

Complaints Policy and Procedure

INTRODUCTION

Glenalmond takes pride in offering an excellent standard of education and pastoral care to all its pupils. It is hoped that complaints will be few and far between. In many cases, a complaint can start out as a concern, and parents should always feel able to raise concerns directly with the appropriate member of staff or their line manager in the first instance.

Nevertheless, if the approach outlined above does not deliver a satisfactory and reasonable resolution, the College recognises and acknowledges your entitlement to complain and we will work with you in the best interests of the children and young people in our care to resolve matters. A complaint will be treated as a serious expression of dissatisfaction which needs a timely response.

This document is intended to act as a guide to assist both parents and pupils in making a complaint if they wish to do so. The process is intended to be open and transparent in the interests of the quick resolution of problems when they arise and, of course, of the well-being and education of the pupils.

We wish to ensure that:

- Parents or pupils wishing to make a complaint know how to do so.
- We respond to complaints in a timely, courteous, and efficient manner.
- Parents know that we listen and that we take complaints seriously
- We take action where appropriate.
- Parents and pupils are confident that they can complain without there being adverse effects on the pupil/themselves as a consequence.

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem and may arise if someone thinks that the College has, for example:

- Done something wrong.
- Failed to do something it should have done.
- Acted or behaved unfairly or impolitely.
- Not given due consideration to a matter.

The Complaints Procedure

Stage 1: Informal resolution

Parents who feel they have concerns are encouraged in the first instance to contact their son or daughter's Housemaster or Housemistress, clearly stating the grounds for complaint. The Housemaster or Housemistress will take ownership for resolving the complaint without further reference if possible; however, if it is of an academic nature, they may consult with the pupil's tutor,

teacher, Head of Department or Deputy Head Academic. If it is about boarding or pastoral care, they may consult the Deputy Head Pastoral. For matters which are not directly pupil-related (e.g. financial matters), parents should contact the Director of Operations.

In order to raise matters, parents and pupils can talk directly to a member of staff, over the telephone or in writing via email or letter.. The school will reply to your complaint within five working days during term time, and as soon as is reasonably practicable during school holidays. In this instance, working days refer to weekdays between 9 am and 5pm, excluding public holidays.

Every effort will be made to address the issue at this informal stage, as it is hoped that an open and balanced approach by parents and pupils at the appropriate level, often with House staff, and a prompt and empathetic response by College staff will result in the majority of issues being easily resolved. We hope that you will feel satisfied with the outcome, or at least feel that your concerns have been fully and fairly considered, even if you don't agree with the outcome.

Should the matter not be resolved in accordance with the timeframe outlined above, or in the event that a satisfactory outcome cannot be reached, parents and pupils will be advised that they may wish to proceed to Stage 2, formal resolution. Escalation to Stage 2 should take place within 14 days of the closure of Stage 1. The College also reserves the right to escalate an informal complaint to the formal stage.

If, for any reason, it would be inappropriate to speak with the relevant Housemaster or Housemistress, or if the complaint is about a member of the Executive team (Warden, Deputy Warden and Director of Operations), the complaint should be addressed directly to the Chair of Council, whose contact details are available from Reception.

Stage 2: Formal resolution

For a complaint to be heard at Stage 2, it should be submitted in writing to the Deputy Warden, who will decide on the appropriate course of action having considered the complaint in detail. It may be necessary for further investigation to take place, and appropriate records of any conversations will be kept for the purposes of addressing the outcome.

Whilst investigating, the Deputy Warden will advise the parents of the action being taken and when a full response can be expected. Once the Deputy Warden is satisfied that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, usually within 14 days of the complaint being made at Stage 2. In making a representation to the College in person as part of Stage 2, parents or pupils may wish to be supported by a friend, although legal representation would not be appropriate at this stage.

If for any reason, it would be inappropriate to address the matter to the Deputy Warden, the complaint should be addressed directly to the Warden or the Chair of Council, whose contact details are available from Reception.

Stage 3: Panel resolution

If the complainant remains unsatisfied with the outcome delivered at Stage 2, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 by writing to the Chair of Council via the Director of Operations who is also Clerk to Council.

At Stage 3, the matter would be referred to the College's Conciliation Committee¹ whose task it is to look at the issues in an impartial and confidential manner. The Committee Convener will be appointed by the Chair of Council and will invite you to a meeting at which the Warden will attend if appropriate. You will be asked if there is any further information you would like the Committee to consider beforehand. The Committee will undertake a full merits hearing, which shall not be limited to a review of the decision at Stage 2, and accordingly decide whether to:

- dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
- may make recommendations.

You will be invited to bring a friend with you. The Conciliation Committee will report its findings to the Chairman of Council, who will write to you with the final outcome, usually within 5 working days.

We hope that we shall be able to deliver a satisfactory outcome. If we are unable to do so, you may contact the Registrar of Independent Schools in the Scottish Government, the Care Inspectorate or seek legal advice. Contact details can be found at the end of this document.

Action taken by staff

Staff should receive complaints in a positive, professional manner, and they should be taken seriously. The member of staff may have to seek advice from their line manager or the relevant Head of Department or Deputy Head.

In some circumstances, the staff member you contact will need to discuss the matter with a colleague and investigate matters further before responding fully. In order to reduce uncertainty, staff will advise parents what is happening and by what date a more detailed response can be expected, guided by the stages outlined above.

All complaints should be recorded by the member of staff receiving the complaint, and this will include details of the concern and the action taken. It is important that notes of meetings, discussions and telephone conversations are also included. Formal complaints should also be recorded in the Complaints file held by the Deputy Warden's Office.

¹ The Conciliation Committee is composed of three members appointed by the Chairman of Council, at least two of whom will be Council members, none of whom have been previously involved in the matter.

Confidentiality

Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential and respectful manner. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Executive team and to those directly involved or who need to be involved in an investigation. The Chairman of Council may also need to be informed. It is the College's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the school aware of the complaint and possibly also of the identity of those involved. This would happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the police. You would normally be fully informed, but the College has a statutory duty to inform outside agencies in certain cases, irrespective of parental wishes.

Complaints about members of staff need sensitive handling and may need to be dealt with by the College's disciplinary or other internal procedures. This means that in some cases the College's actions following a complaint may be in itself subject to confidentiality; where this is necessary, parents will however, be informed that the matter is being dealt with.

Anonymous complaints may not be pursued other than in cases relating to child protection.

Complaints made by Pupils

All pupils should feel entitled to complain if they feel aggrieved, they should feel confident that they will be listened to, and they should know how to proceed. In the first instance, the Housemaster or Housemistress should be the first point of contact. Alternatively, College Prefects can often be helpful, and the Tutor, Chaplain and Medical Staff are also suitable adults to approach. In addition, any pupil may approach the Warden, Deputy Warden or Deputy Heads with a complaint or problem at any time. There is a summary of the Complaints Procedure in the Pupils' Prep Diary, and this is discussed at pupil induction.

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0.2	27/01/20	Reviewed	S Sinclair
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0.5	12/6/24	Reviewed and updated	R Garnish
0.6	22/01/25	Reviewed and updated	R Garnish
.7	9.9.25	Reviewed and updated	J. Davey

Useful Contacts:

Deputy Head Pastoral

Ms Sabina Staziker
Glenalmond College
Perth
PH1 3RY
sabinastaziker@glenalmondcollege.co.uk

Chairman of Council

c/o Director of Operations
Glenalmond College
Perth
PH1 3RY
coo@glenalmondcollege.co.uk

The Registrar of Independent Schools

The Scottish Government
Schools Directorate
Area 2D South
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ
0131 244 0941
independent_schools@scotland.gov.uk

The Care Inspectorate

Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY
0845 600 9527
Email:
enquiries@careinspectorate.com