



PEMBROKE HOUSE



PARENTS' COMPLAINT PROCEDURE POLICY



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Pembroke House Parents' Complaint Procedure Policy

Introduction

The School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils and aims to provide the best service it reasonably can for its pupils and parents.

However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure.

The Parents' Complaint Procedure Policy can be found on our Pembroke House Website and parents can request a copy through the school office.

The Complaints Procedure at Pembroke has three stages, to be covered in a period of **28 working days** (excluding school holidays and weekends) between the complaint being made and the final resolution.

Whilst the policy is published and therefore made available for all to view, including parents of prospective pupils, it only applies to parents of current pupils. Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this complaint procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil, to which the complaint relates, was still registered as a pupil at the school.

A complaint raised by anyone who is not a current parent should be sent in writing to the Head, who will take up the matter with the SLT or Council. **Should the complaint be about the Head, then the matter should be raised in writing and sent to The Chairman of Council.**

Complaints which are raised during the School holidays will usually be deemed to have been received on the first working day after receipt. Working days refer to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding public holidays. The dates of terms are published on the school's website. This means that during school holidays, it may take longer to resolve a complaint, although the school would do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay.

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 Complaints 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.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.



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If parents have a complaint, they should, in the first instance, contact their child's Form Teacher in the Junior School (Year 1 to 4) or their Tutor in Years 5 and above. A parent can expect confirmation of receipt of the issue from the teacher, who should respond within **24 hours** or sooner. In many cases, it is expected that the matter will be resolved quickly to the parents' satisfaction by this means.

If the Form Teacher or Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Head of Department, Houseparent, Senior Leadership or the Head. Complaints made directly to the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher/Tutor, Head of Department or Houseparent.

For more significant matters, the Form Teacher, Tutor or Houseparent will make a written record of all concerns and complaints, and the date on which they were received.

Should the matter not be resolved within **10 working days** of actual receipt of the complaint by the Form Teacher/Tutor, or in the event that the Form Teacher/Tutor 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 Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head no later than **10 working days** after receiving the outcome of the Stage 1 complaint.

The Head will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within **1 working day** and decide on the appropriate course of action to be taken, depending on the severity of the complaint and the individuals involved.

In most cases, the Head will meet or write to the parents concerned within **10 working days** of receiving the written complaint to discuss the matter further, after gathering information from any relevant individuals or departments directly involved. Hopefully, a resolution will be reached at this stage, although it may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations after the initial meeting or response to the complaint.

The School will keep written records of the meetings and interviews held concerning the complaint.

Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing within **10 working days**. The Head will also give reasons for their decision.



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

If the complaint is against the Head, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Council. The Chair of Council or a Council nominee appointed by them will call for a full report from the Head and all the relevant documents. The Chair of Council or their nominee may also call for a briefing from members of staff and may wish to speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair of Council or their nominee is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair of Council or their nominee will give reasons for their decision.

Stage 3: Formal Complaint to Council

Should the complaint involve the Head, or a parent is not satisfied that their formal complaint has been dealt with adequately by the Head, the complainant should make their formal complaint in writing to the **Chairman of Council**, within 10 working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out details of those aspects of the complaint about which the parent remains dissatisfied and their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence that the parents wish to rely on should also be provided, along with details of the outcome desired and confirmation as to whether they wish to attend the hearing.

The Chairman will acknowledge the complaint in writing within **5 working days** or sooner and, if necessary, will procure the formation of a **Council Complaints Panel** of at least **three people** who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, and where **one panel member** is independent of the management and running of the school.

The hearing should be scheduled to take place, normally, within **20 working days** of the receipt of the appeal. The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. The Head shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative or friend. Legal representation will not be permitted, as this is not a legal proceeding. The Chairman of Council must be given seven days' notice if the friend or relation is legally qualified and the parents should note that the Review Panel will wish to speak to them directly and this person will not be permitted to act as an advocate. The companion does not have the right to answer questions on behalf of the parents.

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 or that further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall normally be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days before the hearing. Documentation submitted after this deadline will not normally be considered at the Stage 3 hearing, other than at the discretion of the Chair of the Panel.

If parents cannot attend the Panel Hearing on the scheduled date, and inform the Chair of the Panel of such at least 24 hours before the scheduled commencement of the hearing, then an alternative date will be offered by the Chair of the Panel. This may extend the overall timeframe for the complaints process. If this alternative date is also rejected by the complainant, or if the



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appropriate advance notice of absence is not received, then the hearing may, at the discretion of the Chair of the Panel, proceed to a resolution in the absence of the complainant.

The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel. The Clerk to the Council will take minutes of the hearing.

The panel will make their findings, written records and recommendations within **10 working days** of the hearing (unless additional time has been required to carry out further investigations following the hearing). A copy of these will be:

- provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about
- made available for inspection on the school premises by the Chairman of Council and the Head.

The decision of the Panel will be final. The School will regard repeated attempts to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages as vexatious and outside the scope of this Complaints Procedure.

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

Complaints will be stored electronically in a secure location, either in the Bursar's office or with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, if the complaint is a Safeguarding concern.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where there is an external legal, statutory or child protection obligation to be fulfilled.

The Clerk to the Council will take minutes of the hearing.

Stage 4: Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first stage of the procedure within 10 working days. Stage 2 may normally take up to 20 further days from receipt of the formal complaint, and Stage 3 is intended to be completed within 30 working days of the request for a panel hearing.

Recording Complaints and Use of Personal Data

Following the resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at stage two or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld.

Reviewed: October 2025 - BCH, CT, EAW & AJO
Next Review: October/November 2025



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When dealing with complaints the school, including any panel member appointed under the stage 3 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 members of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue, including emails and records of phone conversations
- Notes and minutes of the hearing
- The Panel's written decision
- Query on the School Policy

In the 2024 - 2025 academic year, there was one formal complaint.