



**Loughborough**  
Schools Foundation

Nursery • Fairfield • Grammar • High

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# **Parental Complaints Policy and Procedures**

## Document Management Information

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## Revision History

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| 2.0            | Template updated. Policy and procedures separated; complaint stages moved to appendices. Improved readability and navigation. Clarified timescales during holidays. | 08/09/2025  |
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|                |                                                                                                                                                                     |             |

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Loughborough Schools Foundation (“the Foundation”) is committed to delivering excellence in academic achievement, extra-curricular opportunities and pastoral care, all within a supportive and nurturing environment. However, there may be occasions when parents feel dissatisfied and wish to raise a concern or make a formal complaint.
- 1.2 The Foundation’s Parental Complaints Policy and Procedures (this Policy) is drafted in accordance with Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and meets the requirements of the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI).
- 1.3 The policy sets out how complaints will be managed fairly, promptly and confidentially. The Foundation aims to resolve concerns at the earliest possible stage, and many issues can be addressed informally without progressing to formal procedures.

## **2. Aims**

- 2.1 The aims of this Policy and its procedures are to:
  - Promote openness, transparency and a welcoming culture.
  - Demonstrate that parents’ views are valued.
  - Encourage parents to raise concerns confidently.
  - Support staff in handling complaints professionally.
  - Provide a clear and effective process for resolving complaints.
  - Ensure complaints are managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level.
  - Resolve concerns in a constructive and timely manner.

## **3. Scope and Application**

- 3.1 This policy applies to complaints from parents of current pupils and former pupils, provided the complaint was raised formally when the pupil was registered at the School.
- 3.2 The term ‘parent’ includes a current parent, legal guardian or education guardian.
- 3.3 Complaints from individuals who are not parents (e.g. members of the public, contractors, or alumni) should be directed to the Head or

appropriate senior member of Foundation staff. These complaints will be considered under Stage 1 and Stage 2 only.

- 3.4 This policy applies to any expression of dissatisfaction however made about actions taken, or a lack of action, by the School where a parent seeks action.
- 3.5 Certain matters fall outside the scope of this policy and are addressed under separate procedures. These include:
- Admissions decisions - see School Admissions Policy
  - Exclusions - see Student Serious Disciplinary Policy
  - Fee queries or disputes - see Parent Terms & Conditions
  - Subject access requests - see Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notices
  - Complaints relating to the use or handling of personal data - see Section 12 (Complaints About the Use of Data)
- 3.6 Requests for financial awards, such as claims for compensation, damages or fee refunds, are not covered by this complaints policy and will not be considered under its procedures.
- 3.7 Where appropriate, an acknowledgement may be made that a complaint is upheld, either wholly or in part. Where appropriate, the outcome may include:
- An explanation
  - An admission that the matter could have been handled differently or better
  - An assurance that steps have been taken to prevent a recurrence, along with a summary of those steps
  - A commitment to review relevant policies and/or procedures
  - An apology
- 3.8 There may be occasions when it is necessary or reasonable to deviate from this complaints procedure if this is reasonable and justified. Parents will be notified of the changes.

#### **4. Management of Concerns and Complaints**

- 4.1 The complaints procedure has three stages, as outlined below and set out in further detail in the appendices.

| <b>Stage</b>                        | <b>Summary</b>                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Stage 1: Informal resolution</b> | An informal concern raised with a member of staff orally or in writing (see Appendix 1). |
| <b>Stage 2: Formal resolution</b>   | A formal complaint made in writing to the Head (see Appendix 2).                         |
| <b>Stage 3: Complaints Panel</b>    | A panel hearing to review the complaint (see Appendix 3).                                |

## **5. Timescales**

- 5.1 Timescales for each stage are outlined in the relevant sections of this policy and appendices. Working days are defined as Monday to Friday, when the school is open to pupils during term time. Term dates are published on each school's website.
- 5.2 It is expected that the complaints procedure will progress in a timely manner. Every effort will be made to resolve concerns efficiently and without unnecessary delay.
- 5.3 Where exceptional circumstances result in a delay (e.g. external investigations), parents will be notified of revised timescales.
- 5.4 Complaints which are received during the school holidays will be treated as received on the first working day after receipt.
- 5.5 Parents are encouraged to raise complaints as soon as possible after any incident causing concern.

## **6. Anonymous Complaints**

- 6.1 An anonymous complaint is one where the complainant's name and contact details are not provided, or where the complainant explicitly requests to remain unidentified.
- 6.2 Parents should be encouraged to provide their names and reassured about the confidentiality of the complaints process. If a complainant insists on remaining anonymous, it is at the Head's discretion to determine what action, if any, should be taken.
- 6.3 All anonymous complaints, regardless of outcome, must be recorded by the school.

## **7. Expected Standards of Behaviour**

- 7.1 Concerns and complaints will be handled fairly, and the school will work constructively with parents towards resolving them.
- 7.2 As concerns and complaints will be dealt with confidentially, complaints are not to be discussed publicly, including via social media.
- 7.3 While a complaint is being investigated, parents are asked to limit related communications. Where behaviour disrupts the process or hinders resolution, reference may be made to Appendix 4: Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints.

## **8. Confidentiality**

- 8.1 Confidentiality is often a crucial issue for parents, pupils, and staff. It is essential that any complaint is handled with discretion and respect. If necessary, the policy on maintaining confidentiality may need to be explained to a complainant.
- 8.2 Parents and pupils should never feel that raising a complaint will negatively affect the pupil's experience or opportunities
- 8.3 In some cases, it may be possible to address a concern without naming individuals. However, even when names are withheld, the identity of the complainant may still be apparent. In such situations, careful consideration must be given to balancing the need to address the issue effectively with the obligation to maintain confidentiality.
- 8.4 If there is a possibility of an issue concerning child safety or protection, or a situation which is likely to involve the police, the appropriate procedures and guidance on confidentiality must be followed particularly carefully.
- 8.5 For reasons of data protection and confidentiality, parents are not entitled to details of any related sanctions imposed on staff, pupils or other parents.
- 8.6 Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where access is requested by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required during an inspection or under other legal authority or court order.

## **9. Publication and Availability**

- 9.1 A copy of this policy is available on both the Foundation and schools' websites. Printed copies can be requested from the school office.

## **10. Special Provision for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**

- 10.1 Parents of children in the EYFS may contact Ofsted and/or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) if they believe EYFS requirements are not being met. In most cases, concerns should first be raised through the School's complaints procedure.

| <b>Agency</b>                    | <b>Email</b>            | <b>Telephone</b> |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Ofsted                           | enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk | 0300 123 4666    |
| Independent Schools Inspectorate | concerns@isi.net        | 020 7600 0100    |

## **11. Boarding Complaints**

- 11.1 Complaints about boarding should initially be raised with the Houseparent. Alternatively, complaints may be directed to the Head or Deputy Head (Pastoral).
- 11.2 All boarding-related complaints will be managed in accordance with this Complaints Policy, including the right to progress the complaint through the formal stages of the procedure.
- 11.3 Parents have the right to contact external agencies regarding any complaint concerning the welfare of pupils in boarding, including:

| <b>Agency</b>                                             | <b>Email</b>            | <b>Telephone</b>                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ofsted                                                    | enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk | 0300 123 1231                                              |
| Leicestershire Local Authority Allegations Manager (LADO) | CFS-LADO@leics.gov.uk   | Office hours: 0116 305 4141<br>Out of hours: 0116 305 0005 |

## **12. Complaints About the Use of Data**

- 12.1 Complaints relating to the use or handling of personal data are dealt with under data protection legislation.



- 12.2 In the first instance, complaints should be raised with the Foundation's Data Protection Officer via [dataprotection@lsf.org](mailto:dataprotection@lsf.org). The Foundation will aim to respond within one calendar month.
- 12.3 If the individual remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they have the right to raise a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Further information is available at [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk).

### **13. Staff Responsibilities, Training and Support**

- 13.1 Given the diverse nature of complaints, the Schools should ensure through training that all staff, including support staff, know how to carry out their responsibilities.
- 13.2 All members of staff are expected to respond to parental concerns in an appropriate and professional manner, within the scope of their role.
- 13.3 If approached by parents about a matter outside their remit, staff should refer the concern or complaint to the appropriate person and inform the parents accordingly.
- 13.4 Matters that cannot be resolved at a particular level should be escalated to a more senior member of staff. Parents should be kept informed of any action being taken.
- 13.5 Staff may be concerned about complaints that could affect their reputation. Training can support staff in handling complaints made to or about them. Support should also be offered to any staff member who is the subject of a complaint, and a colleague not otherwise involved may be appointed to provide that support.

### **14. Record Keeping and Reporting**

- 14.1 A written record of all formal complaints is maintained. This includes details of whether the complaint was resolved at Stage 2 or Stage 3, the action taken as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether it was upheld), and whether the complaint relates to boarding provision.
- 14.2 Records of complaints relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) will be retained for at least three years.
- 14.3 All records created under this policy are managed in accordance with the Foundation's policies on record retention and destruction.

