

IMPINGTON VILLAGE COLLEGE

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1 Introduction

- 1.1 We are committed to developing a strong partnership with students, parents/carers and other stakeholders. This provides a good basis for mutual understanding and for preventing and resolving complaints.
- 1.2 We hope that the adoption of a clear complaints procedure will help to ensure that most complaints are resolved quickly and smoothly and as close to the source of the misunderstanding or problem as possible. In this way complainants can feel assured from the outset of a fair hearing, in line with a defined procedure for dealing with issues that have not immediately been resolved. We also hope that a staged framework might prevent an early and unnecessary escalation of the problem. In addition, we will ensure that lessons learned from the investigation of complaints will prove useful to improve the College's policy and practice.

2 Scope

- 2.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of actions by the College or its staff that affects an individual or a group and requires a response from the College. This procedure deals with such complaints if made by a student, a parent or other external stakeholder, except that there are separate appeals procedures for a parent dissatisfied with a decision regarding either the admission or the exclusion of their child and for appeals against the grade awarded to their child in an external examination.
- 2.2 There are also separate procedures to deal with a complaint raised by or on behalf of a member of staff. These include the Grievance Procedure for a complaint by an employee of unfair treatment, the Harassment Procedure for an employee complaining of bullying or intimidation, the Disciplinary Procedure for an employee complaining about the conduct of another member of staff and the Whistle Blowing Procedure for an unresolved allegation of institutional malpractice.

3 Principles

- 3.1 We believe that most complaints can be resolved satisfactorily by informal discussion either over the telephone or through a meeting involving the key people involved.
- 3.2 Informal queries and complaints should be taken up directly with the relevant member of staff either verbally or in writing. Formal complaints should be addressed to the Principal in writing.
- 3.3 All complaints will be dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible. The length of the period will vary with the gravity and complexity of the complaint and the urgency with which it needs to be settled. However, the intention is that all complaints should be settled within a period which is reasonable in the circumstances.
- 3.4 All formal complaints will be investigated fully, fairly and carefully and complainants will be kept informed of progress.
- 3.5 The aim is always to secure the resolution of the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant if possible.

4 Recording

- 4.1 The Principal will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within three working days.
- 4.2 The complaint will be recorded, together with the outcome and reasons for the outcome. The complainant will be informed of the outcome in writing, together with their entitlement to appeal the outcome.

- 4.3 Where the complaint is upheld, any action to be taken by the College in response will also be recorded.

5 Stage One: Informal Complaints

- 5.1 Informal complaints or concerns should be raised with the relevant member of staff, such as class teacher, form tutor or Learning Manager. Where a formal complaint is raised with the Principal, it will normally be passed to the most appropriate member of staff to deal with it informally. If the complainant indicates that they would have difficulty discussing the complaint with this member of staff, the Principal may direct them to another member of staff. Similarly, if the most appropriate member of staff feels they would have difficulty in dealing with the complaint objectively, the Principal may direct the complainant to another member of staff.
- 5.2 In certain circumstances, the Principal may instead choose to deal with the complaint informally in person, or the relevant member of staff may ask the Principal to deal with it informally in person.
- 5.3 If the complaint has been made in writing, the Principal may choose to treat it as a formal complaint and invoke the formal procedure.
- 5.4 If the complaint has been made to the Chairman of the Governing Body in the first instance, he or she will refer the complaint to the Principal. However, if the complaint concerns the Principal and has already been taken up with the Principal without being resolved, the complaint must be made in writing to the Chairman using the Complaint Form (Appendix A). The Chairman will then invoke the formal procedure.
- 5.5 The member of staff to whom the complainant is referred will carry out an investigation and decide on any appropriate action. The complainant and the Principal will be informed of the conclusions drawn from the investigation and action to be taken, together with details of how to make a formal complaint if they remain dissatisfied.
- 5.6 In some cases, matters affecting general school policy may be judged by the Principal, in consultation with the Chairman of the Governing Body, to be an appropriate area for discussion at Governing Body level, in order to resolve the complaint. In these circumstances care will be taken to ensure that the identity of the complainant and the individual complained of are not disclosed in case a formal complaint is made subsequently.
- 5.7 Every effort will be made to resolve the problem to the satisfaction of the complainant at this informal stage. Possible outcomes include:
- i. complaint resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;
 - ii. complaint not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;
 - iii. complaint dealt with under another procedure;

6 Stage Two: Formal Complaints

- 6.1 The Principal will ensure the complaint is investigated fully. The Principal may delegate responsibility for conducting the investigation to another member of staff.
- 6.2 Where the complaint concerns the Principal, the Principal will inform the complainant in writing that they should send a completed Complaint Form (Appendix A) to the Chairman of the Governing Body, who will then take the place of the Principal throughout the formal procedure.
- 6.3 Once the investigation has been completed, the Principal will review all the information and discuss the findings with the complainant with the aim of resolving the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction.
- 6.4 The Principal will decide on the outcome and inform the complainant in writing of the decision, together with details of how to appeal against the decision if they remain dissatisfied. A meeting may also be arranged to convey the reasons for the decision.
- 6.5 Rarely, the decision may involve taking disciplinary action against an individual, for which there is a separate procedure. In this event, the complainant will be informed that the complaint will be pursued through disciplinary action. The College's

disciplinary procedures require that all details of proceedings remain confidential, and consequently the complainant will not be informed of the outcome.

- 6.6 Possible outcomes include:
- i. complaint withdrawn;
 - ii. complaint dismissed;
 - iii. complaint dealt with under another procedure;
 - iv. complaint upheld.

7 Stage Three: Appeals

- 7.1 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they should send a completed Complaint Appeal Form (Appendix B) to the Chairman of the Governing Body within 10 working school days from the date of the response received.
- 7.2 The Chairman may be able to resolve the complaint informally, with the result that the complainant withdraws their appeal.
- 7.3 If this is not possible, the Chairman will convene a meeting of a Governors' Appeals Committee to consider the appeal.
- 7.4 If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Chairman of the Governing Body's handling of the complaint then they should send a completed Complaint Appeal Form (Appendix B) to the Clerk to the Governing Body.
- 7.5 The appeal will be considered by a Governors' Appeal Committee comprising at least three governors, one of whom will act as Chairman of the Committee. The Committee may not include the Chairman of the Governing Body, any College employees or any Governor who has had a prior involvement in the complaint or in any matter which is the basis of the complaint.
- 7.6 The Appeal Committee will decide:
- i. whether or not the Complaints Procedure was adhered to;
 - ii. whether or not the matter giving rise to the complaint was investigated properly; and,
 - iii. whether the resolution of the complaint was reasonable.
- 7.7 The complainant will be informed in writing within ten days of the findings of the Governors' Appeal Committee and the reasons for these findings and that the decision is final and that the matter is now closed.

Appendix A

Complaint Form

Complainant:

<p>Name:</p> <p>Address:</p> <p>Tel/Mobile:</p>

Details of Complaint

<p><i>Please include full details, including dates, times and names of those involved.</i></p>
--

Signed: **Date:**

<p><i>Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary. Once completed, send this form to the Principal who will arrange for your complaint to be investigated.</i></p>

For office use

Date Received by Principal:

Date of Response to Complainant:

Appendix B

Complaint Appeal Form

Complainant:

<i>Name:</i>
<i>Address:</i>
<i>Tel/Mobile:</i>

Date complaint was submitted in writing:

Date response received from Principal in writing:

I am dissatisfied with the response to the above complaint and would like an Appeal Committee of the Governing Body to consider the matter for the following reasons:

Signed **Date:**

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary. Once completed, send this form to the Chairman of the Governing Body who will arrange for your appeal to be considered.

For office use

Date Received by Chairman of the Governing Body:

Date of Response to Complainant: