CITY OF LONDON
PRIMARY ACADEMY
ISLINGTON

Complaints Procedure

(Whole school policy, including EYFS)

Responsibility:	Governing Body/Head Teacher
Updated:	September 2026
Approved by Board:	October 2026
Next Review Date:	September 2028

COLPAI Complaints Procedure

COLPAI prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a concern or complaint, they can expect it to be taken seriously by the School and dealt with in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially, and that their child will not be penalised for a complaint raised in good faith.

A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done or acted unfairly. Most day-to-day concerns will be resolved by informal discussion, without the need to go through all three stages of the school's Complaints Procedure (outlined below). It is only where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of informal discussion at Stage 1 that further steps may need to be taken. This policy document sets out COLPAI'S procedure for addressing such concerns or complaints, should they arise.

Please note: this policy does not apply to issues concerning pupil admissions and exclusions and child protection. These are the subject of separate procedures, details of which are available from the School Office.

Aims and objectives

- The school aims to resolve complaints by informal means if at all possible.
- All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively.
- The School aims to work closely with parents to resolve all complaints in a timely manner.
- Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated impartially and confidentially.
- The School will ensure that a thorough and fair investigation is carried out into all matters giving rise to the complaint.
- The School is committed to open dialogue and will respond positively to bring about improvement where appropriate.
- The school will provide appropriate redress, where necessary.

Timescales

It is in everyone's interest to resolve the complaint as speedily as possible. Timescales for each stage of the Complaints Procedure are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. For the purposes of this policy, a "working day" is defined as a weekday during term time, when the school is open. The definition of "working day" excludes weekends and Bank Holidays. For the avoidance of doubt, term dates are published on the School's website.

Persistent correspondence

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages of the procedure outlined below and the school has done everything it reasonably can in response to the complaint, the complaint will be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this Complaints Policy. The CEO of the Multi Academy Trust will inform the complainant that the matter is closed. Please refer to COLPAI's Policy for Dealing with Serial and Vexatious Complaints, which can be found on the School's website.

Duplicate complaints
If the School has resolved a complaint under the School Complaints Procedure and receives a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, the duplicate complaint will be assessed as to whether there is any new information or any new issues raised which have not previously been considered. If there are no new issues raised, the School will inform the duplicate complainant that:

- the complaint has already been investigated and the process is now complete
- the School is satisfied that there are no new aspects to the complaint
- the complainant must now refer to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to: Department for Education, Piccadilly, Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD if they are dissatisfied with the original handling of the complaint.

Anonymous complaints
The School will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether an anonymous complaint warrants an investigation.

Complaint campaigns:
Where the School receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the School, the School may respond to these complaints by:

- publishing a single response on the School website
- sending a template response to all of the complainants.

If complainants are not satisfied with the School's response, or wish to pursue a complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

Withdrawal of a complaint
If a complainant wishes to withdraw a concern/complaint, the School will ask them to confirm this in writing.

The Three Stage Complaints Procedure

The Complaints Procedure is divided into three stages. **Stage 1** aims to resolve the concern through informal contact at the appropriate level in school. **Stage 2** is the first formal stage at which written complaints are considered by the Head Teacher. **Stage 3** is the final stage, involving an appeal panel of governors.

In the interests of reaching a fair, fact-based outcome, parents making a complaint are asked not to discuss it with other members of the school community (children, staff or parents) at any stage of the Complaints Procedure.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

1.1 It is hoped that most concerns and complaints can be dealt with quickly and informally.

1.2 If a parent has any concerns, they should normally discuss them with their child's Class Teacher. In the majority of cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction.

1.3 The Class teacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. The Class teacher may be supported by a Phase Leader in managing and responding to the parent's complaint.

1.4 Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days from the receipt of the complaint, or in the event that the Class Teacher/ Phase Leader and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory solution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2: Formal complaints

A parent must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. The school will consider complaints made outside this time frame only if exceptional circumstances apply. Please note that any complaint received during a school holiday or within one month of the end of term or during half term may take longer to resolve than the timescales indicated below.

The Head Teacher may deal with the matter personally or delegate responsibility at this stage to a senior member of staff, as appropriate. All references to the Head Teacher shall therefore automatically be taken to include this nominee.

2.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved informally at **Stage 1**, then the parents should send their complaint in writing and with all relevant documents to the Head Teacher.

