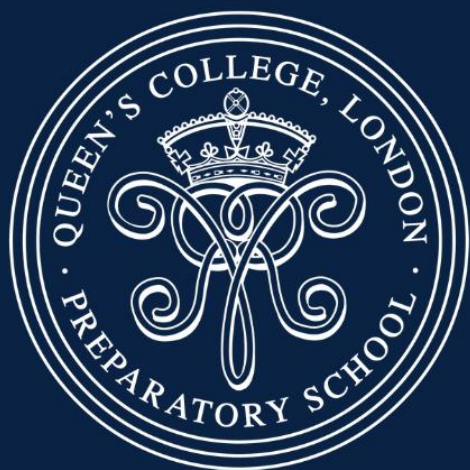




COMPLAINTS POLICY

Queen's College, London

and

Queen's College Preparatory School

(including Early Years Foundation Stage)

Due for review Summer 2027

Purpose of the Policy

This policy sets out the procedures by which concerns and complaints are managed, ensuring they are handled fairly, promptly and in accordance with the School's legal and regulatory obligations.

Scope

This policy applies to all complaints made by parents and others about the provision of services at the School, except where separate statutory procedures apply.

This policy includes complaints relating to the handling of personal data and data protection matters. The School's Data Protection Policy provides further information on how such complaints are handled.

This policy primarily applies to complaints from parents of current pupils, but may also apply to other individuals where appropriate.

The following matters are not dealt with under this policy as they are covered by separate procedures:

- Safeguarding concerns
- Staff grievances
- Admissions and exclusions
- Whistleblowing

Introduction

This policy is for use by parents and guardians of current pupils of Queen's College and Queen's College Prep School (hereafter 'the School') in circumstances in which they have a complaint or concern regarding their own or their daughter's treatment and which does not fall within the scope of other policies.

Definitions

Feedback is a general comment or suggestion.

A **concern** is an expression of worry or doubt for which reassurance is sought and can usually be resolved informally.

A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction about actions taken or lack of action, which requires an investigation and a formal response.

A complaint may be put forward if a parent thinks that the School has, for example,

- Done something wrong
- Failed to do something it should have done
- Acted unfairly

A complaint may be put forward regarding the School as a whole, about a specific department in the School or about an individual member of staff. Further guidance for parents is in Appendix 2 at the end of this policy.

A 'working day' for the purposes of this document is defined as Monday to Friday during term time. During holidays the School will do what it reasonably can to reply promptly to parents and to follow the outlined procedures. It may be the case that, due to the unavailability of key individuals (staff, pupils and parents), responding in full to a parental complaint can only be completed during term time.

A 'current pupil' is defined as one who is currently on the roll at the School.

The School actively encourages engagement of parents with staff, including senior management, over any issue, however minor, which is affecting their daughter's education. The School may receive several communications of this nature on any given day in term time.

The School encourages concerns to be raised and resolved informally wherever possible, as early resolution is usually in the best interests of all parties.

The School's definition of a Complaint, therefore, is an expression of dissatisfaction which reaches the Formal stage (Stage 2 below). A file is kept of all Complaints.

Aims / Principles of Complaints Handling

The School aims to handle complaints in a respectful, non-adversarial manner and expects all parties to engage constructively in the process.

Complaints are taken seriously and handled promptly

- Responses are fair, proportionate and evidence-based
- Confidentiality is respected
- The process is clear, accessible and transparent
- Outcomes are used to inform school improvement

The School reviews complaints to identify patterns and inform improvements to practice.

The School will aim to meet the timescales set out in this policy; where this is not possible, the complainant will be informed and provided with a revised timeframe.

Where complaints relate to data protection matters, statutory requirements will apply.

Record Keeping and Confidentiality

The School will make written records of all Complaints, the date on which they were received, any meetings or interviews held in relation to the Complaints, and the process of their resolution. The records will include any actions taken by the School as a result of the Complaint (regardless of whether it was upheld).

The record of any Complaints regarding pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage will be made available to Ofsted on request.

The following information may be recorded by the School:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Brief statement of issue
- Location of detailed file
- Staff member handling the issue
- Brief statement of outcome
- Action taken by the School
- Date the complaint was closed

All complaints are treated in confidence, except where disclosure is required by law.

Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 - Informal Process

It is hoped that most issues will be resolved informally and quickly. Parents who are dissatisfied should in the first instance raise their concerns informally with an appropriate member of staff such as their daughter's Form Tutor, who may in turn pass the matter to a more senior colleague. However, in some instances, a concern may be received by the Principal or Co-Heads of QCPS directly and resolved informally.

Expressions of dissatisfaction will be acknowledged as soon as practicable and within five working days. Parents will be told what is happening as a result of their concern and, if a more detailed response is needed, by what date it will be received.

Should the matter not be resolved to the parent's satisfaction within fifteen working days of raising their concern, the parents should proceed with their complaint in accordance with the Formal Process outlined below.

Stage 2 - Formal Process

If the parents remain dissatisfied following Stage 1, they should put their complaint in writing, addressed to the Principal or Co-Heads of QCPS or Co-Heads, within three working days of the resolution of the Informal Process, making clear that they wish to progress to the stage of a Formal Complaint. If the Principal or Co-Heads of QCPS, or a decision made by them, is the subject of the complaint, it should be addressed to the co-Chairs of the Council, c/o Clerk to the Council, 43-49 Harley Street, London, W1G 8BT.

Having received the written complaint, the Principal or Co-Heads of QCPS or Co-Heads of QCPS will acknowledge receipt within three working days and will either investigate the matter personally or delegate the investigation to a senior member of staff. Should the complaint involve a suggestion of wrongdoing in relation to race, disability or any other protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010, the College will make every reasonable endeavour to ensure that the relevant characteristic is represented during the investigation process, for example by involving a member of staff from a particular background.

Written records of all meetings and interviews in relation to the complaint will be kept and, if the investigation has been delegated, a report for the Principal or Co-Heads of QCPS will be prepared.

Once the investigation is complete, the Principal or Co-Heads of QCPS (or co-Chair of Council if the Principal or Co-Heads of QCPS are the subject of, or materially involved in, the complaint) will inform the parents in writing of her/his conclusions. It is aimed that this should take place within ten working days of the original Stage 2 Formal Complaint being received. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay, the parents will be notified of this and informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.

If parents remain dissatisfied, they should apply for a review hearing (Stage 3).

Stage 3 (Review Hearing):

A Review Hearing is a review of the decision taken at Stage 2 by the Principal or Co-Heads of QCPS (or in circumstances where the formal complaint concerns or materially involves the Principal or Co-Heads of QCPS, a co-Chair of Council). The Complaints Review Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaint's procedure.

Parents are expected to apply in writing for a Review only after the Stage 2 process above has been exhausted. The letter should be addressed to the Clerk to the Council, 43-49 Harley Street, London, W1G 8BT and should be sent within five working days of the date of written notification of the decision. In their written request, the parents should state the grounds upon which they are requesting the Review Hearing as well as their desired outcome and provide all relevant documents.

The Clerk to the Council will respond to the request for a Review Hearing within five working days in term time.

The Review Panel will comprise at least two members of the Council and one person, nominated by the co-Chairs of the Council, who shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The members of the panel will, so far as is reasonably possible, have no previous detailed knowledge of the case, or of the pupils and parents, and will not usually include the other co-Chair of the Council. The panel will elect its own Chair.

The role of the Review Panel is to establish the facts surrounding the complaint that has been made by considering:

- a) the documents provided by both parties and
- b) any representations made by the parents and the Principal or Co-Heads of QCPS

and to reach a decision, on the balance of probabilities, as to whether each complaint is upheld in whole or in part.

It is not within the powers of the Review Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents. The Review Panel may make recommendations to the School on these matters or any other issues as appropriate.

The Review Hearing will take place at the School or such other place as the Chair of the Review Panel should determine. The hearing should take place within 15 working days of receipt of the application for the review hearing.

Those present at the hearing will normally be:

- The Review Panel
- The Principal or Co-Heads of QCPS (unless this is considered inappropriate because s/he is the subject of, or materially involved in, the complaint)
- Parents or those with parental responsibility
- The pupil (if appropriate)
- Clerk to the Council or another appropriate member of staff to minute the hearing.

Should the parents decide that they do not wish to attend the Review Hearing, the proceedings should nonetheless take place in their absence.

The applicants for a Review Hearing may be accompanied by a friend or a member of staff acting as a friend if required and are asked to inform the Review Panel three working days in advance of the hearing if this will be the case.

The Review Hearing is not a legal proceeding, and legal representation is not appropriate. If the parents wish to be accompanied by someone who is legally qualified, they are expected to notify the Clerk to the Governors of this at least 5 working days prior to the Hearing. The parents should note that the

Complaints panel will wish to speak to the parents directly, and this person will not be permitted to address the Hearing unless invited to do so by the Chair of the Panel.

Each member of the Review Panel will be supplied with a copy of the relevant documents. The parents shall be entitled to copies of any documents that will be considered at the Review Hearing.

The proceedings will be chaired by one member of the Review Panel and conducted in a formal manner. A minute will be kept of the main points that arise. If the Principal or Co-Heads of QCPS consider it necessary in the interests of the individual or the School that the identity of any person should be withheld, the Chair of the Review Panel may require that the name of that person, and the reason for withholding it, be written down and shown to the Review Panel. The Chair may direct that the person be identified.

The Chair of the Panel will explain the procedure to all present at the beginning of the Hearing. The Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses and all statements made at the Hearing will be unsworn. All present will be entitled to write their own notes. Recording the meeting is not permitted unless agreed by the Chair.

The parents will be given the opportunity to put forward their point of view. The Review Panel can investigate further as it sees fit.

The requirements of natural justice will apply. If for any reason the parents are dissatisfied with any aspect of the Review Hearing, they are expected to inform the Chair of the Panel at the time and ask the clerk to note their dissatisfaction and the reasons for it.

All those attending the Review Hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners. The Chair of the Panel may, at his/her discretion, adjourn or terminate the Hearing if these expectations are not met. If the Hearing is terminated, the original decision will stand. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the Hearing is conducted should say so before the proceedings go any further and his/her comment will be noted.

When the Chair of the Panel considers that all the issues have been sufficiently discussed, he/she will conclude the Review Hearing. After due consideration of all facts, they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, a process which it shall complete within five working days of the hearing.

The Chair of the Panel will write to the parents, the Principal or Co-Heads of QCPS and, where relevant, the person complained about, informing them of its decision and the reasons for it within ten working days of the Hearing being concluded. A copy of these findings and any recommendations will also be made available for inspection at the School premises by any member of Council and by the Principal or Co-Heads of QCPS.

The decision of the Panel will be final and will represent the conclusion of the School's complaints procedure.

It is important to note that in exceptional circumstances, in order to ensure a fair decision-making process, deviation from the foregoing procedure may be authorised by the Review Panel. Parents will be notified of any such deviations relevant to any review that they request. Any such deviation will be within the standards set out in the Independent school standards guidance, April 2026

Whether complaints are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a Review Hearing, parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and, so far as reasonably possible, all correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be treated confidentially within the requirements of the Independent school standards guidance, April 2026 except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

Data Protection Complaints

Complaints relating to the handling of personal data will be managed in accordance with this policy in conjunction with the School's Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notices. Children can directly make complaints about the handling of their personal data and the School has provision in place to manage this process in an age appropriate manner, ensuring children can make their complaint easily, can indicate if they think the matter is urgent, and the School can respond swiftly to any safeguarding issues.

The complaint made by Parent or Child should be made in writing to the Bursar, bursar@qcl.org.uk as the Data Protection Officer. A child can also raise an issue or complaint with the Principal, Co-Heads or Deputy Head, Pastoral who should then inform the Bursar.

In accordance with data protection legislation, the School will:

- acknowledge receipt of data protection complaints within 30 days;
- investigate and respond without undue delay; and
- inform the complainant of the outcome in a timely manner; and
- Provide an age-appropriate response to any complaints from children.

Individuals also have the right to raise concerns with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Complaints Against the Head / Governors

If the Principal or Co-Heads of QCPS is the subject of the complaint or has been materially involved in circumstances directly involved with the complaint, a co-Chair of the Council will investigate and respond in writing to the parents directly.

Managing Serial or Unreasonable Complaints

The School may take appropriate action where complaints are determined to be persistent, vexatious, or unreasonable, including limiting contact or adjusting the complaints process, in line with best practice guidance.

Early Years Foundation Stage

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. If parents are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint concerning the school's EYFS provision, they are entitled to make a complaint direct to Ofsted and/or ISI if they so wish.

Appendix 1. Contact details

Independent Schools Inspectorate

To contact the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) please email:
concerns@isi.net

Ofsted

To contact Ofsted please email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Appendix 2. Advice for Parents

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially in accordance with this policy.

Queen's College and Queen's College Preparatory School welcome suggestions and comments from parents, and take seriously complaints and concerns they may raise.

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction which needs a response in accordance with this policy.

The School wishes to ensure that:

- parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
- the School responds to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way;
- parents are reassured that the School listens to and takes complaints seriously;
- the School takes action where appropriate.

How should I complain?

Please follow the procedure set out above.

I don't want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me

The School is here for you and your child, and we want to hear your views and your ideas. Please contact a member of staff as stipulated above.

I am not sure whether to complain or not

If as parents you have concerns, you are entitled to raise them. If in doubt, you should contact the School in accordance with the above procedure to discuss your concerns. This will hopefully help you to decide if you wish to make a formal complaint.

What will happen next?

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

What happens about confidentiality?

Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect, and information will be shared on a 'need to know' basis. In some cases (as referred to above), the Cochairs of Council and other members of the Council may also need to be informed. It is the School's policy that complaints made by parents in good faith should not adversely affect the pupils.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the School aware of the complaint, and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the police and / or children's social care, in which case the School's child protection procedures would be followed and information shared in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018.

While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, we would point out that anonymous complaints may not be pursued.

Any action which needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints will be handled confidentially in accordance with the relevant school procedures.

What records will be kept?

There is a confidential written record of all formal complaints made with a note of whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or whether they proceed to a Review Hearing, along with what action was taken by the School as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

Is there anyone I can talk to outside of Queen's College and Queen's College Prep School?

If you have a complaint or concern which you feel cannot be addressed directly with the College or QCPS, you can contact Ofsted directly on enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or ISI on concerns@isi.net and they will advise you how to proceed.

The School recognises and acknowledges your entitlement to complain and we hope to work with you in the best interests of the children and young people in our care.

Policy information

Policy Title	Complaints Policy
Version	Approved
School	Queen's College London Queen's College Preparatory
Category	Governance & Leadership
Statutory policy	Yes
Policy owner 1	Bursar
Policy owner 2	Principal
Approval	SLT
Submission to Council	Required
Publish on website	Required
Date of last review	Summer 2026
Approved by SLT	Approved
Staff notified	In progress
Review date	Summer 2027