

Complaints Procedure for Parents of Students

This policy complies with the Independent School Standards Regulations.

Fine Arts College is committed to ensuring that all complaints are acted upon quickly and fairly and are resolved. The complaints process should:

- Be simple to understand.
- Be impartial.
- Deal with issues promptly.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Provide an effective response and redress where appropriate.
- Influence how the College operates in future if there are opportunities for improvement.

Complaints Procedure

There is a three-stage procedure:

- Stage One is the process for dealing with informal complaints
 - Stage Two is the process for dealing with formal complaints or complaints that cannot be resolved informally.
 - Stage Three allows for the appointing of a panel of three people for a hearing of the complaint and the evidence if the formal steps 5,6,7,8 have not resulted in a resolution; one of the panel will be completely independent of the management of the College.
1. **Stage One (informal):** Parents may telephone or email the College at any time to raise a concern or make a complaint. They should telephone 020 7586 0312 or email mail@hampsteadfinearts.com
 2. The Administrator will pass details of the parent's message to the student's Personal Tutor as soon as possible.
 3. The Personal Tutor will respond to the parent by telephone or email as soon as possible; unless there are exceptional circumstances this response will be made the same day.
 4. If suggestions and steps taken by the Personal Tutor cannot immediately resolve the problem or if the matter is a complex or delicate one, the Personal Tutor will seek an opinion and advice from either the Head of Lower School, one of the Vice-Principals or the Principal. Communication will continue between the Personal Tutor and the parent until the matter is resolved. This stage will be completed within two or at the most three working days from receipt of the complaint. Records of informal complaints may be kept confidentially for management purposes to enable patterns of concern to be monitored.
 5. **Stage Two (formal):** if the measures above do not resolve the complaint, or the parents are not satisfied with the response from the College, or if the complaint is of a serious nature, the parents will be asked to set out the complaint in writing, in detail, to the Principal and/or Vice-Principals.

6. A full investigation of the complaint will be carried out in the College by one or more members of the senior management team. This may involve speaking to the student concerned and/or other students and one or more tutors. Discretion and confidentiality will be considered and preserved as far as is practicable. This investigation will be completed within two working days from receipt of the written complaint and the parents informed of the findings by telephone or email.
7. Depending on circumstances the parent(s) or guardian(s) may be invited to the College for a meeting to discuss the matter further with the Principal and another member of the senior management team. This meeting may take place before, during or after the investigation above (6), as appropriate,
8. A formal response to the complaint, outlining how it was investigated and resolved will be written and sent to the parents. A copy, along with the original complaint, will be kept securely and confidentially in the student's file and the Complaints File.
9. The Stage Two process will be completed within 10 working days of the receipt of the formal written complaint.
10. The senior management team will consider if any steps could be taken to prevent or guard against the problem arising again. If appropriate, and bearing in mind confidentiality, tutors, administrators and/or students will be advised of any subsequent alterations to College policies or procedures.
11. **Stage Three – (panel hearing):** if parents are not satisfied with the formal written response to the complaint, the Principal may appoint a panel of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom will be entirely independent of the management and running of the College. Parents will be invited to attend a panel hearing to discuss the matter and they may be accompanied by a third party if they wish.

A panel hearing will follow the procedure:

- Detailed minutes will be taken
 - The complainant will be invited to outline their complaint.
 - Witnesses may be called in to support the complainant.
 - The Principal will have the opportunity to question the complainant and/or witnesses.
 - Witnesses may be called to support the Principal.
 - The complainant may question the Principal and/or witnesses.
 - The panel may ask questions at any point.
 - Both parties leave while the panel deliberates in confidence.
12. The panel will report its findings, may make recommendations and will decide whether the complaint has been adequately dealt with by the College at Stage Two or whether further steps and/or redress are needed. Copies of the deliberations of the panel will be sent to the complainant and, where relevant, to the person complained about. Findings and recommendations will be stored confidentially and securely in the student's file and in the Complaints File.

Any subsequent response from the Principal to the complainant may include any of the following:

- An apology.
- A clear acknowledgement that the College has been at fault.

- An explanation of the steps that are being taken to avoid such a problem in the future.
- An explanation of any misunderstanding on the part of the complainant about what may have happened.
- A clarification of College policy, if necessary.
- Any actions that may help in providing the complainant with redress.

If this response is given verbally, it should be followed up with a written reply.

13. The maximum timescale for resolution of complaints involving a panel hearing is 20 working days from the receipt of a request for a complaint to move to Stage Three.
14. Any correspondence, statements, meeting minutes or panel hearing minutes and any other written record at any stage of the complaint will be stored confidentially and securely in the student's file and in the Complaints File. However details of the complaint may have to be shared with inspectors from the Independent Schools Inspectorate, should this information be requested as part of an inspection of the College.
15. Records will detail whether the complaint is resolved at the formal stage or whether it proceeded to a panel hearing.

Further Action

There may be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Principal will be able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed at College level.

This does not preclude a complaint being escalated to the Department for Education (DfE)

Please note: Parents must go through the College's three-stage complaints procedure first.

The DfE cannot investigate individual complaints about independent schools. But it has certain powers as a regulator if the school is not meeting standards set by DfE for:

- education
- pupil welfare and health and safety
- school premises
- staff suitability
- making information available to parents

The DfE will consider any reports of a major failure to meet the standards. It can arrange an emergency inspection to look at pupil welfare and health and safety, and make sure serious failings are dealt with.

For minor complaints, DfE can ask one of the school inspectorates (ISI) to take these into account when the school is next inspected.

The use of social networking sites

Parents who have a complaint regarding the College should address these through this Complaints Policy procedure. The College will not deal with complaints made through other

channels or third parties, such as social networking sites. The College strongly believes that social media is not the appropriate forum for parents to discuss any issues or dissatisfaction that they may have; this policy has been created as the means to address these.

In the event that the College becomes aware of complaints being made on social networking sites (either before or after having been dealt with under this Policy) the College reserves the right to take the appropriate action under the Student and Parent Social Media Policy. This policy is available on our website.

Appeals

Please see our Behaviour and Sanctions Policy for information about the appeals process.

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