



CHEL TENHAM
LADIES' COLLEGE

Complaints Procedure

2026-27

Complaints Procedure

INTRODUCTION

College welcomes all suggestions and comments from parents and takes seriously any concerns or complaints raised. From time to time, parents may have queries or concerns that they wish to raise with College staff. These can usually be resolved swiftly and amicably through Stage 1 of this Procedure without recourse to a formal complaint (Stage 2).

If a parent believes their concern or complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage 1, they may make a formal complaint using Stage 2 of this procedure. If the parent remains dissatisfied, they may request a panel adjudication using Stage 3 of this procedure. Each Stage is set out in more detail below.

SCOPE

This Procedure is for use only by parents of current students. Complaints by parents of former students will be dealt with under this Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the student to which the complaint relates was still registered as a student at the School.

For the avoidance of doubt, this procedure does not apply to parents of prospective students or students who have left College voluntarily or as a result of being excluded unless the complaints process was started while the student was still being educated at the School.

College will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Head of College, Executive Principal or Chair of Council, as appropriate, will determine whether the anonymous complaint warrants an investigation.

Complaints must be raised within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents has occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. College will consider complaints made outside of this time frame only in exceptional circumstances.

STAGE 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION

The vast majority of concerns and complaints can be resolved quickly and informally through discussion with the appropriate member of staff.

The Parents' Handbook gives information about who to contact with particular areas of concern. If the member of staff contacted cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him / her to consult another member of staff. In many cases, a complaint will be resolved by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the parent(s) addresses their concern to a member of staff who is not immediately familiar with the concern, more information will be sought before providing a response. This may cause a small delay in responding.

In all cases at Stage 1, College will acknowledge the concern, and every effort will be made to respond and achieve a resolution as soon as possible. In the majority of cases, a response can be expected within fifteen working days (excluding weekends and school holidays).

The member of staff to whom the complaint has been directed will keep a record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received.

STAGE 2 – FORMAL RESOLUTION

A parent who is not satisfied with the response received at Stage 1 may proceed to a formal complaint. This must be made in writing to the Head of College, using the form at the end of this Procedure and clearly stating the request for escalation to Stage 2. An editable version of the form is available from the Head of College's Office.

The completed form should outline the nature of the complaint, why the parent remains dissatisfied and the resolution sought. If the Head of College or Executive Principal is the subject of the complaint, the written complaint should be addressed to the Chair of Council. In these circumstances, it is not appropriate for complainants to contact the Head of College, Executive Principal (or any other member of staff involved) to discuss any issue relating to the complaint until after the outcome is known. Any such communications will be directed to the Clerk to Council and then relayed to the correct person as appropriate.

In most cases, the Head of College will communicate with the parent(s) and in some cases, this initial communication itself will lead to a resolution of the complaint.

THE RESPONSE YOU WILL RECEIVE

The Head of College (or in her absence and depending on the area of complaint, the Executive Principal or Vice Principal Academic), will use all reasonable endeavours to send an initial response to your complaint within five working days,

acknowledging receipt of your formal correspondence, and explaining how we will proceed.

Once again, in all cases every effort will be made to address the issue in a prompt and timely manner, and to provide you with a response and a resolution as soon as possible.

The Head of College may feel it necessary to carry out further investigations, or may appoint another member of staff to investigate the complaint. College may request additional information from the parent(s) and others who have knowledge of the circumstances.

A report of the investigation will be prepared and considered by the Head of College. Once the Head of College is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, they will respond in the form of a letter or report telling you of the outcome of your complaint. It will explain their conclusion, the reasons for it and any action taken or proposed.

The Head of College will aim to notify you of their decision within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint. In all cases every effort will be made to resolve the complaint in a timely manner, recognising that to do so benefits both parties. However, where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in delay, you will be notified of this and informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.

The Head of College's Office will keep records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

STAGE 3 – PANEL HEARING

If a Parent(s) is dissatisfied with the Head of College's decision at Stage 2, the Parent(s) can request that the complaint be referred to a Complaints Panel. A Complaints Panel meeting is a review of the decisions taken by the Head of College.

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

- (i) the documents provided by both parties; and
- (ii) any representations made by the Parents and the Head of College

and to reach a decision on the balance of probabilities as to whether to uphold or dismiss each complaint.

The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been raised previously as part of the Complaints Procedure.

A request for a meeting with the Complaints Panel must be made in writing to the Clerk to Council within five working days of the Head of College's decision, using the form provided at the end of this Procedure and providing details of the

continuing grounds of the complaint and the outcome desired. An editable version of the form is available from the Head of College's Office.

The Clerk to Council will acknowledge the request in writing within three working days of receipt and every reasonable effort will be made to enable the meeting to take place within twenty working days of receipt of the request.

The Complaints Panel will consist of at least three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members will be appointed by the Chair of Council. The Panel members will elect one of them to be the Chair of the Panel throughout the proceedings. A clerk appointed by the Panel will take minutes of the proceedings.

You should identify and supply copies of any relevant papers in your possession or control to the Clerk to Council no later than five working days prior to the meeting. Copies of such papers will then be supplied to all parties. A late submission of papers may lead to an adjournment. Should any party make a late submission it will be made clear that the Panel and any other parties are not automatically obliged to consider it, nor indeed to respond to it.

You may be accompanied to the meeting itself by one other person of your choice. This may be a relative, member of staff or friend. The meeting is not legal proceedings, and so legal representation will not be necessary. If you do wish to be accompanied by someone who is legally qualified, please notify the Clerk to the Council of this at least five working days prior to the meeting and note that the Panel will wish to speak with the Parent(s) directly and this person will not be permitted to act as an advocate.

All those attending the meeting are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the meeting may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chair. If terminated, the original decision will stand. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and his / her comment will be minuted.

For compliance purposes the Panel hearing should go ahead unless the Parent(s) later indicates that he or she is now satisfied and does not want to proceed further. A Panel hearing should, therefore, proceed notwithstanding that a Parent may subsequently decide not to attend. If necessary, the Panel should consider the Parent's complaint in absentia and issue findings on the substance of the complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion.

The requirement for the Panel to proceed does not prevent College from accommodating Parental availability for dates or considering comments concerning panel composition. 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 it considers relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it will endeavour to complete within five working days of the meeting. The Panel will write to the Parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel is final.

The Panel's findings and recommendations, if any, will be sent in writing to the Parent(s), the Head of College, The Executive Principal, Council and, where and to the extent relevant, the person complained of, within five days of the date of the hearing.

A copy of the Panel's findings will be kept on a confidential record in the Clerk to Council's office for inspection by the Head of College, Executive Principal and the Chair. This represents the conclusion of College's Parents' Complaints Procedure.

Repeated attempts to raise the same complaints following completion of all three stages of this Procedure is likely to be considered vexatious.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Complaints will be treated confidentially as far as possible. Knowledge will be limited to the Head of College, those directly involved and any others that need to know, including the Executive Principal and Chair of Council (or in his / her absence, the Vice Chair).

It is College's policy that complaints made by Parents should not rebound adversely on their children. In some circumstances, it may be necessary 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 if it became necessary to refer matters to the Police or the Charity Commission.

Matters relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file in accordance with College's Data Protection procedures. Anonymous complaints may not be pursued, although they will also be kept confidentially on file. Any action that needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures will be handled confidentially within the College.

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

RECORD KEEPING

All formal complaints are digitally stored as a confidential record in the Head of College's office, which also records whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing and the action taken as a result of the complaint. The record of complaints specifically identifies those complaints relating to boarding provision.

The nature of the complaint (though not the names of the complainant or any student or employee involved), the stage reached, and the action taken are

reported to the Audit and Risk Committee of Council at the appropriate time, whether or not the complaint is upheld.

The number of complaints during the academic year 2025-26 registered under the formal procedure (ie Stage Two) was nil with one at Stage Three.

DEFINITIONS

In this policy, "Parent(s)" / "you" means a current Parent or legal guardian.

References to **working days** mean Monday to Friday, when College is open during term time. The term dates are published on College's website and do not include travelling days or exeats when many staff may not be available.

Contact details of the Independent Schools Inspectorate: 0207 6000 100 or email info@isi.net.



Stage 2 Complaint Submission Form

Please complete and return via email below to:

Head of College
Cheltenham Ladies' College
Bayshill Road
Cheltenham
GL50 3EP
Email: principal@cheltladiescollege.org

Complainant Information	
Your name:	
Pupil's name:	
Your relationship to the pupil:	
Postal address:	
Postcode:	
Day time phone number:	
Evening phone number:	
Email address:	

Please give concise details of your complaint (including dates, events, key evidence etc.) to allow the matter to be fully investigated.

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What action have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint?

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

If attaching documents, please list them here.

Signature:

Date:



CHEL TENHAM
LADIES'
COLLEGE

Stage 3 Complaint Submission Form

Please complete and return via email below to:

Clerk to Council
Cheltenham Ladies College
Bayshill Road
Cheltenham
GL50 3EP
Email: clerktocouncil@cheltladiescollege.org

Complainant Information	
Your name:	
Pupil's name:	
Your relationship to the pupil:	
Postal address:	
Postcode:	
Day time phone number:	
Evening phone number:	
Email address:	

Reasons for continuing dissatisfaction:

What actions might resolve the issue?

I formally request a Panel hearing and wish to be accompanied by:

Signature:

Date: