

# **Chadsgrove Educational Trust Specialist College**



## **Complaints Policy and Procedure**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. Chadsgrove Educational Trust (The College) welcomes the opportunity to investigate any circumstance where a student or their representative feels that the College standards have failed to meet expectations.
- 1.2. The College will make every effort to rectify any act found to disadvantage a student and will take action to minimise the likelihood of any repetition of the same.

## **2. Purpose**

- 2.1. This policy provides a procedural framework for receiving, investigating and responding to complaints from a student or their representative.
- 2.2. To assist with the continuous improvement of the College provision.

## **3. Aims**

- 3.1. Our complaints policy and procedure aims to ensure that any student or their representative has access to a structured means of raising concerns or expressing dissatisfaction with services received from the College.
- 3.2. To ensure that all complaints are dealt with promptly and consistently and are handled with courtesy and fairness.

## **4. Principles**

- 4.1. The College proposes that there is a difference between a concern and a complaint, and that taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.
- 4.2. The existence of a complaint's procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve concerns informally wherever possible.
- 4.3. The complaints procedure is confidential, non-adversarial, simple to understand and use, and easily accessible.
- 4.4. Investigation of formal complaints is conducted impartially.
- 4.5. Investigations are conducted, and outcomes are communicated as swiftly as practicable.
- 4.6. All points at issue are addressed, and an effective response with appropriate redress provided.
- 4.7. Information concerning complaints is reviewed by the College Leadership Team (CLT) and Directors so that services can be improved.

## **5. Limitations**

- 5.1. During the course of an investigation covered by this policy, it may be necessary to suspend that investigation pending the outcome of a grievance or disciplinary hearing, or procedures of another agency.
- 5.2. This policy does not encompass complaints relating to refusal of placements at the College. See Admissions Policy.

## **6. Complaints process**

- 6.1. There are four stages within the College complaints procedure:
  - Stage one: informal complaint heard and resolved
  - Stage two: formal complaint heard by Principal
  - Stage three: formal complaint referred to the Chair of Directors
  - Stage four: appeal raised to Directors' Appeal Panel (3 members)

- 6.2. If a complainant wishes, they can at any time raise their complaint to an external agency relevant to the issue (e.g. Ofsted, DfE, Worcestershire County Council). Referral to an external agency will terminate any internal investigation raised regarding the same issue.
- 6.3. At no stage of the complaints process may the College or the complainant invite a solicitor or similar legal representative to attend any meetings.

## **7. Complaints procedure**

### **7.1. Informal Complaint**

- 7.1.1. The College expects minor complaints to be dealt with informally with an appropriate member of staff in order to resolve issues on the spot, including providing an apology where necessary.
- 7.1.2. The complainant should contact the College to talk to the person who provided the service they were unhappy with, or their direct line manager.
- 7.1.3. If the complainant indicates that they would have difficulty discussing their complaint with a particular member of staff, the College will respect those views and refer the complainant to another staff member who is in the position to consider the complaint objectively and impartially.
- 7.1.4. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the Principal will consider referring the complainant to another staff member.
- 7.1.5. Where the first approach by the complainant is made to a Director, they will refer the complainant to an appropriate member of staff. Directors are not able to be involved with informal complaints or the early stages of formal complaints, in case they are required to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.
- 7.1.6. We will aim to resolve informal complaints immediately or within a timescale agreed between the parties involved. However, if the complainant is not satisfied and considers the complaint unresolved then the matter should be escalated to a formal complaint.
- 7.1.7. Informal complaints are recorded on:
  - The central College Complaints Log (see Appendix 5) to be reviewed termly to identify any issues or patterns.
  - CPOMs if relating to a student.

### **7.2. Formal Complaint**

- 7.2.1. A formal complaint may be raised at any time, whether or not the matter has previously been raised as an informal complaint.
- 7.2.2. For a complaint to be considered as a formal complaint it must be submitted to the College in writing, dated and bearing the complainant's signature. This may take the form of a letter or email, but the College preference is for the College Complaints Form to be completed.
- 7.2.3. A formal complaint must be made as soon as reasonably possible. Complaints received more than six months after the event giving rise to the complaint will only be considered at the Principal's discretion if it would have been unreasonable for the complaint to be made earlier or there were extenuating circumstances which prevented the complainant from making the complaint earlier.
- 7.2.4. The College will acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days of receiving it in writing.

- 7.2.5. The College believes that complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will endeavor to provide a full response within 15 College working days of acknowledging receipt, however, where more extensive investigations are necessary, alternative time limits may be set and the complainant sent details of the deadline and an explanation for the extension.
- 7.2.6. An appropriate member of staff will be designated by the Principal to investigate the complaint and interview relevant individuals. On conclusion of the investigation, the designated member of staff will provide a written report with recommendations, which will be made available to the complainant and Principal.
- 7.2.7. If the complaint relates to the Principal, then it will be received by the Chair of Directors.
- 7.2.8. If the complainant is not satisfied that the complaint is resolved, they have the option of referring the complaint to the Chair of Directors, who will review the procedure and outcome.
- 7.2.9. Formal complaints are recorded on:
  - The central College Complaints Log (see Appendix 5) to be reviewed termly to identify any issues or patterns.
  - CPOMs if relating to a student

### 7.3. Appeal

- 7.3.1. Where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the procedure following review by the Chair of Directors, they can request (in writing, dated, signed, and addressed to the Chair of Directors) that their complaint be referred to the Directors' Complaints Appeal Panel.
- 7.3.2. The Directors' Complaints Appeal Panel will consist of at least three Directors.
- 7.3.3. The decision of the Appeal Panel will be the final decision of the College. The decisions available to the Appeal Panel are to:
  - dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
  - uphold the complaint in whole or in part
  - identify the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
  - recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur

## 8. Monitoring of Complaints

- 8.1. All informal and formal complaints and their outcomes will be recorded on the Complaints Log and CPOMS where necessary.
- 8.2. Outcomes will be evaluated by the College Leadership Team, and a summary report made to Directors at each meeting of the Board of Directors.
- 8.3. This Complaints Policy and associated procedures will be reviewed with reference to the process and outcomes of any complaints investigated in order to inform effective practice.

## 9. Investigating Complaints

- 9.1. The Principal will appoint an appropriate member of staff to investigate the complaint.
- 9.2. Guidance (see Appendix 3) will be provided to inform investigators.
- 9.3. The investigator will have access to all documents relating to the complaint and will conduct interviews as necessary to establish relevant facts.

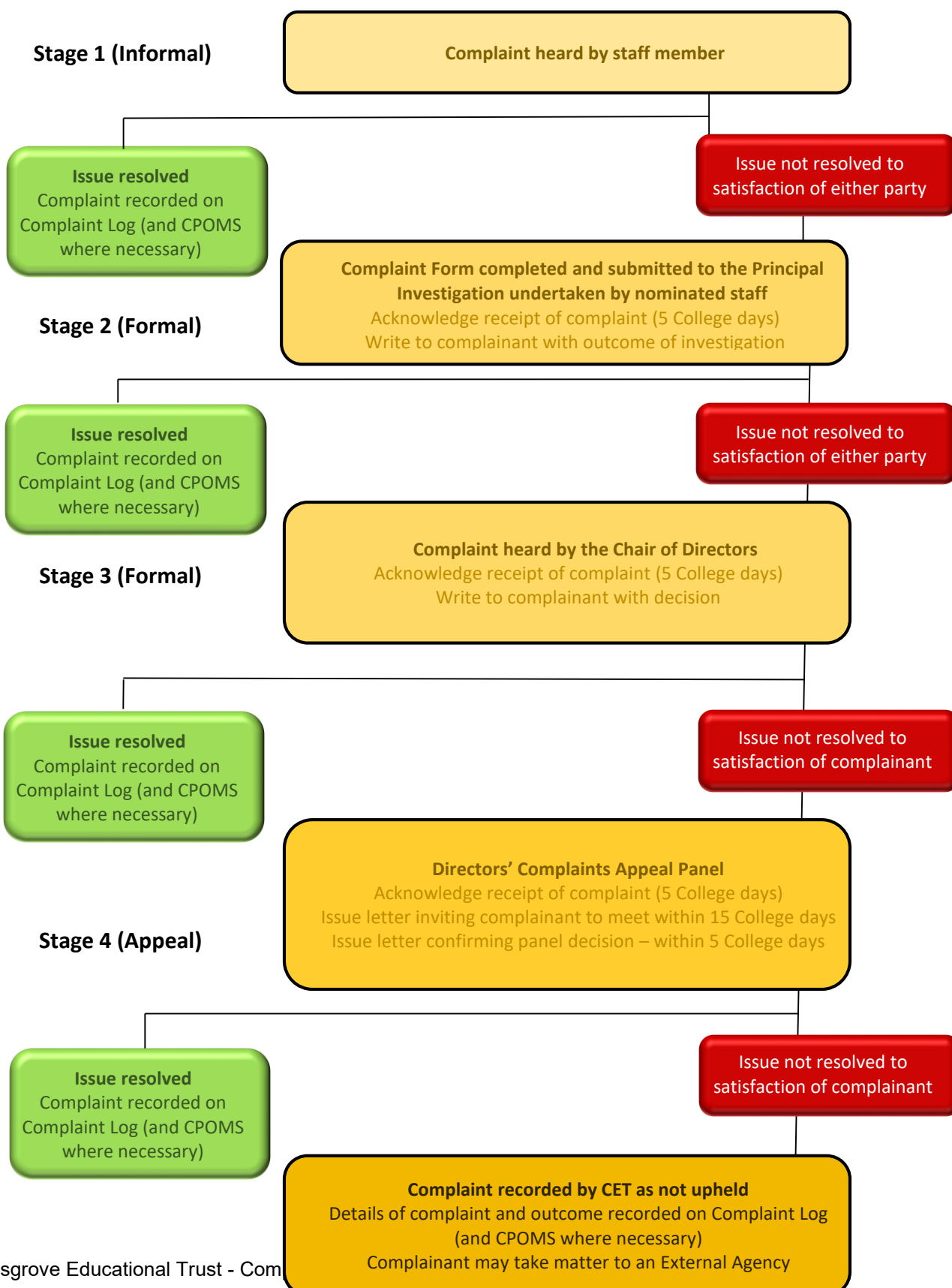
- 9.4. The investigator will provide a written report summarising the facts pertaining to the issue and making recommendations for resolution.
- 9.5. The report should identify areas of agreement between the parties and clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred.
- 9.6. Identification that the College could have handled a situation better is not the same as a suggestion of negligence.

