

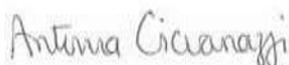
## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS OF STUDENTS

*This policy which applies to the whole college including boarding is publicly available at [www.natmatsci.ac.uk](http://www.natmatsci.ac.uk) and upon request a copy (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) may be obtained from the College Office.*

**This procedure applies to parents of students of the college and past students, if a complaint was raised when the student was still registered but does not cover exclusions. The Complaints Procedure is publicly available on the college website [www.natmatsci.ac.uk](http://www.natmatsci.ac.uk) and, on request, a copy (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) may be obtained from the college office.**

- **Monitoring and Review:** This procedure is subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Principal to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Principal logs all complaints (formal and informal) 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 College Board will undertake a full annual review of this procedure, inclusive of its implementation and the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged. Any deficiencies or weaknesses will be remedied immediately and without delay. They also retain details of the number of complaints, registered under the formal procedure during the preceding college year.

Signed:



Ms Antonia Giovanazzi  
Principal

Date reviewed: September 2018

Date of next review: September 2019

This policy was last reviewed and agreed by the Proprietor of the College in September 2018 and will next be reviewed no later than September 2019 or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

### Timescales

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. The complaint will normally be resolved within 28 days of the lodging of the complaint to its resolution whenever possible. Allowable exceptions to this rule are for instances when persons involved in the complaint are unavailable during holiday periods. In this case the parents will be kept informed. However, as far as possible, the meeting should not be delayed if the referral comes at the end of term, especially at the end of the summer term. Since the aim of the procedure is to resolve the issue and effect reconciliation if necessary, it will be best if the matter can come to the panel as quickly as possible, especially if the parents will already have been engaged over a longer period in attempts to put things right.

## Introduction

The National Mathematics and Science College will ensure that the quality of teaching and pastoral care offered to students will be 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 the concerns and anxieties of both students and parents. We aim for the closest co-operation between parents and the teachers to whom our students are entrusted. Dealing with parental concerns is a vital part of the ethos and mission of the National Mathematics and Science College. We aim to be open about the decisions we make and the actions we take and will always explain our rationale.

A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional wellbeing and security at stake, or when the college's stated aims or values are being ignored. A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint. If parents of students at the college do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the college in accordance with this procedure. We use the term "complainant" to refer to the individual or individuals making the complaint. Complaints will be resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of students. At every stage of the procedure, the handling of the complaint will be swift (using the agreed time frame), fair and necessarily confidential. Throughout the process, the National Mathematics and Science College will be willing to: listen, learn, admit mistakes, apologise if appropriate, address any issues raised and change practices and procedures if appropriate. In situations concerning alleged abuse, the Child Protection Procedures take precedence over the College complaints procedure. For any complaint that involves a potential child protection issue, this must be reported immediately to the Principal (See our Child Protection Policy for details of the procedure). Separate procedures will also apply if the Principal excludes or requires the removal of a student from the college and the parents seek a review of that decision.

### **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution** (*References to the number of 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 voice them as soon as they arise. Obviously, the more information the college gives to parents the less scope there is for misunderstanding. Parents will be encouraged to give feedback, preferably to the person concerned. In most cases, discussion, explanation, further information or an apology, if appropriate, will resolve any issues. Every effort will be made to allay concerns at this stage and with the least possible formality. Our ideal is that no concern should ever become a formal complaint, as through open dialogue, a resolution should always be accomplished.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's Form Tutor or Boarding Residential Warden. In most cases the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parent's satisfaction. If the person contacted cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to consult the Principal.
- The member of staff dealing with the matter will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date they were received. A written record is to be kept of the date a resolution was reached and the agreed nature of this.
- Should the matter not be resolved within 5 college days, or if National Mathematics and Science College and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure. A written record is to be kept of the date a resolution was reached and the agreed nature of this. The parents will then 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. These complaints will be treated at first in the informal resolution stage.

## **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution** (*References to the number of working days refer to term-time only*)

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Principal who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Principal will speak to the parents concerned, normally on the day of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- The Principal will:
  - establish what has happened so far and who has been involved; clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
  - meet with the complainant or contact them clarifying what the complainant feels would resolve the issue;
  - interview those involved, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish and
  - conduct each interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in questioning and keep notes of each interview.
- Within 5 college days of receiving the complaint, the Principal will complete the investigation and contact the complainant to arrange a meeting. At any point in the process the Principal may decide or agree to commission a further investigation. If this occurs, the timescale may be extended by a further 5 college days and the complainant will be informed in writing of the extension and the reason for it.
- When the investigation is complete, the Principal will meet the complainant to try to resolve the complaint. Any of the following may be appropriate at this point:
  - an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid in whole or in part; an apology; an explanation; clarification of any misunderstanding; an admission that the situation could have been handled better or differently;
  - an assurance that the event complained of will not recur; an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it will not be repeated and
  - an undertaking to review college Policies in light of the complaint.
- Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Principal will give reasons for the decision. A written record will also be kept of when a final outcome was reached.
- The Principal will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Should a parent or guardian have a complaint about the Principal it must be put in writing to the Principal, who investigates in the same way as with any other complaint
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure

## **Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing**

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution of this procedure) they will be referred to the Panel Convenor who has been appointed by the College Board to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. This should be in writing and include the nature of the complaint and how the college has handled it so far. The College Board is obliged to investigate the matter and will do everything possible to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the college. The Panel Convenor can be contacted in writing at the college.
- The Panel will consist of at least 3 people not directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the college. The Department for Education has given the following guidance on the identity of an independent panel member. *“Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other colleges, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered.”* Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the College Board.
- The Panel Convenor, on behalf of the Panel, should agree with all parties the date of the Appeal Meeting within 5 college days of receipt of the written referral of the complaint. The meeting itself should be held within 15

college days of the receipt of the referral. If the complainant or Head wishes to submit information in writing to the Panel this should be sent to the Panel Convenor at least 5 days before the date of the hearing.

- 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. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- The complainant, who could be parents or guardians, may be accompanied at the panel hearing by a friend or relative. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Complaints Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Complaints Panel will reach a decision and may make findings and recommendations, which it shall complete normally within 5 working days of the hearing.
- A copy of the Panel's findings, and/or any recommendation and the reasons for them will be:
  - sent by email or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about;
  - available for inspection on the college premises by the Chairman of the College Board and the Principal.

#### **Role of the Panel Convenor is:**

- to confirm to all parties in writing the date, time and venue of the hearing; to receive and distribute any documentation to be read before the hearing; to meet and welcome all parties as they arrive at the hearing; to record the proceedings and
- to notify all parties of the Panel's decision. The wording of any letters will be agreed with the Chair of the Panel.

#### **The role of the Chair of the Panel is to ensure that:**

- procedure is properly followed;
- the procedure for the hearing of the complaint is explained to all parties and that they can put their case without undue interruption;
- the issues are addressed; all parties are put at ease, especially those who are unfamiliar with such a hearing;
- proceedings are kept as informal as possible and that everyone treats each other with respect and courtesy;
- the Panel operates in an open-minded and independent way and time is given for all parties to consider 'new' evidence.

#### **Options open to the Panel**

The Panel may:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part; dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on an appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint or recommend changes to the college's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not re-occur.

#### **After the Hearing**

The Chair of the Panel agrees with the Convenor the wording of the letter to be sent to both parties. The Convenor will:

- ensure that the letter is sent out in accordance with the agreed time scales and procedure as stated in Stage 3 of this policy;
- write up the notes of the meeting and gives a copy to the Chair of the Panel and
- ensure that any recommendation to change college policies or procedures is put on the agenda for the next meeting of the Board of Directors.

**Confidentiality:**

Parents and Guardians can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Such correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except:

- where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

**Record keeping for the Whole College**

A written record of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage, or proceed to a panel hearing, is kept by the Principal for a minimum of three years. 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. A written record will also be kept of when an outcome was reached. The College Board examine this written record on an annual basis. The college will provide, on request to Ofsted, a written record of all complaints made during a specified period and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint. The number of formal complaints, received in an academic year, is made available to parents.

**Legal Status**

This policy incorporates the manner in which complaints are to be managed in accordance with Part 7, paragraph 33 (a) to (k) inclusive of The Education (Independent College Standards) (England) Regulations currently in force along with the provision of information being made available in Part 6 Paragraph 32 (3) (f) of the Regulatory Requirements.

## **Complaints Relating to Boarding Provision**

The College's written record of complaints identifies those complaints relating to boarding provision separately from complaints relating to college practice, and any action taken by the college because of those complaints.

## **Complaints Procedure for Boarding Students**

There is a separate complaints procedure for students' parents. A student's parents may wish to invoke the procedure available to them if they feel that the College has not dealt adequately with a complaint made by their child in accordance with the procedure described above.

### **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR BOARDING STUDENTS**

#### **Introduction**

Students should always feel that they can take a problem or complaint to any adult charged with their care and receive a sympathetic hearing. Most difficulties can be sorted out in this informal manner.

The following avenues of complaint are available:

- speaking to the Head of Boarding, or, a Residential Warden privately;
- speaking to the College Counsellor or any other responsible adult privately;
- speaking to the Principal privately.

#### **Making a Formal Complaint**

- A student will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith. We take complaints seriously and investigate them thoroughly.
- If any student feels the need to make a formal complaint about a matter which is causing him or her distress or a problem which cannot be resolved otherwise, the student may inform the Head of Boarding either verbally or in writing. The Head of Boarding will discuss the matter with the student as soon as possible or put the student in touch with an appropriate person outside the College.
- If a student prefers to talk to someone outside the College, the student should talk to their parents. If the student wishes to speak with an independent person or organisation, they can use the details below:

#### **Independent Listeners**

Cllr. Rachel Lancaster (Female) - Joint Chair of Governors - 07735 628566

David Mark Womble (Male) - Manager of Home for Adolescents - 02477 055228

#### **For students, up to 18**

Coventry Children's Social Care - 024 7678 8555 - [www.coventry.gov.uk](http://www.coventry.gov.uk)

ChildLine - 0800 1111 - [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

#### **For students over 18**

Coventry Adult Social Care - 0247 683 3003 - [www.coventry.gov.uk](http://www.coventry.gov.uk) - [ascdirect@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:ascdirect@coventry.gov.uk)

#### **Adults reporting**

NSPCC Helpline - 0808 800 5000 - [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

The Children's Commissioner for England - 0800 5280731 - [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

Local Authority Designated Officer - 0247683 3443 - [www.coventry.gov.uk](http://www.coventry.gov.uk) - [LADO@coventry.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:LADO@coventry.gcsx.gov.uk)

### **Procedure when a formal complaint is made**

- The person to whom a serious complaint is made will keep a written record of that complaint and of its outcome. The Head of Boarding will review these records annually.
- A complaint made by a student will be resolved, either to the student's satisfaction or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of students, within 72 hours wherever possible.
- There is a separate complaints procedure for students' parents. A student's parents may wish to invoke the procedure available to them if they feel that the College has not dealt adequately with a complaint made by their child in accordance with the procedure described above.

### **Procedure when the outcome of a formal complaint is felt to be unsatisfactory**

If a student, or his/her parents, feel that the procedure detailed above has not dealt with the complaint satisfactorily, a letter setting out the unresolved complaint should be sent to:

Ms. Margot Veronique Robinson  
2 Westwood Way, Coventry CV4 8JB  
[v.robinson@natmatsci.ac.uk](mailto:v.robinson@natmatsci.ac.uk)  
0784 332 8087