Complaints Policy and Procedure

Statement of Policy intent

LCS values highly 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 the school in accordance with this Procedure. A complaint is any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the school. A parent is the parent of a current registered pupil. This Procedure does apply to past pupils if the complaint is initially raised when the pupil is still registered.

Procedure introduction

Should a parent have a complaint, the procedure below outlines the course of action that should be taken and the anticipated response of the school. The aim of this procedure is to ensure that parents know that there is a clear process for managing a complaint, involving clear timescales, appropriate responses/actions and record keeping. The process involves 3 potential stages – informal, formal and panel.

Reference to 'school days' means weekdays during the school term (including INSET days) and the "school day" starts at 8.00am and ends at 5.30pm for the purposes of this Procedure.

In all cases of a complaint received by a member of staff, that staff member should inform the Head Teacher of the details (parties involved, date of complaint, any action taken and any resolution) in order that the Head Teacher may be able to monitor the situation, assist, look for patterns or repetition and keep an informal central record.

Stage 1: Informal concern/complaint

The parent should, in the first instance approach the person most closely concerned with the issue, for example, the class teacher, to discuss their complaint. This can be done in person, by telephone, through their child's communication book or by emailing the school office. It may be that the matter is able to be resolved efficiently with this direct contact.

A written record will be made of all complaints and the date on which they were received. A resolution date will be logged. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 school days or in the event that the member of staff 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 Procedure.

However, if the complaint is against the Head Teacher, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors on chairofgovernors@londonchristianschool.com. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 school days or in the event that the Head Teacher 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 Procedure.

Stage 2: Formal written complaint

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head Teacher. The Complaints Form should be used. It can be found as the Appendix to this policy. If emailed it should be sent to Head@londonchristianschool.com.

The Head will contact the parents concerned, within 5 school 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 Head Teacher to carry out further investigations. The Head Teacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Head Teacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, and within 15 school days from the receipt of the complaint, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head Teacher will also give reasons for her decision.

If the complaint is against the Head Teacher, the Chair of Governors needs to be contacted on chairofgovernors@londonchristianschool.com. The Chair will call for a full report from the Head Teacher and for all the relevant documents. The Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, and within 15 school days from the receipt of the complaint, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed in writing and the reasons for the decision given. The Chair may seek advice from the Governing Body.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3: Formal panel hearing

Should Stage 2 not achieve a satisfactory outcome within the timescales established, parents may request an independent panel to be established to deal with the complaint. Stage 3 should be a full -merits hearing of the complaint, not merely a check that the process was followed. This request must be made within 1 month of the decision under Stage 2 and must be made to the Secretary to the Chair on fmartin@londonchristianschool.com.

The Secretary to the Chair, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and the panel will be convened as soon as reasonably practicable, but the Panel will not normally sit during half terms or school holidays.

The panel should consist of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in Stage 2 of the complaint process, including a person who is independent of the management and running of the school.

Mr Theo Jones is the independent person on the complaints panel. He is Lead Knowledge Counsel and joint manager of the Corporate Finance Know-how Group and also Chairman of the Template Review Committee at Berwin Leighton Paisner LLP. He worships at St Helen's Church Bishopsgate and is independent of the management and running of the School.

If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than three days prior to the hearing.

The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate, but if parents do intend to be accompanied by legal representation, the school should be notified in writing to chairofgovernors@londonchristianschool.com at least 3 school days in advance.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 15 school days of the Hearing. A resolution date will be logged. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision, the reasons for it and action to be taken regardless of whether the complaint was upheld. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Chair and, where relevant, the person complained of.

A copy of the findings and recommendations will be available for inspection by the Head Teacher and Governing Body.

Record Keeping

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

For Stage 1, the Head Teacher will keep an informal record of the details. For Stage 2, the Head Teacher will be responsible for keeping accurate records of correspondence, documents and statements related to the case (including actions and outcomes) to be retained for a minimum of 3 years. For Stage 3, the Secretary to the Chair will be responsible for keeping accurate records of correspondence, documents and statements related to the case (including actions and outcomes). All records are to be kept in accordance with the retention and deletion Schedule in the Data Protection Policy. Currently records are to be kept for a minimum of 7 years from the date of resolution. All records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Education and Skills Act requests access to them.

Persistent Correspondence

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 this policy.

Complaints about the Early Years Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements

As well as the general right to complain set out in this policy, there is a specific right to complain should any parent have a complaint about whether the school is fulfilling the statutory EYFS Safeguarding and Welfare requirements. If so, the parent should submit this in writing to the Head Teacher, who will keep written records. The complaint will be investigated and the complainant will be notified of the outcome within 28 days. In the case of a following inspection, parents will be notified and informed of the final outcome. Please note that any complaint in relation to EYFS Safeguarding and Welfare requirements received within one month of the end of term or half term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to school holidays and the unavailability of personnel. If any such complaint is received outside of term-time, it may not be practical for the School to adhere to the timescale stated above.

Independent Person's length of service

The independent person shall be appointed for a maximum of three years.

Contacting the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) or Ofsted

The School is inspected by ISI. Parents and pupils have the right to contact an inspector if they have a complaint concerning a pupil's welfare. ISI will usually expect parents or pupils to have followed the School's formal complaints procedure before contacting them. However, you can report your complaints, including those about EYFS to Ofsted or ISI directly as follows:

Ofsted https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/online-complaints 0300 123 1231
ISI concerns@isi.net 020 76000100 or you can write to the ISI Regional Office: Independent Schools Inspectorate, Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12, Long Lane, London EC1A 9H

Policy approved by the Head and the Governor responsible for Complaints: February 2025
Review date: February 2027

Appendix

London Christian School

COMPLAINT FORM

Name of complainant:

Date of complaint:

Nature of complaint:

Name(s) of other person(s) involved:

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:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Actions taken:

Date: