

Complaints Procedure

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Introduction

The Glasgow Academy (The Academy) has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to our pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by The Academy with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. This guide tells you about The Academy's Complaints Procedure and what you should do if you have a complaint. It also sets out our standards and what you can expect from the school.

This procedure is available to all parents and prospective parents on the school website or via the Administration Centre.

Parent(s) means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a child about whom the complaint relates.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about actions taken or a lack of action. It may be made about The Academy 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 Academy is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that The Academy has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

An anonymous complaint that appears to raise a serious issue will be directed to the Rector, who will decide whether it is capable of being investigated. Anonymous complaints of this nature must be recorded. An anonymous complaint will be considered if there is enough information to enable the complaint to be investigated. An anonymous allegation about child abuse must be handled under The Academy's Child Protection Policy.

What is not covered by this procedure?

- A complaint made by a pupil (please see Pupil Handbook)
- A complaint regarding financial assistance (please contact the Head of Finance)
- A complaint regarding Admissions (please contact the Director of External Relations)
- A complaint which has already dealt with under this procedure (Please see Stage 4 of this procedure – Conciliation Committee)
- A complaint which covers subject matter which has already been the subject of legal action

Time Limits

Complaints should usually be raised under this procedure within 3 months of the issue arising to enable a full and fair investigation to be carried out. Complaints brought outside of this time limit will be considered if there are special circumstances.

Complaints Procedure

This procedure is designed so that concerns and complaints can be dealt with in a thorough and fair way. The Academy may deviate at any point from the procedure with the approval of the Chair if it is determined that this is the most appropriate way of dealing with a particular complaint.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If a parent has a minor concern which they feel could be easily and informally resolved they should normally contact their son or daughter's Class Teacher or Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction.
- If a parent has a complaint which is of a more serious nature (or if the nature of the complaint relates directly to the class teacher) it should be raised with the relevant Stage Leader (Prep School) or Head of Department (Senior School);
- If the complaint is not in relation to classroom teaching, parents should contact their child's Tutor. Where necessary the Tutor will consult with the Head of House on the best course of action to resolve the matter;
- Complaints made directly to Stage Leader/Head of Department may be referred back to the relevant Class Teacher if they feel it can be resolved informally in that manner. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, they may deem it more appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- The person receiving the concern or complaint will make a written record of the matter and the date on which it was received. Should the matter not be resolved within 5 working days or in the event that the member of staff (Class Teacher/ Tutor/ Stage Leader/ Head of Department) 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.



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 Rector. The Rector will then decide the appropriate course of action to follow.
- Written complaints should contain as much specific detail as possible as well as detail of what course of action the parent is seeking to resolve the matter.
- In most cases the Rector will appoint a member of the Senior Leadership Team or other appropriate person employed by the Academy who will speak to the parents concerned within five 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 the investigating officer to carry out further investigations.
- The investigating officer will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the investigating officer 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 investigating officer will also give reasons for the decision. The investigating officer will make his decisions and provide the parents with reasons as soon as possible after investigations have been completed.
- If the complaint is against the Rector, the complaint should be passed to the Chair of Governors. The Chair or his/her nominee will then follow the Stage 2 procedure set out above. Once the Chair or his/her nominee is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed with a decision in writing. The Chair of Governors or his/her nominee will give reasons for the decision.
- If parents are not satisfied with the decision at the end of Stage 2, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Appeal to Rector

If the investigating officer cannot resolve a complaint he or she will refer the matter to the Rector and the investigating officer will inform the parents making the complaint that he or she has done so.

The Rector will inform the parents of the action he proposes to take and ask them if they wish to add to any statements to those already made. The Rector may arrange to meet with the parent. Having investigated the matter, the Rector will reach a decision and communicate it to the parent.

The Rector will attempt to find a solution. If this is not possible and the parent wishes to take the matter further, the complaint will pass to the Chair of Governors. It is normal practice for the Rector to consult with the Chair regarding the proposed action to be taken in cases which may have disciplinary implications. In cases where the Chair has already been consulted to the extent that he/she considers they may be conflicted in dealing with a particular matter, the Chair may invite the Secretary or an experienced Governor to undertake the tasks set out above or proceed straight to a Conciliation Committee per Stage 4.

Stage 4—Conciliation Committee

The Chair will invite a suitably experienced Governor to convene a Conciliation Committee in appropriate cases. The Convenor, with the agreement of the Chair, will determine the composition of the committee which will comprise up to three other members. The Committee will be chosen from members of and Secretary to the Board of Governors and, if appropriate, an independent nominee.

If the Convenor considers it appropriate, an independent nominee may be asked to sit on the committee and The Academy has a reciprocal arrangement with another independent school in Glasgow for this purpose. The Committee may take into account such specialist advice as they consider necessary to reach a conclusion, either from within the school's resources or externally.

