

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

Availability of this Procedure: This procedure, which is provided to parents of students on the roll of the College, is also publicly available on the College website. It is also available from the College Office and, if required, can be provided in large print or another accessible format.

Scope: All who work for, volunteer at, or supply services to the College have an equal responsibility to understand and implement this procedure both within and outside of normal College hours, including activities away from the College.

All new employees and volunteers are required to confirm that they have read, understood, and will abide by this procedure.

Legal Status: This procedure complies with **Part 7, paragraph 33 (a) to (k) inclusive of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations** currently in force, which set out the manner in which complaints are to be handled.

Timescale: The process of dealing with a complaint from the moment it is received by the College to final resolution will **aim not to exceed twenty-eight (28) working days**, except in circumstances where timescales are affected by College holidays, the complexity of the complaint, or the need for further investigation. Where timescales are extended, the complainant will be informed in writing of the reasons for the delay.

Monitoring and Review:

The Principal logs all complaints received by the College and records at which stage and how they were resolved. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken, and the outcome of the complaint. The logging of complaints for management purposes enables patterns of concern to be monitored.

The Principal, along with the Governance Advisory Committee (GAC), monitors the Complaints Procedure to ensure that all complaints are handled properly, taking into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and making any modifications necessary to this procedure. The Principal also retains details of the number of complaints registered under the **formal procedure** during the preceding College year.

This procedure will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement, review, and audit by the Principal, who will undertake a full review of this procedure and its implementation no later than one year from the date shown below, or earlier if changes in legislation, regulatory requirements, or best practice so require.

Reviewed: December 2025
Next Review: December 2026

Signed

David Game

Founder

John Dalton

Principal

Definition of a Complaint

Under the terms of this procedure, a concern or complaint is deemed to be any matter of parental or pupil dissatisfaction which is brought to the attention of the Principal or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. This may be raised directly by a parent or guardian or escalated by another member of staff.

Ethos and Principles

David Game College will ensure that the quality of teaching and pastoral care offered to pupils is of the highest order. However, if parents have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the College in accordance with this procedure.

We are always willing to listen to concerns and anxieties, with parental and pupil concerns being of particular importance. We aim for the closest cooperation between parents and the teachers to whom our pupils are entrusted. Dealing with parental concerns is a vital part of the ethos and mission of David Game College.

We aim to be open about the decisions we make and the actions we take and will always explain our rationale. Throughout the process, the College will be willing to listen, learn, admit mistakes, apologise where appropriate, address issues raised, and change practices, including College policies and procedures, where necessary.

Nature of Complaints

A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional wellbeing or security at stake, when the College's stated aims or values are being ignored, or where there is an alleged breach of the law. A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint.

The term *complainant* refers to the individual or individuals making the complaint, which may include one or more parents or guardians of pupils at the College.

Complaints will be resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction or with an otherwise appropriate outcome that balances the rights and duties of pupils and staff.

At every stage of the procedure, the handling of the complaint will be swift, fair, and confidential, subject to any legal obligations.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

(References to working days refer to term time only)

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally if parents feel able to raise them as soon as they arise. Parents are encouraged to give feedback, preferably to the person concerned. In most cases, discussion, explanation, further information, or an apology where appropriate will resolve the issue.

If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's Tutor. In most cases, the matter will be resolved at this level. If the Tutor cannot resolve the matter, it may be necessary to consult the Head of Boarding or Head of GCSE.

The member of staff dealing with the matter will make a written record of the concern, the date received, any actions taken, and the outcome.

If the matter is not resolved within **five (5) College days**, or if a satisfactory resolution is not reached, parents will be advised to proceed to Stage 2 of this procedure and will be informed in writing.

Although a written complaint is considered formal, this does not mean that the formal stage is automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing (for example, by email). Such concerns may still be addressed initially under Stage 1.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

(References to working days refer to term time only)

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, the complaint should be submitted in writing to the Principal, who will decide the appropriate course of action.

In most cases, the Principal will speak to the parents concerned, normally on the day of receipt, to discuss the matter and attempt resolution.

The Principal will:

- o establish what has happened and who has been involved;
- o clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- o meet with or contact the complainant to discuss desired outcomes;
- o interview those involved, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish; and
- o conduct the investigation with an open mind, keeping written notes.

Within **five (5) College days** of receipt, the Principal will complete the investigation. Where further investigation is required, this may be extended by a further **five (5) College days**, and the complainant will be informed in writing.

Possible outcomes include:

- acknowledgement that the complaint is valid in whole or in part;
- an apology or explanation;
- clarification of misunderstandings;
- assurance that the issue will not recur and details of preventative steps; and
- an undertaking to review College policies or procedures.

A written decision and reasons will be provided. A written record will be kept of the outcome and date reached.

If parents remain dissatisfied, they may proceed to Stage 3.

Complaints About the Principal

Should a complaint concern the Principal, it must be submitted in writing to the **Chair of the Governance Advisory Committee**. If the complainant remains dissatisfied following investigation, they may proceed to Stage 3.

Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing

If earlier stages fail to resolve the complaint, parents may request a Complaints Panel Hearing in writing to the Panel Convenor appointed by the Chair of the GAC.

Composition of the Panel

The Panel will consist of **at least 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 College.

The independent member will not:

- be employed by the College;
- be a member of the Governance Advisory Committee or Proprietorial Body; or
- have any ongoing involvement in the management of the College.

Hearing Arrangements

- The Panel Convenor will agree a hearing date within **five (5) College days** of receipt of the request.
- The hearing will normally take place within **fifteen (15) College days**.
- Documentation must be submitted at least **five (5) working days** prior to the hearing and will be shared with all parties.
- Parents may be accompanied at the hearing.
- The hearing will proceed even if the complainant does not attend.

Role, Scope and Limits of the Panel

The Panel will:

- consider the complaint fully and fairly;
- review whether College policies and procedures were followed correctly;
- consider whether the decisions reached were reasonable in the circumstances;
- hear representations from both the complainant and the College; and
- make findings and recommendations where appropriate.

The Panel does not replace the professional judgment of the Principal and does not normally overturn disciplinary or academic decisions unless there has been a clear procedural failure or serious issue of fairness. However, the Panel may recommend actions or changes to prevent recurrence.

Outcome of the Hearing

The Panel will normally reach its decision within **five (5) working days** of the hearing. A written outcome, including reasons and any recommendations, will be sent to:

- the complainant; and
- where relevant, the person complained about.

The decision of the Panel is final.

Scope of the Panel Hearing

The role of the Panel is to consider the complaint in its entirety, including whether the School's published procedures were followed correctly and whether the decision-making process was fair, reasonable, and proportionate in the circumstances.

The Panel is **not a re-hearing of the disciplinary matter**, nor is it empowered to substitute its own view for the **professional judgement of the Principal**, who has responsibility for discipline and exclusion decisions.

Accordingly, the Panel will not overturn the Principal's decision merely because it might have reached a different conclusion on the same evidence.

The Panel may only interfere with the Principal's decision in **very exceptional circumstances**, where **new, material and credible evidence** is presented that was not reasonably available at the time of the original decision and which **fundamentally alters the context** in which the decision was made.

Any such evidence must be **clearly evidential**, verifiable, and of sufficient weight that no reasonable Principal, acting on the information originally available, could properly have reached the same decision.

In all other cases, the Panel's findings will be limited to procedural compliance, fairness, and any recommendations for future practice, and the Principal's decision will remain final.

Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled confidentially. Records will be disclosed only where required by law, including to the Secretary of State or inspection bodies acting under statutory authority.

Record Keeping

A written record of all complaints is maintained by the Principal, including:

- whether they were resolved informally or formally;
- actions taken; and
- outcomes reached.

Records are retained for **at least three years**, and longer where required for inspection, safeguarding, or legal purposes. The number of complaints registered under the **formal procedure during the preceding academic year** is made available to parents on request.

Safeguarding

Any complaint involving a potential safeguarding or child protection issue will be reported immediately to the Principal and managed in accordance with the College's Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy. Safeguarding procedures take precedence over this Complaints Procedure.

Relationship with Other Procedures

This Complaints Procedure is separate from the College's Disciplinary, Capability, and Grievance Procedures. Complaints made by staff members are addressed through the Grievance Procedure.

Complaints Summary (Academic Year 2024–2025)

Informal complaints: 6 (all resolved)

Formal complaints: 0