- 14.4 These records may contain personal data. The Foundation's privacy notices, available on its website, explain how personal data relating to pupils and parents is used.
- 14.5 Staff must follow data protection policies and procedures when handling personal data associated with complaints.
- 14.6 The number of formal complaints (stage 2 and 3) made against each school in the preceding school year is published on the relevant school's website.
- 14.7 Brief summaries of complaints reaching Stage 2 and 3 will be reported to the Governors. Care will be taken to preserve the impartiality of Governors, particularly in cases where they may be involved in a future complaints panel hearing.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Stage 1: Informal Resolution Procedure**

- **Contact:** Form Tutor, Class Teacher or Head of Year
- **Timescale:** Complaint acknowledged normally within 24 hours; resolution aimed for within 10 working days.

### **Informal Resolution of a Concern or Complaint**

1. It is hoped that most concerns and complaints can be resolved quickly and informally. For example, dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching, pastoral care or a billing error should be able to be resolved by the appropriate member of staff.
2. Initial concerns and complaints should be raised with the Form Tutor, Class Teacher, or Head of Year. If they are not the appropriate person to deal with it, it will be passed to the person who is. If this individual cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Deputy Head or the Head.
3. Boarders' parents or legal guardians should direct concerns and complaints to the Boarding House Parent. Alternatively, they can be directed to the Head or Deputy Head (Pastoral).
4. Concerns raised directly with a Deputy Head or Head will usually be referred to the relevant staff member unless it is deemed appropriate for them to handle the matter personally.

### **Informal Procedure**

5. An informal complaint will be acknowledged by telephone, email or letter within 2 working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during the holidays. The response will outline the action being taken and expected timescales, which may include investigation or a meeting with the parent.
6. The member of staff in receipt of the complaint will make a written record of it and the date on which it was received. A matter raised orally will not necessarily be acknowledged in writing, but a record of the matter will be made.
7. Where appropriate, parents will be asked early in the process what outcome they are seeking.

8. The parent will usually receive a response to the complaint within 10 working days.

### **Next Steps**

9. If the parent is dissatisfied with the outcome or if the issue cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint may be made under Stage 2 of this procedure, as outlined in Appendix 2.

## Appendix 2

### Stage 2: Formal Complaint

- **Contact:** Head  
A complaint against the Head should be put in writing to the Chair of Governors who will follow the procedure set out in Stage 2
- **Timescale:** Complaint acknowledged within 3 working days; resolution aimed for within 10 working days.
- **Note:** Special provisions apply to EYFS complaints – [see Section 10](#).

### Submitting a Formal Complaint

1. Complaints will usually only progress to Stage 2 after being considered informally, and only if the parent indicates a wish to escalate the matter.
2. A formal complaint should be submitted in writing to the Head of the School, usually within 10 working days of receiving the Stage 1 response, and should include:
  - The parent's name and full contact details
  - Details of the complaint and who it has previously been raised with
  - Copies of any relevant documents
  - The outcome being sought
3. The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone, email, or letter within 3 working days during term time, or as soon as practicable during holidays. The response will outline the action being taken and expected timescales.

### Complaint Investigation

4. In most cases, the Head will speak to the parents concerned, usually with another member of the Senior Leadership Team present, normally within 5 working days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
5. Further investigation may be required. This may be conducted by the Head or delegated to a senior member of staff or, where appropriate, an independent third party.
6. Written records of all meetings and interviews will be kept. If the investigation is delegated, a report will be prepared and usually reviewed by the Head. Personal data may be redacted, and names anonymised in accordance with data protection principles.

## **Complaint Decision**

7. Once all relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and communicated in writing, normally within 5 working days of the initial meeting. The response will include reasons for the decision.
8. For complaints relating to EYFS, parents will be notified of the outcome within 28 calendar days of receipt.

## **Next Steps**

9. If the parent remains dissatisfied, they may request that the complaint be referred to a Complaints Panel under Stage 3 (see Appendix 3).
10. Without prejudice to the right to proceed to Stage 3, the Chair of Governors may offer a meeting with the parent to discuss the outcome and seek a satisfactory resolution to any outstanding concerns; this meeting does not form part of the formal complaints procedure.

## Appendix 3

### Stage 3: Complaints Panel

- **Contact:** Head of Governance, who will inform the Chair of the Governors.
- **Timescale:** Hearing to take place normally within 25 working days of receipt of the request.  
**Note:** Special provisions apply to EYFS complaints – [see Section 10](#).

### Complaints Panel Hearing

1. A Complaints Panel Hearing (Hearing) will review the elements of the Stage 2 decision about which the parent remains dissatisfied.
2. The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint, which have not been previously raised as part of the complaint procedure.

### Requesting a Hearing

3. A written request must be submitted to the Head of Governance within 10 working days of receiving the Stage 2 decision. Requests will normally only be considered if Stage 2 has been fully completed.
4. The request should include:
  - Parent's name and contact details
  - Details of unresolved elements of the complaint
  - Copies of relevant documents for consideration
  - Desired outcome
  - Whether the complainant wishes to attend the hearing and be accompanied
5. The Head of Governance will acknowledge the request for a Hearing in writing within 3 working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during holidays.

