

The Cornwall Independent School

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This policy, which applies to the whole school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), is publicly available on the school website and upon request a copy (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) may be obtained from the School Office.

Scope: All who work, volunteer or supply services to our school have an equal responsibility to understand and implement this policy and its procedures both within and outside of normal school hours, including activities away from school.

Legal Status: Complies with The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations currently in force.

The Cornwall Independent is a School:

- Where we promote an enduring love of learning.
- Where each child is respected as an individual.
- Where we engender a clear appreciation of the traditional ethical precepts
- Where children feel safe and unconditionally valued.
- Where excellence is identified and where each child may extend themselves.
- Where staff are our most cherished resource.
- Where pupils engage with technology as a means of extending systematic enquiry.
- Where there is a partnership between staff, pupils, parents and proprietor.

Monitoring and Review: These arrangements are subject to continuous monitoring, refinement, and audit by the Headteacher, who will undertake a full annual review, inclusive of its implementation and the efficiency with which the related duties have been implemented. This review will be formally documented in writing. Any deficiencies or weaknesses recognised in arrangements or procedures will be remedied immediately and without delay. All staff will be informed of the updated/reviewed arrangements, and it will be made available to them in writing or electronically.

Signed:

Reviewed: May 2026
Next Review: September 2026



Miss Louise Adams
Headteacher



Mr Stephen Beck
Chair of the Advisory Board

Mr Bill Brown
Education and Compliance Adviser

Oversight of implementation of this policy rests with the Chair of the Advisory Board Mr Stephen Beck and he can be contacted at: 47 Upper Selsdon Road, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 8DG

Introduction: The Cornwall Independent School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. The School's aims are concerned with meeting the needs of the pupils, parents' staff and other stakeholders. Constant communication and feedback are crucial in monitoring standards and improving provision. Those who have complaints should feel these can be voiced and that they will be taken seriously. There is no distinction in practice between a concern and a complaint; both terms reflect an expression of dissatisfaction that requires a response from the School - either to explain its position or to put right what may be wrong. We will seek to resolve complaints by informal means wherever possible.

A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional well-being and security at stake, or when the School's stated aims or values are being ignored. A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint. If parents/staff do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure. Investigations will be thorough, fair and completed in a reasonable timeframe. The complainant may not be entitled to all information regarding the investigation but will be kept informed of the process and of the decisions reached. This is a complaints policy for parents/staff of pupils currently attending The Cornwall Independent School. This policy does not apply to prospective parents/staff relating to admissions issues, or to pupils or staff who may wish to complain. The timescales indicated in the procedures below should allow for swift resolution of complaints. There will be some circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that delay resolution; namely school holidays and other factors. It is intended that all issues will be resolved within 28 days of the first complaint being made.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. There may also be other circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you [or your child] raise[s] in good faith.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents/staff have a complaint, as soon as possible they should normally contact the most appropriate member of staff, such as their son or daughter's form teacher or tutor. In most cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents/staff' satisfaction. If the member of staff contacted cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Deputy Headteacher for advice.
- Complaints made directly to the Deputy Headteacher will usually be referred back to the relevant form teacher unless the Deputy Headteacher deems it appropriate for her to deal with the matter personally without it going through the normal channels. This will still be deemed to be under Stage 1 (Informal) of this policy.
- The member of staff who is dealing with the matter will keep a written record. Should the matter not be resolved within five working days or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents/staff will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure. A note should be kept of the date a resolution was reached and the agreed nature of this, this helps prevent the process from drifting into a longer timeframe.
- Sometimes, parents/staff will raise a concern informally with the Headteacher directly. As above, she may feel that this should be referred back to the relevant form teacher, tutor. But there will certainly be occasions when the Headteacher feels it is appropriate to resolve the issue informally herself without the need for referral. This will still be under the Stage 1 process of informal resolution. It is only when/if the parents/staff are not satisfied with the outcome that they should proceed to Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution - Headteacher

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents/staff should put their complaint in writing to the

Headteacher. The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

- In most cases, the Headteacher will meet or speak to the parents/staff concerned, normally within five working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. The dialogue may be by email to ensure there is no delay. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headteacher to carry out further investigations that take more time, and she will inform the complainants of this. These investigations should take no longer than seven days in normal term time. During school holidays the time taken for consultation with other staff is more difficult to predict, but it should be expected that this should not exceed fourteen days.
- The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headteacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and parents/staff will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headteacher will also give reasons for the decision. A note will be kept of when a final outcome was reached. This whole process should not take more than 21 days, including investigation.
- If parents/staff are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 - Formal Resolution – Advisory Board

- If the complaint cannot be resolved by the headteacher then the parents/staff should put their complaint in writing to the Advisory board. The Advisory Board will then decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. This may involve contacting members of the parent company and seeking the advice of them and their solicitors.
- In most cases, the Head of the advisory board will contact speak the parents/staff concerned, normally within five working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. The dialogue may be by email to ensure there is no delay. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Advisory Board to carry out further investigations that take more time, and they will inform the complainants of this. These investigations should take no longer than seven days in normal term time. During school holidays the time taken for consultation with other staff is more difficult to predict, but it should be expected that this should not exceed fourteen days.
- Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Advisory board is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and parents/staff will be informed of this decision in writing. The complainant will also give reasons for the decision. A note will be kept of when a final outcome was reached. This whole process should not take more than 21 days, including investigation.
- If parents/staff are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 4 of this Procedure.

Stage 4 – Panel Hearing

- If parents/staff seek to invoke Stage 4 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Convenor, who will be appointed by the Proprietor to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The other two Panel members will usually be members of the Advisory Board. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Proprietor. The Panel Convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 21 days.
- 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 5 days prior to the hearing.
- The complainant(s) may be accompanied to the panel hearing if they wish.
- The Panel meeting will be a full merit hearing and not only a judicial review of process. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents/staff' 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 findings and recommendations, within 5 working days of the Panel meeting.
- A copy of those findings and recommendations will be –
 - (i) sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about;
 - (ii) made available for inspection on the school premises by the Proprietor and the Headteacher. In the event that the

complaint is against the Headteacher, the Proprietor will appoint an appropriate person/s, either internally or externally, to investigate and report.

Confidentiality: Parents/staff can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements, and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Written records and retention: A written record is kept of all complaints that reach the formal stage (Stage 2 above), and of whether they are resolved at that stage or proceed to a panel. A record will also be kept of what action is taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld) and the date on which a final outcome was reached. All records of complaints will be kept for a minimum of three years. The school will provide on request to Ofsted and ISI a written record of all complaints made during a specified period and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint.

Parents may ask the Headteacher for the number of complaints received at the formal and panel stage during the preceding academic year.

In addition to the Complaints Procedure detailed above, parents may also make a complaint to either the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) or, for complaints concerning the Early Years Foundation Stage, to Ofsted. This includes parents appealing against a decision made by the school about their complaint.

Recording Complaints and use of personal data: Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all [formal] complaints, whether they are resolved at [the Stage 1 (informal stage),] the formal stage - Headteacher (Stage 2), the formal stage – Advisory Board (Stage 3) or proceed to a Panel hearing (Stage 4) and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The Cornwall Independent School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 4 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name and contact details of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes/minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's *Privacy Notice* but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's *Data Protection Policy*.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its *Privacy Notice [Data Protection Policy]* [and *Retention of Records Policy*]. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector (see above), there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (eg, in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

Complaints within the Early Years Foundation Stage: Parents of EYFS pupils should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. The School will notify the parents about the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days from the date the complaint was received.

The school will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with

its Privacy Notice and Retention of Records Policy. Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

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 will be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

Contact details:

- Independent Schools Inspectorate:
CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA Telephone: 020 7600 0100 Fax: 020 7776 8849 Email: see Website: www.isi.net
- Ofsted:
Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD Telephone: 03001231231 Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk