Arnold House School

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

LAST REVIEW: MARCH 2026
NEXT REVIEW: MARCH 2027
REVIEWED BY: HEADMASTER

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Introduction

Arnold House 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.

The School is here for your child and you can be assured that neither you nor your child will be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

Although the School endeavours to manage complaints in an open and transparent manner, parents should be aware that there may be circumstances which mean the School is unable to share complete details about how a complaint has been handled by the School, the evidence collated, steps taken in response or other related matters. This could be the case even when a complaint is upheld. For example, this may be because such information constitutes sensitive third-party data (for example belonging to a staff member, pupil or other parent), legal or regulatory requirements prohibit disclosure, or withholding information is in accordance with specific instructions from a statutory agency. This list is not exhaustive.

The School will be mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in the application of this policy. "Parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil about whom the complaint relates.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School.

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, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales, detailed below.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally**.**
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's Form Teacher, or the most relevant member of staff such as the Director of Music. If the Form Teacher / Staff Member cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult senior staff, normally the Head of Year in the first instance.

- Complaints made directly to the Deputy Headmaster or the Headmaster will usually be referred to the appropriate Form Teacher, Head of Year, or relevant Staff Member, unless the Deputy Headmaster or the Headmaster deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form Teacher / Staff Member 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 10 working days or in the event that the Form Teacher / Staff Member 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 Complaints Procedure.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors whose contact details are available from the School Office on request.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster. The Headmaster may require further information from the parents to help clarify the scope and nature of their concerns. The Headmaster may in some circumstances deem it appropriate to nominate a staff member to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Headmaster (or their nominee) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headmaster (or their nominee) will speak to the parents concerned, within 10 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out. The Headmaster (or their nominee) will determine who should carry out any investigation and this may be someone external to the School.
- Written records will be kept of all formal meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headmaster (or their nominee) is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmaster (or their nominee) will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Headmaster (or their nominee) will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 20 working days of the complaint being put in writing (or following the provision of any further clarificatory information about the complaint to the Headmaster, if so requested).
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the references to the Headmaster (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to determine the complaint against the Headmaster.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the Clerk to the Governors within 5 working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. The contact details of the Clerk are available from the School Office. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.
- To the extent the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated due to extenuating circumstances which have impeded the parents from taking action, the parents should request an extension in writing. Such a request should be made to the Clerk to the Governors in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. This will be considered.

- In the event the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated (including to the extent applicable any extensions if agreed) the School reserves the right to conclude the complaint process and not progress the matter to Stage 3.
- The Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of 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. The Complaints Panel will appoint one of the Panel members to act as the Chair of the Panel. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and schedule a hearing to take place within 20 working days.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, they may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. The Stage 2 decision-taker shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate and the companion should not be a lawyer. The identity of the companions should be confirmed to the Panel as soon as possible and by no later than 2 working days before the hearing. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- A note-taker will attend the hearing to take a note. This will not be a verbatim note but an accurate reflection of what was discussed. Notes of the hearing will be shared with attendees as soon as practicable after the hearing. To the extent there is any disagreement about the content of those notes or further comments from the parties, these will be considered by and, where possible, resolved by the Chair. A copy of any comments on the notes will be appended to the notes.
- The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint 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 the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:
  - dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
  - uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
  - make recommendations for the School to consider.
- Stage 3 Panels cannot require that any financial compensation is paid to parents or otherwise obligate the School to take particular steps.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 5 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Stage 2 decision-taker. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster.

Definition of Working Days

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or

as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay. The School expects parents to engage in the process in a reasonable, constructive and responsive manner to help ensure matters can be dealt with in a timely way and in line with the targets set out in this Procedure.

Persistent correspondence
Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this will be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

Recording Complaints and use of personal data
Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at Stage 1 (informal stage), Stage 2 (formal stage) or proceed to Stage 3 (a Panel hearing) and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name and contact details of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes/minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice, Data Protection Policy and Retention of Records Policy. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector (see above), there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (eg, in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

Parents of EYFS pupils
Parents of EYFS pupils should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. The School will notify the parents about the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days from the date the complaint was received.
Arnold House will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Retention of Records Policy.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the ISI:

- Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
- ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: info@isi.net
- ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

Availability of this Policy

Arnold House 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 Arnold House will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding School year. In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Arnold House will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding School year.

Although this Procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils.

Record Keeping

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. There may also be other circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.

Complaints in the Last Academic Year

The School keeps a record of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure each year in order to comply with the regulatory requirements as set out by the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

There were two complaints under Stage 2 of this Procedure in the 2025-2026 academic year.