



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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Whom this complaints procedure is for

This complaints procedure is for parents of pupils at the School who wish to make a complaint.

The School's complaints procedure is provided to parents of current and prospective boys, and to all staff. It can be downloaded from the School's website: www.choirschool.com.

Boarding

The School's complaints procedure complies with Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the regulatory body which now inspects boarding schools. Boarders at the School have a complaints procedure that is publically available on a noticeboard in the boarding house phone booth.

Complaints

The chain of complaint is the three-stage process (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three). If parents are still not content after a panel hearing, then approaches can be made to two external bodies: the Independent Schools Inspectorate or the Department for Education. (There is a possibility that Local Authorities may be involved in the chain of complaint – for example, when the complaint concerns child safeguarding, prolonged absences from School or statements of special educational needs.) Guidance on school issues can be obtained from DfE public enquiries:

Tel 0370 000 2288

Third parties

In the event of complaints relating to members of the Cathedral Music Department, these will be referred to the Cathedral Administrator and Head of HR who will instigate the Diocesan complaints procedure. Complaints which raise safeguarding concerns will be referred both to the Cathedral Safeguarding Representative and to the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead who will refer it to the Westminster LADO where it meets the threshold for referral. Whilst decisions around suspension are decisions for the Cathedral to take, it is entirely within the School's discretion whether to permit or prohibit the individual concerned from having contact with its pupils whilst any safeguarding referral or investigation is underway, and indeed – depending on the outcome of any referral or investigation – thereafter. If a decision is made to investigate which requires speaking to a pupil, this will be done in conjunction with school staff. The outcome of any complaint will be referred back to the Head Master and the parent concerned. A similar process will be followed with any other third party provider where the parental complaint relates to a member of their staff.

THE THREE-STAGE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Stage 1 – Informal resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally through an email exchange or meeting, within ten working days; a member of the SMT may assist with finding an informal resolution.

Stage 2 – Formal resolution

- If a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then parents should put their complaint in writing, within ten working days, to the Head Master. The Head Master will then decide the appropriate course of action to take.
- The Head Master will make the person against whom the complaint has been made aware that a formal complaint has been received as soon as reasonably practicable.
- A written record will be kept of all formal complaints, and of how, and at what stage, they were resolved.
- In the case of complaints which raise issues of safeguarding children or vulnerable adults, the School's safeguarding procedures will be followed.
- In most cases the Head Master will meet with the parents concerned, normally within ten days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head Master to carry out further investigations.
- The Head Master will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint and may ask his PA to record the meeting.
- Once the Head Master is satisfied that, so far as practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head Master will also give reasons for his decision.
- Stage 2 of the process will be completed within 28 days (unless holidays or other circumstances, such as legal or statutory requirements, dictate that it is not practicable to do so).
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to stage 3 of this procedure. The School will record any findings and recommendations, whether or not the complaint is upheld, including the actions taken by the School, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld.

Stage 3 – Panel hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to the Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the complaints panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the complaints panel for consideration. The panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. Each of the panel members shall be appointed by the board of Governors. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within fourteen days.
- If the panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied to all parties not later than seven days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or friend. Legal representation is not appropriate.



- If possible, the panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within fourteen days of the hearing. The panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the panel will be final. The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head Master, the Governors and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint has been made. The School will record any findings and recommendations, whether or not the complaint is upheld, including the actions taken by the School regardless of whether the complaint is upheld.

All concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except insofar as is required of the School by Part 7 of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014, where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails. For relevant agencies (e.g. the ISI), full records, including findings and recommendations, are available onsite.

Parents may ask for the number of complaints registered under the formal Complaints Procedure during the preceding School year.

Tel 020 7931 6099

Email office@choirschool.com

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