## **10. Appendices**

Appendix 1	Complaints Procedure Flowchart
Appendix 2	Complaint Form
Appendix 3	Complaint Investigation Guidance
Appendix 4	Appeal Panel Guidance
Appendix 5	Complaints Log



# Complaints Procedure





## Chadsgrove Educational Trust

Complaint Form	
<i>To be submitted to the College Office for the attention of the Principal</i>	
Name of Student	
Your Name	
Your relationship to student	
Your address	
Your telephone number	
Your email address	
Please give full details of your complaint	



What action (if any) have you already taken to try to resolve this issue? Include who you have spoken to/contacted and any response received.			
If you have included any documents or other evidence with this form, give details			
What action(s) are you seeking from THE COLLEGE in order to resolve this issue?			
Your signature		Date	
<i>Office use only</i>			
Date form received		By whom	
Date acknowledgement issued		By whom	
Complaint referred to			Date
Date report received			
Date outcome issued to complainant			
Outcome:   Upheld <input style="width: 30px;" type="checkbox"/> Dismissed <input style="width: 30px;" type="checkbox"/> Referred <input style="width: 30px;" type="checkbox"/> Appealed <input style="width: 30px;" type="checkbox"/>			
Notes			



# Complaint Investigation Guidance

An appropriate member of College staff will be appointed to investigate any formal complaint received.

## Investigating Complaints

The person investigating the complaint will ensure that they:

- Establish what actions have been taken so far
- Refer to the Complaint Form to clarify the nature of the complaint received to establish:
  - What has taken place to give rise to the complaint
  - When and where this occurred
  - Who was involved
  - Why the complaint has been raised
  - How the complainant would like the matter resolved
- Meet with, or otherwise contact, the complainant to seek clarification or further information if required
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist with obtaining necessary answers
- Keep notes of all interviews, to be countersigned by interviewee
- Complete a report, concluding whether the complaint is upheld and identifying actions to be taken
- Make a record of all informal and formal complaints relating to students on CPOMS
- Record all complaints electronically on the College Complaints Log



## Appeal Panel Guidance

- 1 The appeal hearing must be independent and impartial. No Director may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- 2 In deciding the make-up of the panel, Directors must try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of Director and sensitive to the issues of race, gender, and religious affiliation.
- 3 The hearing will be held in private, with the remit of resolving the complaint and achieving reconciliation between the College and the complainant. Whilst complainants might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour, the panel should establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- 4 Complainants may feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting, and emotional when discussing an issue that affects them or someone close to them. The Panel Chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible, and the layout of the room should be informal and non-adversarial.
- 5 The Directors sitting on the panel will be conversant with and follow the College Complaints Policy.

The Panel Chair will ensure that:

- the parties are informed of the date, time, and venue of the hearing at least 5 College days in advance, ensuring that the dates are convenient
- any witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence
- any relevant written material has been sent to the parties in advance of the hearing
- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption
- if a new issue arises, all parties are afforded the opportunity to consider and comment on it
- all issues relating to the complaint are addressed
- the panel is open minded and acts independently
- a record of the proceedings is made
- all parties are notified of the Panel's decision in writing within five College days



## Chadsgrove Educational Trust Specialist College Complaints Log

All complaints should be handled in line with Chadsgrove Educational Trust Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Complaint Number:	Date Complaint Received:	Details of Complaint:	Complainant details:	Complaint Handler:	Actions Taken to Resolve Complaint:	Outcome:	Recorded on CPOMS?	Date Complaint Closed: