



Name of Policy:	Complaints Policy (for the whole school including EYFS)
GHS Policy Number:	12
ISI Regulation:	Manner in which complaints are to be handled (Part 7)
Linked Policies:	Safeguarding Admissions
Reviewed by:	Richard Lock, Head, Boys' School Emma Studd, Head, Girls' School Venetia Banbury, Head, Early Years Nicola Cornish, Deputy Head Alexia Roe, Bursar Sophie Trafford / Christian Warland, Principals
Date of review:	July 2025
Date of next review:	July 2026

Introduction

Garden House School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. The school welcomes comments and suggestions from all parents and takes seriously any concerns or complaints which may help to improve the educational experience for both our pupils and parents. We firmly believe that by working in close partnership with our parents, most complaints can be resolved quickly, easily and informally.

If parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure.

A complaint is defined as any matter about which a parent of a child at the school is unhappy and wishes the school to take action.

This policy is available to parents of current registered pupils. Parents of past pupils can use this procedure, but only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered and it does not cover exclusions. Failure to admit pupils is not covered by this policy. This policy is made available to parents via the school website and can also be requested via the school office.

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. The expression 'parents' is used for those having parental responsibility for the child.

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. 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.

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.

Timescales

For the purposes of this document a "working day" is defined as Monday to Friday during the School's term time. During holidays, the School will do what it reasonably can to reply promptly to parents and to follow the procedures outlined in this policy. It may be the case that, due to the unavailability of key personnel (staff, pupils and parents), responding in full to a complaint can only be completed during term time. It may take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to life at the School or as a consequence of unavoidable absence (staff, pupils and parents). However, deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only be permitted on an exceptional basis: The School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay. Parents will be informed of any deviation from the timescales set out in this policy.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most concerns and complaints will be resolved quickly, easily and informally.
- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their son/daughter's class teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway. If the class teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult an additional member of staff or the relevant Head. In either case, that Head should be informed so that the complaint can be addressed properly. A Record of Informal Complaints is kept on the school system.
- Complaints made directly to the Heads will usually be referred to the relevant class teacher unless the relevant Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- Should the matter not be resolved within 5 working days or in the event that the class teacher or Head 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.
- Although all formal complaints will be made in writing, this does not mean that the formal stage is automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing, for example, by email. Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the preliminary stage (Stage 1) and only then if the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage.
- The Senior Leadership Team, who meet weekly, will ensure appropriate time is given to the discussion of concerns or complaints insofar as they may represent a deeper problem that needs to be remediated; further discussion will also take place between the Heads and the Principals as a matter of course.

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 Head (or to the Bursar if a Head is the subject of the complaint). The Head[†] will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will meet with or speak to the parents concerned, normally[†] within 5 working days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Action taken by the school as a result of the complaint will be kept on the written record.

[†] In cases where a Head is the subject of the complaint then it will usually be dealt with by one of the Principals rather than a Head.

- Once the Head is/are 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, normally within 5 working days of the original meeting and 10 working days if the written complaint having been received. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision. A record will be kept of whether the complaint is resolved at this stage, or whether it is to proceed as below.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.
- If a Head is the subject of the formal complaint then it will usually be dealt with by one of the Principals

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Bursar, who has been appointed to call hearings of the Complaints Panel (the **Panel**).
- The matter will then be referred to the Panel for a full-merits hearing of the complaint. The Panel will consist of at least 3 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 (see appendix). Panel members shall be appointed by the Principals. The Bursar, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 working days.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 2 days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate, and the provision requiring a complaint procedure to allow a parent to be accompanied at a panel hearing does not confer a right on a parent to have a legal representative to make legal representations on their behalf at a hearing. However, the school acknowledges that a parent's right to request and attend a panel is not forfeit because they have either threatened or initiated legal proceedings.
- 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 facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 working days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of findings and recommendations. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained of. A copy of the findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Principals and/or the relevant Head.

All concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and with appropriate confidentiality. A written record of complaints made in writing under the formal procedure will be maintained, with a record of whether they were resolved or proceeded to a panel hearing and the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they were upheld or not). 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 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. Complaints which do not have safeguarding implications will be retained for a minimum of 7 years. Records containing allegations of abuse will be preserved for the term of the Independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

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

EYFS

In the case of the EYFS, parents can make a complaint to ISI or Ofsted if they so wish should they feel the EYFS requirements are not being met. Please see the contact details below.

All written complaints about the fulfilment of EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The record of complaints will be made available to ISI on request.

Contact details:

Mr Richard Lock, Head, Boys' School
Mrs Emma Studd, Head, Girls' School
Mrs Venetia Banbury, Head, Early Years
Mrs Alexia Roe, Bursar
Mr Christian Warland, Principal
Mrs Sophie Strafford, Principal

Garden House School
Turk's Row
Chelsea,
London
SW3 4TW

Girls' School Office +44 (0)20 7730 1652
Boys' School Office +44 (0)20 7730 6652
Email: info@gardenhouseschool.co.uk

Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI)

CAP House
9-12 Long Lane
London

EC1A 9HA
Tel: 0207 600 0100

Ofsted

Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education) hosts the office of the Children's Rights Director for England, which may be contacted with any query or concern at any time.

Ofsted Piccadilly
Gate Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
Free Phone: 0300 123 1231
email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

General Advice

If parents or pupils are unsure about a situation, there are several organisations which will discuss the matter in confidence, and are able to offer impartial and non-judgmental advice:

- Childline: 0800 1111
- NSPCC: 0808 800 5000
- Kidscape: 020 7823 5430

Child Protection

If any parent is concerned that a pupil may be at risk of harm, please refer to the Safeguarding Policy for details of how to contact the relevant person.

Number of complaints:

Number of formal complaints received in the Academic Year 2021-2022: 1
Number of formal complaints received in the Academic Year 2022-2023: 1
Number of formal complaints received in the Academic Year 2023-2024: 2
Number of formal complaints received in the Academic Year 2024-2025: 0

Appendix

***Complaints Procedure – Independent Member of the Panel**

The DfE has given the following guidance on the identity of an independent panel member:

‘Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered.’