2.2 The complaint will be acknowledged within five working days of receipt during term time or as soon as practicable during the holidays.

2.3 In most cases, the Head Teacher will speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter, normally within seven days of receiving the complaint. Every attempt will be made to reach a resolution at this stage.

2.4 The Head Teacher may need to request additional information and/or carry out further investigation, for example where there are other parties involved. The parents will be notified of any change in timescales in order to carry out this investigation.

2.5 The Head Teacher may appoint a third party to carry out a Stage Two investigation, either a COLPAI governor or a governor from another school reporting to City of London Academy Trust (COLAT), depending on the nature of the complaint and the skills and availability of potential investigators.

2.6 The Head Teacher will keep written records of all meetings/interviews held in relation to this further investigation.

2.7 Once the Head Teacher is satisfied that all the relevant facts have been established, she/he will decide whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint in whole or in part. Parents will be informed of this decision in writing within one calendar month of receipt of the complaint. The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made relating to the complaint and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the School will take to resolve the complaint.

2.8 If the complaint is against the Head Teacher, the complaint should be sent in writing with all relevant documents to the Chair of Governors who will request a full report from the Head Teacher and all the relevant documents relating to the complaint. The Chair of Governors may also call for a briefing from members of staff. In most cases the Chair of Governors will meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair of Governors is satisfied that all the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed in writing of their decision concerning the complaint within one calendar month of receipt of the complaint. The Chair of Governors will give reasons for their decision and, where appropriate, details of actions the School will take to resolve the complaint.

2.9 If the parents are not satisfied with the decision at Stage 2, they should request a Panel Hearing, which is Stage 3 of this Procedure.

This is the final stage of the Complaints Procedure, and only takes place following a failure to reach an earlier resolution under Stages 1 or 2. A request for a Panel Hearing will only be considered if the relevant procedures at Stages 1 and 2 have been completed.

3.1 Parents should write to the Clerk to the Governing Body ("the Clerk") via the school office, within ten working days of receipt of the decision at Stage 2, setting out the grounds for their request to re-examine that decision. Requests received outside this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. Parents should provide any evidence supporting their request, along with their grounds for making it.

3.2 The Clerk will acknowledge the request for a Panel Hearing in writing within five working days and record the date upon which the request is received.

3.3 The Clerk will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration.

3.4 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 be governors of the school or another school reporting to COLAT. The Panel will be selected by the Chair of Governors. The Clerk will appoint one panel member to act as Chair of the Panel.

3.5 Every effort will be made to enable the Panel Hearing to take place within 15 working days of the receipt of the request or as soon as is reasonably practicable, although the Panel will not normally sit during school holidays.

3.6 The purpose of the Panel Hearing is to provide parents with the opportunity to present their arguments in front of a panel of governors who have no prior knowledge of the details of the case and who can, therefore, consider the issues without prejudice. Except in very unusual circumstances, **the Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been already raised as part of the Complaints Procedure conducted at Stages 1 and Stage 2.** New complaints must start with Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure.

3.7 The Clerk will provide each member of the Panel and also the parents with a copy of the relevant documents at least five working days before the hearing. If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that additional details connected to the complaint be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of any additional material requested by the Panel will also be provided to the parents, normally not later than three working days prior to the hearing.

Please note that the Panel will not normally accept as evidence recordings of conversations that were

obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

43.8 The parents are entitled to attend the Panel Hearing. They may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they so wish. This person may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. Parents are asked to notify the Clerk at least five working days before the hearing if anyone will be accompanying them.

3.9 The Head Teacher shall be entitled to attend the Panel Hearing. If the complaint is against the Head Teacher, he/she is also entitled to be accompanied by another person. This may be a relative, friend or teacher. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

3.10 If the complaint is against any other member of the School's staff, that person will also be entitled to attend the Panel Hearing. He/she is entitled to be accompanied by another person. This may be a relative, friend or teacher. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

3.11 The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend. Under most circumstances, it would be desirable for all parties directly involved in the complaint to be present at the Panel Hearing to enable the Panel to fairly assess the full merits of the complaint.

3.12 At least five working days before the Panel Hearing, the Clerk will:

• confirm and notify the complainant and parties attending of the date, time and place of the Panel Hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue is accessible

• provide the complainant with brief details of the Panel members who will be present at the Panel Hearing.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, the Clerk will then decide when to hold the meeting. The Panel will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties where available.

3.13 The Clerk will attend the hearing in order to keep full minutes of the meeting as a written record of the proceedings. The Panel Hearing will be held in private. Electronic recordings of Panel Hearings are not normally permitted, unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it.

3.14 The Chair of the Panel Hearing will conduct the hearing fairly, in such a way as to ensure that all those present, both complainant and persons against whom complaints are made, have the opportunity of hearing all the oral evidence and asking questions and making comments in an appropriate manner.

3.15 If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how this should be carried out. The Chair of the Panel may at his/her discretion adjourn the hearing for further investigation of any relevant issue.

3.16 After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and accordingly decide whether to:
• uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part
• dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the Panel will:
• decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint(s)
• make recommendations
• where appropriate, suggest changes to the school systems or procedures to prevent similar issues occurring in the future.

3.17 The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations may be notified orally at the hearing. If the Panel needs time to consider its decision, the Chair of the Panel Hearing will provide the complainant with its decision and a full explanation of the reasons for it by email or in writing within ten working days of the Panel Hearing.

3.18 A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations will be sent to the parents and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint has been made and also to the Head Teacher. The decision will also be made available to the Chair of Governors. Any actions arising from Panel recommendations will be reported to the next meeting of the Governing Body or as soon as possible thereafter.

3.19 Where the Panel Hearing has been conducted in accordance with the Stage 3 directions outlined above, the decision of the Panel will be final.

Suggested Procedure for the Stage 3 Panel Hearing (as suggested by The Key for School Governors)

1. The Chair opens the meeting and explains the procedure to be followed
2. The complainant can present their case, including calling any witnesses
3. The School presents its case, including calling any witnesses
4. The School sums up its defence
5. The complainant sums up their case and explains what they want to happen as a result of the complaint
6. All parties withdraw
7. The Panel considers the parties' cases and, where feasible, will make a decision during the meeting
8. With the Clerk, the Panel drafts a decision letter
9. The decision letter will be sent to the complainant, the members of the Panel, the Chair of Governors, the Head Teacher and the subject of the complaint within five working days

Confidentiality

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential. In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will normally be destroyed after a three-year period. In exceptional circumstances some details will be retained for a further period as necessary.

Monitoring and review
The Chair of the Governing Body will monitor the Complaints Procedure in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Head Teacher will ensure all complaints are logged and a record is kept of how they are resolved. The Chair of the Governing Body will examine this log on a termly basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure, reporting back to the Governing Body. This policy will be formally reviewed every three years by the Head Teacher and the Governing Body.

Complaints against the Head Teacher

These complaints will follow a similar process to all other types of complaint, however the Chair of

Governors must handle Stages 1 and 2.

Complaints against governors and/or Chair of Governors

If the complaint is about the Chair of Governors, an individual governor, or the whole governing body, it should be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body. The Clerk should select the most appropriate person to manage the complaint:
• for complaints about individual governors, this will usually be the Chair of Governors
• for complaints about the Chair of Governors, both the Chair and the Vice-Chair or the entire governing body, the complaint must be escalated to the Board of the Multi Academy Trust.

The number of formal complaints the school has received in the last 12 months will be published annually.

Next Steps
If you have a complaint which has not been satisfactorily resolved through this Complaints Procedure, you should contact:
Chair of the Multi Academy Trust
City of London Academies Trust
PO Box 270 Guildhall
London

The Education Funding and Skills Agency:
Academies Central Unit (Academy Complaints)
Education Funding Agency
Earlsdon Park
53-55 Butts Road
Coventry
CV1 3BH

Email: academyquestions@efa.education.gov.uk

If the complainant believes the School/Trust did not handle their complaint in accordance with their published Complaints Procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the ESFA after they have completed the Stage 3 – Appeal Panel. The ESFA will not normally re-investigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the School. They will consider whether the School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.
The complainant can refer their complaint to the ESFA online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on 0370 000 2288, or by writing to:
7Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit Education and Skills Funding Agency Cheylesmore House 5, Quinton Road Coventry CV1 2WT

This policy links to the COLPAI Vexatious Complaints Policy.

REVIEW
The School will review this Complaints Policy every year or as deemed appropriate.