



CROOKHORN COLLEGE

Complaints Procedure

Date of Policy: September 2023
Review Date: September 2024

AIMS:

- To ease the process of expressing dissatisfaction or concern through a clear, fair and efficient process with the aim of resolving issues swiftly and effectively.
- To ensure that College staff and, where appropriate, the Governing Body, provide a prompt and full response to complaints.
- To maintain a monitoring system of all complaints and to consistently review practices to prevent the unnecessary repetition of problems.

The Headteacher's PA is the first point of contact for complaints received by telephone, email or in writing, and will act as the co-ordinator for the complaints process, ensuring these are recorded on the complaints database upon receipt. The Headteacher's PA will acknowledge every complaint within two working days and bring it to the immediate attention of the Headteacher and the relevant member(s) of the Senior Leadership Team.

WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the College. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to the College about any provision of facilities or services that we provide, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed as appendix A.

RAISING AN INITIAL CONCERN:

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. The College takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

A concern can be raised in person, in writing or by telephone. Concerns should be raised with either the Tutor, Subject Teacher, Head of Subject or Head of House. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Headteacher's PA will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher's PA will refer you to another staff

member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the College will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaint's procedure.

MAKING A COMPLAINT:

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints further stages of the procedure.

Complaints against College staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher via the Headteacher's PA. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the Clerk to Governing Body (clerk@crookhorn.hants.sch.uk). Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact admin@crookhorn.hants.sch.uk. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS:

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

TIME SCALES:

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

The College will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first day of term after the holiday period.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against the College in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

RESOLVING COMPLAINTS:

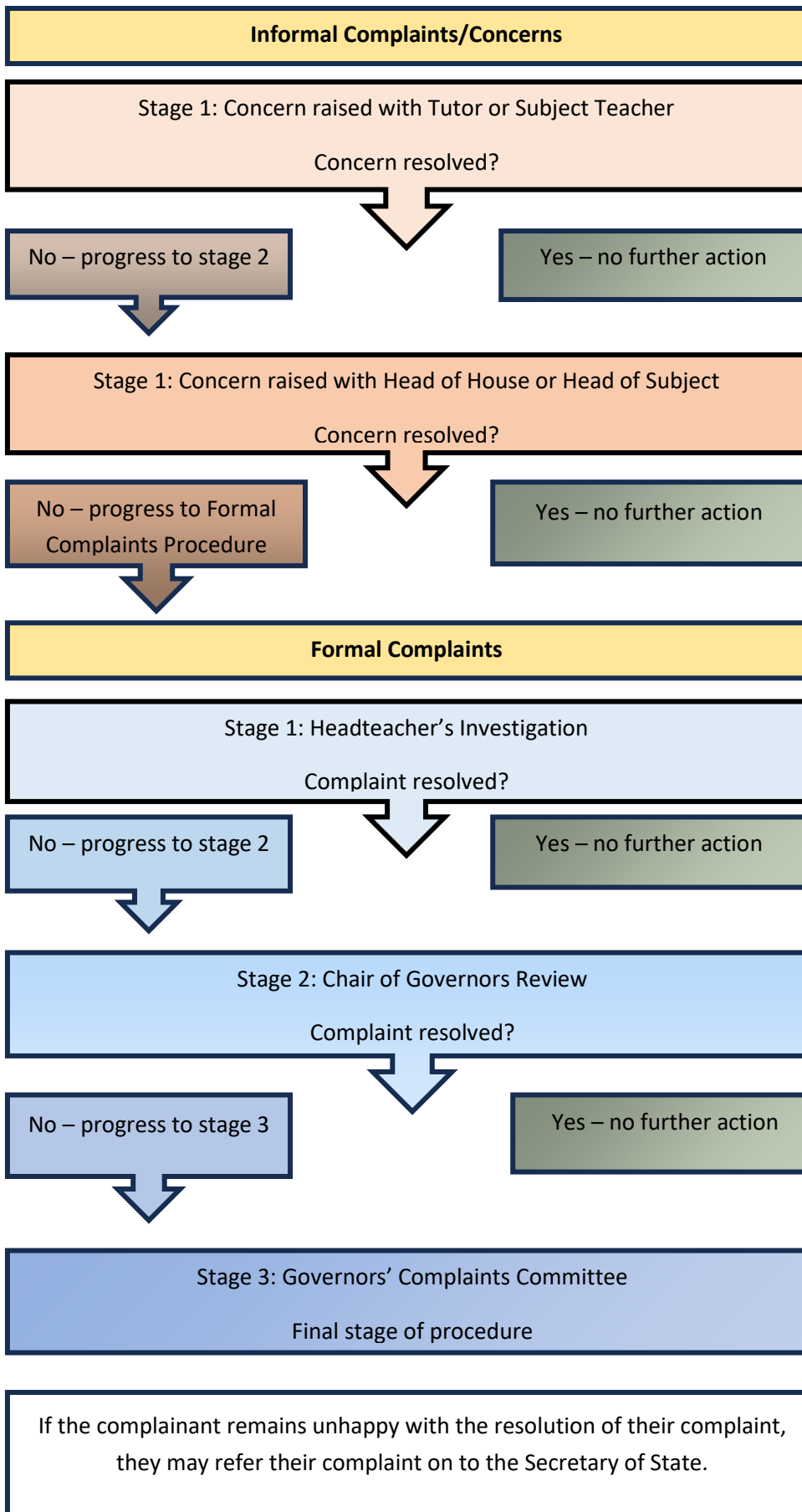
At each stage in the procedure the College will seek to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review College policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

WITHDRAWAL OF A COMPLAINT:

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE: QUICK GUIDE



Please note that each stage of the complaints process must be completed before it is possible to progress the complaint to the next stage.

The College reserves the right to deviate from the published procedure on occasions when this is reasonable or necessary. In this event the decision will be communicated to the complainant.

STAGE 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the Headteacher's PA. This may be done, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form provided at the end of this procedure) by post or by email.

The Headteacher's PA will record the date the complaint is received, inform the Headteacher and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 2 College days.

Within this response, the Headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the Headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within 10 college days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the College will take to resolve the complaint.

The Headteacher's PA will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

STAGE 2

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wish to take the matter further, you can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 by writing to the Chair of Governors within 10 College days, detailing your concern and the reasons why you feel that this has not been addressed in a satisfactory manner at stage 1.

The Chair of Governors will check with the Headteacher to confirm that Stage 1 has been exhausted before proceeding to Stage 2.

The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 College days of receipt of the complaint. The acknowledgement will inform the complainant that the complaint will be reviewed, and a full response will be provided within the next 10 College days.

The Chair of Governors will review your original complaint and the procedures followed at stage 1, they may invite you to attend a meeting to discuss your complaint and possible solutions, or to explain what has happened or will happen as a result of your complaint. This stage offers an opportunity for achieving conciliation between all parties.

The Chair of Governors will keep a record of all interactions with you and any decisions made in reference to your complaint. They will consider and reach a decision and will write to both parties. The College will ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept on file.

The Headteacher's PA will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

STAGE 3

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wish to take the matter further, you can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaint's procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the College office, within 5 College days of receipt of the Stage 2 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 College days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 College days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors Crookhorn College available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a College employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 5 College days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 3 College days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 2 College days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Crookhorn College with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 College days.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Crookhorn College will take to resolve the complaint.

The panel's decision is the final stage in the complaint's procedure. If you believe the College has not handled their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 3 at

Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Crookhorn College. They will consider whether Crookhorn has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS

Crookhorn College is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our College. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Crookhorn College defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the College, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on College time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the College causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in

a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the College.



Complaint Form

Please complete and return for the attention of the Headteacher's PA via admin@crookhorn.hants.sch.uk who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Student's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the student (if relevant):
Address:
Postcode:
Email:
Day time telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the College about it.

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

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix A

Concerns or complaints relating to the exceptions listed below will be dealt with through the relevant statutory procedures and do not fall within the scope of this Complaints Procedure.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals 	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with the Local Authority.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p> <p>https://www.crookhorn.hants.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=876&type=pdf</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>

