

CHRIST'S HOSPITAL

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Aim

1. The aim of this document is to set out the manner in which complaints raised by parents or guardians of students at the school are managed. The intention is that the school's response to complaints is sympathetic, effective and appropriate. The school will also aim to resolve complaints as quickly as possible. Every effort will be made to ensure that complaints are settled in a positive way, including consideration of ways in which some aspects of school life may have gone wrong, with the aim of putting right some aspect of school life which may have gone wrong.

Scope

2. This policy applies to complaints raised by parents or guardians in relation to registered students of Christ's Hospital only. The procedure in the event of the expulsion of a student is covered by the parent contract.

Introduction

3. Christ's Hospital has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its students. However, if parents or guardians do have a complaint, they can expect that it will be treated by the school in accordance with this policy. Christ's Hospital will make this policy available to all parents of students and prospective students on the school's website; a hard or emailed copy can be provided on request by emailing the school Office.
4. Parents and students should never feel, or be made to feel, that a complaint will adversely affect a student or his/her opportunities at the school.

Timescales

5. Timescales for each stage of the complaint process are set out below. Reference to "working days" means **Monday to Friday during term time**. The dates of school terms are published on the school's website and in the termly school Calendar.

Complaints Log

6. Every formal complaint made to the school will be noted, together with the action taken, in the Complaints Log, held by the Head.

PROCEDURE STAGE 1: INFORMAL COMPLAINT

7. It is expected that most concerns, where a parent or student seeks intervention, reconsideration or some other action to be taken, can be resolved informally. Where a complaint is raised informally, it is expected that most concerns will be resolved within **ten working days**. If this is not possible, the parent will be informed and a firm date for resolution will be offered.
8. Parents or students should initially raise their concerns in writing, as follows:
 - **Education issues:** if the matter relates to the classroom, assessments, the curriculum or special educational needs, with the relevant Head of Department or Head of Year;

- **Pastoral care:** for concerns relating to matters outside the classroom or in the boarding house, with the relevant houseparent;
- **Disciplinary matters:** a problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised with the relevant houseparent or Head of Year;
- **Financial matters:** a concern relating to fees or extras should be raised with the Finance Director.

STAGE 2: FORMAL COMPLAINT

9. A complaint which cannot be resolved under Stage 1 above should be set out in writing to the Head. If the complaint is about the conduct of the Head, the complaint should be addressed to the Treasurer, who will take on the responsibilities assigned to the Head under Stage 2 of this policy. The complainant should provide full details of the complaint, including the outcome they are seeking, and include copies of all relevant documents and their own contact details. The complaint will normally be acknowledged by email or letter within **three working days** of receipt, indicating the action being taken and the likely timescale. A Complaints Form will be completed and retained in the Complaints Log.
10. The Head will instigate an investigation into the matter and respond to the complainant within **15 working days**. The person conducting the investigation may request additional information from the complainant.
11. The outcome of the investigation will be reported to the Head who will then notify the complainant by email or letter of his decision and the reasons for it. Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the investigation.
12. The Head's aim will be to inform any complainant of the outcome of an investigation and any related action within **15 working days** of receipt of the complaint. In all cases the Head will keep the complainant informed of any changes to the timetable indicated.

STAGE 3: REFERRAL TO A COMPLAINTS PANEL

13. A parent or student who is dissatisfied with the decision made under Stage 2 may ask for the complaint to be referred to a Complaints Panel, by writing to the Chief Operating Officer (see Annex A).
14. A hearing before a Complaints Panel should be requested in writing to the Chief Operating Officer within **five working days** of receipt of the decision being complained of. The referral will normally be acknowledged by email or letter within **three working days** of receipt, indicating the action being taken and the likely timescale.
15. A request under Stage 3 will usually only be considered if the procedures at Stages 1 and 2, have already been completed. For the avoidance of doubt, a panel will not be convened simply because the complainant does not agree with a decision made under Stage 2. The letter to the Chief Operating Officer should give full details of the complaint, the reason for requesting a panel and the outcome being sought; it should also enclose all relevant documents and the full contact details of the complainant. The complainant may not include any new issues which have not previously been notified to and investigated by the Head, but may make reference to:
 - any concerns regarding the investigation process followed thus far;
 - any fresh evidence that has come to light; or
 - any new mitigating circumstances of which the school may not be aware.

If the Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the Treasurer, is satisfied that there is a case to answer, a panel will be convened. In reaching a decision, the Chief Operating Officer may ask the complainant for more information.