The Convenor will agree a date and venue for the meeting with the interested parties and will request that the parent and the Rector submit all relevant papers to be considered at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. The parent will be asked to clearly identify the reasons why they do not feel the matter has been satisfactorily resolved. The Convenor will determine the conduct of the meeting. The parent may bring a supportive friend to the meeting at the discretion of the Convenor, but legal representation is not appropriate.

At the meeting the Convenor will invite the parent, the Rector and any other relevant parties to present or add to the written information before the Committee, and members of the Committee may then ask questions or discuss the issues with those present.

The Committee will consider the information from the parent, the Rector and any other relevant parties including such specialists as they consider necessary with a view to testing both the process adopted and the reasonableness of the proposed resolution in all the circumstances.

In situations where the Convenor feels a conclusion may be reached expeditiously, parties to the complaint may be asked to withdraw and wait while the Committee considers its position. When the Committee has reached agreement on the outcome of the complaint, the Convenor will summarise that outcome and confirm the terms with all members of the committee prior to dispersing. In other cases, the Convenor will indicate to the parent when a decision may be expected and how that decision will be communicated. It is incumbent on the Committee to deal with complaints as quickly as possible. In all cases, the outcome should be communicated in writing to the parents with a copy to the Chair and Rector within 48 hours of the Committee reaching a decision.

The Secretary of the Trust should also maintain a record of those complaints which have been referred to a Conciliation Committee and the decisions reached by the Committee. Any recommendations as to future practice arising from the particular complaint should be recorded by the Secretary and copied to the Rector.

Attendance at meetings

If a meeting is requested by the parent or thought to be necessary by any person dealing with a complaint the parent may be invited to bring a supportive friend. Attendance by a legal representative is not considered appropriate at any stage of the procedure

Timescales

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales. However it will sometimes not be possible to meet certain deadlines within this procedure. Where there are justifiable reasons for doing so, the timescales will be extended and communicated to the parents with reasons.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, **working days** refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although The Academy will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay.

Basic Principals, Rules and Reasonable Expectations

Any individual making a complaint to The Academy is subject to the same expectations regarding their conduct as all others who interact with the School, its staff and its pupils. The Academy has a duty of care to protect staff from unacceptable conduct and measures will be taken to protect staff as necessary.

The definition of unacceptable conduct (in addition to physical threats or violence) includes derogatory remarks or rudeness and any written or verbal approach that may cause staff to feel afraid, threatened or abused. Inflammatory remarks and unsubstantiated allegations are also considered unacceptable conduct.

In cases where conduct is considered unacceptable the complainer will be advised by the Bursar that their language/conduct is considered unacceptable. They will be asked to moderate their conduct, and they will be warned that if the unacceptable action or conduct continues, the Academy will cease communication with them.

In all cases, if physical violence is threatened or used, the Academy will report this to the Police.

If a complainer indulges in unacceptable conduct and/or unreasonably persistent and/or vexatious complaints, the Rector will:

- ensure that the matter is properly considered and progressed in accordance with this procedure
- require that any appropriate adjustments to the procedure be made, including cessation of communication with the complainer, and/or
- impose restrictions on the complainer's contact with the School as may be appropriate and proportionate, and
- inform the complainer of any restrictions and the reason for the restriction.

Other examples of inappropriate conduct include:

- repeatedly demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale
- unreasonable levels of contact, e.g. volume of emails or telephone contact
- insisting on speaking to a particular staff member when that is not possible
- repeatedly changing the substance of a complaint or raising unrelated concerns



- refusing to cooperate with the process
- denying statements made at an earlier stage
- using electronic recording tools without consent of others involved
- persistent refusal to accept a decision or explanation made in relation to a complaint, and/or continuing to pursue or attempting to re-open a complaint without presenting any new evidence
- having insufficient or no grounds for their complaint or refusing to specify the grounds for their complaint and appearing to be making the complaint only to annoy, or for undeclared reasons.

Individuals have the right to complain to The Academy more than once if subsequent issues arise. However, repeated use of the Complaint Handling Procedure becomes unreasonable when the effect of the repeated or additional complaint(s) is to harass staff or prevent The Academy from pursuing its legitimate business or implementing a legitimate decision.

The Academy will only consider repeated use of these procedures as being unreasonable, in exceptional circumstances.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

The Academy will keep a written record of all complaints and any action taken by the School, whether they are dealt with at the informal or formal stage. This includes keeping records of Conciliation Committee hearings.

The Academy processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. when dealing with complaints The Academy (including any Committee member appointed under the Stage 4 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 child
- 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 and minutes of the hearing, and
- The Committee'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
GLASGOW ACADEMY
