



**QUINTON HALL**  
Preparatory School & Nursery

# Complaints Policy and Procedure

Owner	<b>SF</b>
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<b>Policy Approved By:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Senior Management Team	<b>11/2/20</b>
Full Governing Board	<b>F&amp;GP 11/2/20</b> <b>Full Board 11/2/20</b>
Presented and Agreed by Staff	<b>June 2020</b>
Review Date:	<b>June 2021</b>

Quainton Hall School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this procedure. Quainton Hall School makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and in the school office during the school day, and Quainton Hall School will ensure that ***parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and the form in which it is published or available.***

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or the body conducting the inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

### **What Constitutes a Complaint?**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

**Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.**

## **Who can make a complaint?**

This complaints procedure is mainly aimed at parents or carers of children who are registered at the school, but it is not limited to them.

Any member of the public may make a complaint to Quinton Hall about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides.

Children who attend Quinton Hall have their own complaints procedure drawn up using the Common Principles for a Child Friendly Complaints Process outlined by the Children's Commissioner.

Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), the school will use this complaints procedure.

## **The difference between a concern and a complaint**

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*. A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest opportunity. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Quinton Hall takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, the Headmaster will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headmaster will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Quinton Hall will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

## **How to raise a concern or make a complaint**

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or headmaster. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headmaster) should be made in the first instance, to Mr Ford (the Headmaster) via the school office. Please mark them as 'private and confidential'.

Complaints that involve or are about the headmaster should be addressed to Mr Neil Enright (the Chair of the board), via the school office. Please mark them as 'private and confidential'.

Complaints about the chair of the board, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the clerk to the governing body via the school office. Please mark them as 'private and confidential'.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations such as Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

### **Anonymous complaints**

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headmaster or chair of the board, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

### **Duplicate complaints**

If, after closing a complaint at the end of the complaints procedure, we receive a duplicate complaint from a spouse, a partner, a grandparent or a child not attending this school, we will remind them that we have already considered the complaint and the local process is complete. Complainants will be advised to contact the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our handling of the complaint.

**Complaint campaigns**

If we receive what we consider to be a large volume of complaints, all based on the same subject and possibly from complainants not connected to the school, then we will treat these complaints as being part of a campaign and respond in one of the following two ways, depending upon the nature and scale of the complaint:

- send the same response to all complainants; or
- publish a single response on the school’s website.

**Timescales**

Complainants must raise the complaint within three months of the incident, or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

**Complaints received outside of term time**

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

**Scope of this complaints procedure**

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Quinton Hall School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

<b>Exceptions</b>	<b>Who to contact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whistleblowing</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees,</p>

	<p>including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The secretary of state for education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the local authority or the DfE (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff grievances</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff conduct</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities</li> </ul>	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about admissions will be dealt with under the school's internal complaint systems.</p>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against Quinton Hall School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

### **Resolving complaints**

At each stage in the procedure, Quinton Hall wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- **an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur;**
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint;
- an apology.

### **Withdrawal of a complaint**

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

### **Stage 1 -Informal Resolution.**

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally directly with the person concerned. Clearly, the nature of complaints will vary but from the moment that the School is made aware of a complaint the initial aim would be to address this speedily and within a week of it being made.

If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their son or daughter's Form Tutor/Class teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult with their Head of Department, the Deputy Head or the Headmaster.

Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, the Deputy Head or the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor unless the Head of Department, the Deputy Head or the Headmaster deems it appropriate for him or her to deal with the matter personally.

The Form Tutor/Class teacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received.

Should the matter not be resolved within **5 working days** or in the event that the Form Tutor/Class teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.

If, however, the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should address their complaint in writing directly to the Chair of Governors c/o Quanton Hall School, Hindes Road, Harrow, HA1 1RX

## **Stage 2 - Formal Resolution**

Formal complaints must be made to the Headmaster (unless they are about the Headmaster), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the complaint form), or by telephone. The Headmaster will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) normally within **3 school days**. Within this response, the Headmaster will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headmaster can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

*Note: The Headmaster may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.*

During the investigation, the Headmaster (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headmaster will provide a formal written response normally within **10 school days** of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the Headmaster is unable to meet this deadline, he will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Quanton Hall School will take to resolve the complaint.

The Headmaster will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2. If the complaint is about the Headmaster or a member of the governing body (including the Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

Complaints about the Headmaster or member of the governing body must be made to the clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is jointly about the chair and another governor, or the entire governing body, or the majority of the governing body, stage 2 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body or a Guardian of the Shrine of our Lady of Walsingham. At the conclusion of its investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

### **Stage 3**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to stage 3 – a panel hearing with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first two, impartial, governors available and an external panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to stage 3 must be made to the clerk, via the school office, within **5 school days** of receipt of the stage 2 response.

The clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) normally within **2 school days**.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting normally within **30 school days** of receipt of the stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will, prior to the meeting, decide among themselves who will act as the chair of the complaints committee. If there are fewer than two governors from Quainton Hall available, the clerk will source any additional, independent professional through another local school in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at stage 3. The committee will agree a clear terms of reference, a clear process, and a direction to reach a final decision within a specified timescale before the panel hearing.

The committee will invite parties to a meeting and will allow them to be accompanied to the panel hearing if they wish. This can be a relative or friend.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend. A legal representative of the complainant is not normally allowed to accompany the parent unless the school agrees.

At least **10 school days** before the meeting, the clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least **7 school days** before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least **5 school days** before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept as evidence recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from stage 2 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented.

The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The chair of the committee will provide the complainant and Quanton Hall with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, normally within **7 school days**.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the DfE if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Quanton Hall.

If the complaint is jointly about the chair and a governor or the entire governing body or the majority of the governing body, stage 3 will be heard by a committee of independent individuals.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Quainton Hall will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

### **Next steps**

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 3.

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Quainton Hall. They will consider whether Quainton Hall has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE online at [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

Formal Complaints (Stage 2 or 3) during the academic year 2017 – 2018 =0

Formal Complaints (Stage 2 or 3) during the academic year 2018 – 2019 =1

**Complaint form**

Please complete and return to Mr Ford (*Headmaster*) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</b>
<b>Address:</b>  <b>Daytime telephone number:</b>  <b>Evening telephone number:</b>

**Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it. Dates must be included.**

**What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**

**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**