CHELTENHAM COLLEGE CHELTENHAM PREP SCHOOL

Parents' Complaints Policy

Reviewer: Philip Attwell
Approver: Chris Townsend
Reviewed: October 2026
Next Review: October 2027
Last approved by Council: November 2024

'Cheltenham College' refers to Cheltenham College Senior School *and* Cheltenham College Preparatory School (including Cheltenham College Pre-Prep and Nursery School)
'College' refers to Cheltenham College Senior School
'Cheltenham Prep' refers to Cheltenham College Preparatory School
'Nursery and Pre-Prep' refers to Cheltenham College Nursery School and Pre-Prep

Introduction

Cheltenham College has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by Cheltenham College in accordance with this policy. This policy refers to complaints and concerns, although both will be managed in the same way through this policy.

This policy has been approved by the Head and Cheltenham College Council. It provides guidelines for handling concerns and complaints. It complies with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The policy applies to all sections of Cheltenham College including our EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) setting. The procedures set out below may be adapted as appropriate to meet the policy aims and circumstances of each case.

This policy applies to parents of pupils at Cheltenham College which includes a legal guardian or education guardian. Where pupils have left the College, this parents' complaints policy no longer applies. Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy.

Concerns and complaints directly from pupils are dealt with under a separate procedure, a copy of which can be supplied on request.

Data Protection complaints can be submitted using the online form found in the "contact us" section of the College website.

This policy does not apply to pupil exclusion which is covered by the Suspension and Exclusion Policy.

We aim to resolve any complaint in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. When we refer to "working days" we mean Monday to Friday, during term time. The dates of terms are published on the Cheltenham College website.

Who should you contact?

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis. For a minor day-to-day issue, please contact the relevant teacher, tutor or, if it is an issue to do with boarding, the Housemaster or Housemistress. For a more serious subject-related academic concern, the Head of Department should be contacted. For a more serious general academic concern or pastoral matter, the Housemaster or Housemistress. For concerns relating to boarding please contact the Deputy Head (Pastoral) or the Housemaster or Housemistress in the relevant school. For concerns about the curriculum, please contact the Deputy Head (Academic) at the relevant school. For any other pastoral or disciplinary concerns, please contact the Deputy Head (Pastoral) at the relevant school.

Complaints concerning the Head of Cheltenham Prep should be addressed to the Head of Cheltenham College. Complaints about the Head of College should be addressed to the President of Council by email to president@cheltenhamcollege.org. In either case, the complaint will follow the procedure set out in Stage 2.

In matters regarding finance, fees and non-academic services please contact the Bursar.

Cheltenham College does all it can to ensure that it responds to concerns in a highly professional manner. However, if you feel that an expression of concern has not been handled properly by a member of staff, please contact the relevant Deputy Head at either school.

The member of staff concerned makes a written record of every concern; this record includes the date on which the concern was received. Cheltenham College usually endeavours to acknowledge a written notification by telephone, e-mail or letter within two working days of receipt during term time, and within seven working days or as soon as practicable in the School holidays. Should the matter not be resolved within a reasonable period (one not normally exceeding two term-time weeks) or in the event that the relevant staff and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents should proceed to make a formal written complaint directly to the Head using the procedure set out in Stage 2.

What to do if you remain dissatisfied:

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. (Complaints concerning the Head of Cheltenham Prep should be addressed to the Head of College. Complaints about the Head of College should be addressed to the President of Council by email to president@cheltenhamcollege.org) You should send full written details of the nature of the complaint, any relevant documents and full contact details. It would be very helpful if you could also indicate what you envisage as the desired outcome. Cheltenham College usually endeavours to acknowledge a written notification by telephone, email or letter within two working days of receipt during term time, and within seven working days or as soon as practicable in the School holidays.

Where the complaint concerns the Head, the President of Council will replace the Head in the procedure outlined below.

The Head decides, after considering the complaint, upon the appropriate course of action to take and may ask to meet with the parents, normally within ten days of receiving the formal complaint. The Head will decide on whether an investigation is appropriate.

It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations that may delay a resolution. The Head may ask a senior member of staff to act as investigator and may involve one or more members of the Council if appropriate. Written records are kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, the Head will reach a decision, and parents informed of this decision in writing (usually within 14 working days after meeting with the Parents). The Head will also give reasons for the decision. (The Head of Cheltenham Prep may consult with the Head of College before making a final decision.)