### Hearing Arrangements

6. Every effort will be made to enable the Hearing to take place within 25 working days of receipt of the request. If this is not possible, the parent will be kept informed, and an indicative timescale given. Hearings will not normally be held during school holidays.

7. If, after reasonable efforts, a mutually convenient date for the hearing cannot be agreed, the Panel will proceed based on written submissions from all parties.
8. Written notification of the date, time and location of the hearing will be sent to all parties at least 5 working days in advance.
9. Any additional documents parents wish the Panel to consider should be sent to the Head of Governance at least 7 working days before the Hearing.
10. The Head of Governance will circulate a copy of the bundle of documents to be considered by the complaints panel to all parties at least 5 working days before the Hearing.
11. Parents may be accompanied at the Hearing by a companion, such as a relative or friend. As the Hearing is not a legal proceeding, legal representation is not required. The companion may not act as an advocate or address the Panel unless invited to do so by the Chair of the Panel.
12. A minute-taker will be appointed to record the hearing.

### **Composition of the Complaint Panel**

13. The Panel will consist of three individuals not directly involved in the complaint, including one independent member who is not involved in the management or running of the School.
14. One member will be appointed as Chair, responsible for managing the hearing and ensuring fairness and adherence to procedure.

### **Panel Role**

15. The Panel will establish the facts relating to the elements of the complaint that remain unresolved by considering:
  - Documents provided by both parties
  - Any representations made during the Hearing
16. The Panel will review the Stage 2 process and decision, and determine, on the balance of probabilities, whether or not to uphold each unresolved element of the complaint.



## **Hearing Procedure**

17. The format of the hearing is at the discretion of the Panel Chair and may be conducted sequentially (with parties attending separately) or as a roundtable with all parties present.
18. The panel will usually hear from the Stage 2 decision-maker and the parent.
19. All participants are expected to behave with courtesy and respect. If behaviour is inappropriate and continues after a warning, the Chair may adjourn or terminate the hearing. Any concerns about conduct must be raised before proceedings continue and will be minuted.
20. The Chair may adjourn the hearing to investigate further or seek legal advice.
21. All parties may take notes for personal reference.
22. Once the Chair is satisfied that all relevant information has been considered, the hearing will be concluded.
23. The Hearing is a private proceeding. No records or statements may be shared with the press or other media.

## **Panel Decision**

24. The Panel will make findings on each unresolved element of the complaint on the balance of probabilities and may make recommendations.
25. The panel must decide whether the complaint(s) made are well-founded. To do this, they must establish on balance of probabilities what happened. This means that if there is a dispute in the evidence about what happened, they will reach a decision by considering which version of events is more likely than not to have occurred.
26. It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents. The Panel may make findings and recommendations on these or any other issues to the Head or the Governing Body as appropriate.
27. The decision, findings and any recommendations will be provided in writing to the parent and, where relevant, the person complained about, within 7 working days of the Hearing.

## **Next Steps**

28. The Panel's decision is final. Stage 3 marks the conclusion of the complaint's procedure.
29. Decisions, findings, and recommendations will be available for inspection by the Governing Body, Head, or relevant regulatory bodies, including Ofsted and/or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI).

## **Appendix 4**

### **Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints**

1. Loughborough Schools are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. While we do not normally restrict contact with complainants, we expect all interactions to be respectful. We will take appropriate action to protect staff from behaviour that is abusive, offensive, or threatening.
2. Unreasonable behaviour is defined as conduct that hinders the effective handling of a complaint due to the frequency, nature, or tone of the complainant's contact. Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - Refusing to clearly articulate the complaint, its grounds, or desired outcomes, despite offers of assistance
  - Refusing to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
  - Refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
  - Insisting on outcomes or procedures that fall outside the scope of the complaints policy
  - Introducing trivial or irrelevant information and expecting it to be addressed
  - Raising large numbers of detailed but insignificant questions and demanding immediate responses
  - Making unjustified complaints about staff handling the issue and requesting their replacement
  - Changing the basis of the complaint during the investigation
  - Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
  - Refusing to accept the outcome of a properly conducted investigation
  - Seeking unrealistic outcomes
  - Making excessive demands on staff time by frequent, lengthy, and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with

- Using threats, intimidation, or abusive, offensive, or discriminatory language
  - Knowingly providing false information
  - Publishing inappropriate or defamatory content on social media or public platforms
3. Complainants should limit communications related to their complaint while it is being investigated. Repeated or excessive correspondence may delay the resolution process.
  4. Whenever possible, the Head or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before considering the complainant to be 'unreasonable'.
  5. If the behaviour continues, the Head will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the Foundation causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.
  6. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the Foundation premises.