ABBEY DLD
GROUP OF COLLEGES
CAMBRIDGE • LONDON • MANCHESTER

Abbey DLD Group – Complaints Procedure

Principles

The Abbey DLD Group provides a clear, transparent and professional process for dealing with complaints relating to its colleges.

All colleges aim to work collaboratively in partnership with parents[1]. However, it is recognised that issues may arise which are not resolved to the satisfaction of parents, and that they will wish to make a formal complaint. If parents or pupils do have a complaint, it will be treated in accordance with the procedures detailed below. Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the college is a complaint, and in the scope of the procedure, however the college labels it.

Responding to complaints will be given the highest priority and will be dealt with comprehensively.

The days specified in this policy refer to days that the college is in session. Complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. The target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

The Group's complaints procedure is intended primarily for concerns regarding the education, welfare, conduct, or treatment of current students. Complaints relating to a student who has left the College will only be considered where they are submitted within three months of the student's final date of attendance.

Complaints received more than three months after a student's departure will not normally be considered, unless the Principal determines that there are exceptional circumstances which prevented the complaint from being raised sooner and that it remains possible to conduct a fair and proportionate investigation.

The Group reserves the right not to investigate complaints where the passage of time would make it unreasonable or impracticable to establish the facts.

Process

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- We hope that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's teacher or tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved immediately by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the teacher/tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to consult the Principal.
- Complaints made directly to the Principal will usually be referred to the relevant teacher/tutor unless the Principal deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- The teacher/tutor will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on

[1] Reference in this document to a parent includes (for the sake of convenience) a child's guardian.

which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved immediately, receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged within 5 days and a response provided within 10 working days. If a response cannot be provided within that time, or in the event that the 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 Principal. The Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Principal will meet with the parents concerned, normally within two days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Principal to carry out further investigations, in which case a definitive answer will be given within 10 further working days.
- The Principal will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Principal 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 in writing. The Principal will also give reasons for their decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the resolution of the Principal, they may opt to proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If, following a failure to reach an earlier resolution with the Principal, the parents seek to invoke Stage 3, then the matter will be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Principal will explain the process, which will involve writing to the Chair of Governors with all relevant information, via enquiries@abbeydld.co.uk
- The Chair of Governors will then convene a panel to consider the complaint. The Panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom must be independent of the management and running of the college.
- The Chair of the Panel will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 working days.
- 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 three days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation is not permitted.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should proceed.
- After due consideration of all facts considered relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 14 working days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it.
- The Panel's findings and recommendations will be sent in writing to the complainant, the Principal and, where relevant, the person regarding whom the complaint was made. A copy of any complaint and findings/recommendations will be available for inspection on the college premises by the proprietor and the Principal, and also made available to Inspectors,

on request.
- This exhausts the complaints procedure after the decision has been communicated in writing.

Complaints about the Principal

In the event that parents have a complaint about the Principal, the three-step process above will apply. In the first instance, parents should seek informal resolution by speaking directly with the Principal about their concerns (stage 1). If a resolution cannot be reached, parents should put their complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors via enquiries@abbeydld.co.uk, who will conduct investigations as per stage 2. If parents are still not satisfied, the matter will be referred to a complaints panel, as outlined in stage 3.

Complaints about Data Processing / Privacy

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of the Group's handling of your personal data you have the right to lodge a complaint by completing a Data Processing Complaints Form and emailing it to enquiries@abbeydld.co.uk - the form is available on the portal, or linked here.

All complaints will be handled in accordance with the Complaints Procedure, and the Data Protection Act (2018) including Section 164A expectations. Where complaints escalate beyond stages 1 and 2, there is the option to refer your concerns to the ICO for independent handling. In the event that a complaint is urgent or is linked to safeguarding concerns, please clearly indicate this in your submission.

If you remain dissatisfied following the Complaints Procedure, you can escalate your complaint to the ICO via their website - https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/ .

Recording of Complaints

All complaints which have reached stages 2 or 3 are duly recorded in the Complaints Register, including the outcome of the individual complaint and any actions taken as a result, regardless of whether they are upheld. The stage at which the complaint is concluded is recorded, whether at stage 2 (Formal Resolution) or Stage 3 (Panel Hearing).

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential; the exceptions to confidentiality are the Secretary of State and an inspection body under section 109 of the 2008 Act.

Information regarding the number of formal complaints received in the previous academic year is available by contacting the college directly via the contact details on their website.

The College will provide OFSTED and ISI on request with a written record of any complaints made during a specified period and the action that was taken as a result.

Contact details:

OFSTED
Ofsted - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Education: 0300 123 4666
General enquiries: 0300 123 1231

ISI
https://www.isi.net/contact

Address: Schools Inspectorate
CAP House
9 – 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA

Tel: 020 760