Cheltenham College aims to respond to any written complaint within 28 days or as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

Where the parents are not satisfied with the response to the complaint made under Stage 2, they may request a review of the Stage 2 decision by the Complaints Panel at a panel hearing.

The role of the Complaints Panel is to make findings and recommendations in relation to the complaint. The Complaints Panel will base its decision on documents provided by the parents and the Head, and on any oral or written comments made to the Panel. The Complaints Panel will decide on the balance of probabilities (that is, whether it is more likely or not any facts put forward are true) whether each complaint should be fully or partly upheld or dismissed.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the Complaints procedure.

In order to proceed to a panel hearing, the parents should write to the President in confidence c/o the Secretary to Council. Parents should make the request within seven days of the decision made under Stage 2 above. In their written request to the Secretary to Council, parents must state the grounds upon which they are requesting the panel hearing and the desired outcome together with all relevant documents.

The Secretary to Council shall acknowledge receipt of the request for a panel hearing within five working days if possible but within seven working days and will immediately inform the President of Council and the Head that a request for a Panel Hearing has been received.

The Secretary to Council shall, in consultation with the President of Council, arrange for a Panel Hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally no later than 21 days from receipt of the request or as soon as possible. The parents will be given not less than three working days' notice of the date, place and timing of the panel hearing.

The Complaints Panel will consist of three individuals who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member will be independent of the management and running of Cheltenham College. The two others will be members of Council. The parents may ask the Secretary to Council to inform them who has been appointed to sit on the Complaints Panel ahead of the panel hearing.

The parents and the Head (or President if the matter was dealt with by the President at Stage 2) are responsible for ensuring that they provide the Secretary to Council with copies of any material upon which they intend to rely at least seven working days before the panel hearing. If the Complaints Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. The Secretary to Council will ensure that at least three calendar days before the Hearing a copy of any documentation provided by the parties is provided to all present at the hearing.

The parents may be accompanied at the Panel Hearing by one other person e.g. a relative or friend. The hearing is not legal proceedings, and the Panel are free to decide on the most appropriate procedure to be followed in the circumstances. Legal representation is not normally appropriate. If the parents wish to be accompanied by a person who is legally trained, they must inform the Secretary to Council no later than seven days before the date of the hearing to allow other parties to seek legal advice as necessary. If the parents decide not to attend the panel hearing it will be conducted in their absence using such material and representations as are available.

The Panel Hearing will be conducted in an informal manner and as determined by the Chair of the Panel who will explain the procedure to all present at the beginning of the panel hearing. A note-taker will be present at the panel hearing.

All those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners. The Chair may, at his or her discretion, adjourn or terminate the hearing if these expectations are not met. If the hearing is terminated, the panel will still reach a conclusion.

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

The Panel will confirm their decision in writing to the parents and the reasons for it within seven working days of the panel hearing. The Panel's findings and any recommendations are sent in writing to the parents, the Head, Members of Council and, where relevant, the person(s) about whom the complaint was made. The decision of the Panel is final. The findings and recommendation are available for inspection on the school premises by the Council and the Head.

Record keeping

Cheltenham College keeps a written record of all formal complaints and of whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or proceed to a Panel Hearing, identifying the action taken by Cheltenham College as a result of the complaints regardless of whether they are upheld. The number of formal complaints registered during the preceding school year will be supplied to parents on request.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints are treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records are kept confidential except in so far as is required of the College by the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014; where disclosure is required by the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will be kept for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

There were four complaints that proceeded beyond the informal stage during the 2025/26 academic year.

Contacting Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI)

Although Cheltenham College is inspected by ISI, an independent organisation which reports to the Government on schools, parents of children in the EYFS setting have the right to contact Ofsted if they have a complaint that has not concluded to their satisfaction through Cheltenham College's procedure. Such parents can report their concerns to Ofsted on 0300

123 4666 at enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

All other parents have the right to contact the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) if they have a complaint that has not concluded to their satisfaction through Cheltenham College's Complaints Procedure. ISI can be contacted at concerns@isi.net or at the following address:

ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate
CAP House
9 - 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA
Telephone: +44 (0)207 600 0100
Fax: +44 (0)207 776 8849

It is expected that complaints made will go through Cheltenham College's Complaints Procedure before Ofsted or ISI is contacted.