16. Every effort will be made to enable the Panel hearing to take place within **20 working days** of the receipt of the request for a hearing, but the Panel will not normally sit during half terms or school holidays. As soon as is reasonably practicable and at least **five working days** before the hearing, the Chief Operating Officer will send to the complainant written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing. The complainant will be informed in advance of the names and status of the members of the Panel and will be provided with details of the procedure to be followed on the day. The Chief Operating Officer will make appropriate arrangements to provide any assistance required by the complainant, for example because of a disability.
17. The Complaints Panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint; normally this will be two members of the Council of Christ's Hospital and at least one member who is independent of the governance, management and running of the school.
18. The Panel's task is to establish the facts surrounding the complaint that has been raised by considering:
 - the documents provided by both parties; and
 - any representations made by the complainant, the Head and/or the Treasurer.
19. If, after establishing the facts, the Panel considers that the complaint is valid or justified, it will uphold the complaint. If the Panel considers that the complaint is not valid or justified, it will dismiss the complaint. It will make this decision based on the evidence presented and the balance of probabilities.
20. The complainant will be invited to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by one other person such as a relative, teacher or friend. Should the person accompanying the complainant be legally qualified, they will not be present in a professional capacity. A student aged 13 and above may attend part or all of the hearing at the discretion of the chair of the Panel. Copies of any additional documents for consideration by the Panel should be sent to the Chief Operating Officer at least **three working days** before the hearing. If the complainant does not exercise their right to attend the hearing, the Panel will consider the complaint in their absence.
21. The hearing will be chaired by a member of the Panel, chosen from amongst themselves, and will be conducted in an informal manner. The Panel Chair will conduct the hearing in such a way as to ensure that all those present have the opportunity to ask questions and make comments in an appropriate manner. The hearing is not a legal proceeding and the Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account.
22. All statements made at the hearing will be unsworn. All those present are entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes for reference purposes; the Chief Operating Officer, or their delegate, will be asked to take written notes of the proceedings.
23. All those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chair. 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 included in the notes.

24. The Chair may, at his/her discretion, adjourn the hearing for further investigation of any relevant issue; this may include an adjournment to take legal advice.
25. After due consideration of the matters discussed at the hearing, the Panel will reach a decision. The Panel's decision, findings and recommendations may be notified orally at the hearing or subsequently and shall be confirmed in writing to the complainant by in writing within **seven working days**. The decision, findings and any recommendations will be notified to the Council of Christ's Hospital and the Head and reasons for the decision will normally be given. The decision may include recommendations which will be notified to the complainant, the Chair of the Council of Christ's Hospital, the Head and, where relevant, any person about whom the complaint has been made.
26. A hearing before the Complaints Panel is a private proceeding; no notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in, or arising from, the proceedings shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press, media or any third party.
27. The decision of the Complaints Panel is final with no further right of appeal. Repeated attempts by a parent to raise the same complaint after consideration at all three stages will be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

Confidentiality and record keeping

28. A written record will be kept of:
 - all formal complaints;
 - their resolution at either Stage 2 or Stage 3;
 - any action taken by the school as a result of the complaints regardless of whether they were upheld or not;
 - the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the school year (this will be reported to the Council of Christ's Hospital annually).
29. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008; that is where access is requested by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required during a school's inspections or under other legal authority.
30. Records of complaints that do not have safeguarding implications will be retained for seven years before being disposed of securely. Any complaints or other records that raise safeguarding concerns or contain or relate to allegations of abuse will be retained for 75 years, in line with the recommendation of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

Author: SHCR/LWGW

Date of last review: June 2025

Date of next review: June 2027

Annex A: Contact details for relevant individuals and organisations.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR RELEVANT INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS

Christ's Hospital

1. The following address should be used to contact:

- Treasurer
- Head
- Chief Operating Officer
- Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Finance Director
- Houseparents (please state the name of the house concerned)
- Heads of Year (please identify the relevant year group) school Office

Christ's Hospital school
Horsham
West Sussex
RH13 0LJ

Main school switchboard: 01403 211293

Details are also included in the termly school Calendar and on the school website:

www.christs-hospital.org.uk

Independent schools Inspectorate (ISI)

2. Concerns about a student's welfare, or complaints about a school, may be raised with:

ISI
CAP House
9 - 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA

Main switchboard: 0207 6000100

Student welfare concerns: 0207 7109900

Further details at www.isi.net

West Sussex Safeguarding Children Board

3. The Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) can be contacted via:

Main switchboard: 0330 222 5296
lado@westsussex.gov.uk