



HAMPSTEAD
FINE
ARTS
COLLEGE



2026-2027

Hampstead Fine Arts College

Complaints Procedure

for Parents of Students

This policy complies with the **Independent School Standards Regulations**.

Hampstead Fine Arts College is committed to ensuring that all complaints are acted upon promptly and fairly and, wherever possible, resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned. 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 where there are opportunities for improvement.

Complaints Procedure: A Three-Stage Procedure

The College operates a three-stage complaints 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 appointment of a panel of three people for a hearing of the complaint and the evidence where the formal Stage Two process has not resulted in a resolution. Two members of the panel will be Governors of the College and one will be completely independent of the management and governance of the College.

Stage One – Informal

Parents may telephone or email the College at any time to raise a concern or make a complaint.

Telephone: 020 7586 0312

Email: mail@hampsteadfinearts.com

The Administrator will pass details of the parent's message to the student's Head of Year (Years 9, 10 and 11) or Personal Tutor (Years 12 and 13) as soon as possible.

The Head of Year or 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 on the same day.

If the suggestions and steps taken by the Head of Year or Personal Tutor cannot immediately resolve the problem, or if the matter is a complex or delicate one, the Head of Year or Personal Tutor will seek an opinion and advice from the Principal or an appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Communication will continue between the Head of Year/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 and to identify opportunities for improvement.

Stage Two – Formal

If the measures above do not resolve the complaint, if 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.

A full investigation of the complaint will be carried out in the College by one or more members of the Senior Leadership Team, as appropriate. Wherever possible, the person investigating the complaint will not have been directly involved in the matter giving rise to the complaint.

The investigation may involve speaking to the student concerned and/or other students and one or more tutors or members of staff. 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.

Depending on the 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 Leadership Team. This meeting may take place before, during or after the investigation, as appropriate.

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 in the Complaints File.

The Stage Two process will be completed within 10 working days of receipt of the formal written complaint.

The Senior Leadership 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.

Stage Three – Panel Hearing

If parents are not satisfied with the formal written response to the complaint, the complaint will go to the Managing Director on behalf of the governing body. The Managing Director will establish an appropriate Panel to consider the matter.

The arrangements for this stage of the procedure will be communicated to parents at the time.

The Panel will comprise three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint hitherto:

- Two Governors of the College; and
- One person who is completely independent of the management and governance of the College.

The Panel Chair will be selected by the Managing Director.

Parents will be invited to attend a Panel hearing to discuss the matter and may be accompanied by a third party if they wish.

The Panel hearing will take place whether or not the parent attends, although arrangements for the hearing will facilitate the parent's exercising their right of attendance.

The Panel Hearing

Although legal representation is not normally appropriate at a panel hearing, the parent/carer may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or friend. If the intention is to bring someone to the hearing in support, the name of this person must be shared with the Chair of the panel at least 5 working days in advance of the panel. If being accompanied by a legally qualified person, this needs to be declared and they do not have the right to speak on behalf of the parent.

- Detailed minutes will be taken.
- The complainant will be invited to outline their complaint.
- Witnesses may be called to support the College's position.
- The Panel may ask questions at any point.
- Both parties will leave while the Panel deliberates in confidence.

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 findings and recommendations 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.

Possible Response Following a Panel Hearing

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.

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.

Records and Confidentiality

Any correspondence, statements, meeting minutes, 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 a complaint may have to be shared with inspectors from the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) or other relevant regulatory authorities should this information be requested as part of an inspection or regulatory process.

Records will detail whether the complaint was resolved at the formal stage or whether it proceeded to a Panel hearing.

The College will use information arising from complaints, where appropriate and without compromising confidentiality, to identify trends and opportunities for improvement in its policies, procedures and provision.

Further Action

There may be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedure 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) where appropriate. Parents should normally complete the College's three-stage complaints procedure first.

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

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

The DfE will consider reports of a major failure to meet the required standards. It may arrange an inspection to look at matters including pupil welfare and health and safety and to ensure that serious failings are dealt with.

For less serious concerns, the DfE may ask one of the school inspectorates 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 normally deal with complaints made solely 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 individual issues or dissatisfaction that they may have. This policy has been created as the appropriate means through which concerns and complaints can be raised and addressed.

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 appropriate action under the **Student and Parent Social Media Policy**.

This policy is available on the College website.

Scope of the Policy

Please note that this Policy relates to current parents/carers of students at Hampstead Fine Arts College.

Complaints from individuals who are not current parents/carers, or complaints concerning matters outside the scope of this Policy, may be considered by the College at its discretion and may be dealt with under a different procedure where appropriate.

Reviewed: August 2026

Reviewed by: ES