



Francis Holland Schools

Name of Procedure

Author

Committee for Review & Approval

Date of Last Revision

Date of Committee Approval

Date of Next SLT Review

Date of Next Committee Approval

Regulation Number

Regulation Description

Complaints from Parents of Current Pupils

Headteachers

Education

December 2023

February 2024

December 2024

February 2025

Part 7 33

Complaints Procedure

The manner in which complaints are handled

Revision History	
This section should be completed by the reviewer each time this procedure is reviewed	
Changes made [brief description of edits]	Date [Term and Year]
Amendments to the Introduction, Stage 1 and Leavers and legal requirements relating to Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) Reporting Standard and OFSTED standard for EYFS providers. Inclusions of "Definition of Complaints and Concerns" Written records retainment updates	February 2024

Availability of this document:

Copies of this document are available at francisholland.org.uk/policies/ or on request from the school office, Francis Holland School (Regent's Park, Ivor Place, London NW1 6XR or Francis Holland School (Sloane Square), 39 Graham Terrace, London SW1W 8JF.

Application of this document:

This procedure applies to both Sloane Square and Regent's Park, and to the EYFS as well as junior and senior schools. Where there are differences in procedures between the schools this has been clearly highlighted in the appendices

Complaints from Parents of Current Pupils

Francis Holland Schools Trust puts the wellbeing and safety of the young people in its care at the forefront of all its policies and wishes to work with parents closely to ensure that this provision is outstanding. It welcomes comments, concerns and praise, and acknowledges a parent's right to complain. Francis Hollands Schools enjoy close relationships with parents, offer exceptional pastoral care, and complaints are rare.

When a concern or complaint is first raised with a member of staff, it is defined as an informal notification of dissatisfaction or concern. Should it not be resolved through this first stage of this procedure, but progress to stage 2, the formal stage, it is defined as a 'formal complaint'.

This procedure applies only to complaints made by parents.

Definition of Complaints and Concerns

The Trust advises staff that a complaint is "an expression or statement of dissatisfaction by a parent however made, about actions taken or a lack of action, and which seeks action by the Trust".

A concern is defined as "an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought".

Many issues can be resolved informally without the need to follow formal procedures; nonetheless the Trust will take informal concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

The written record of complaints is limited to all those made in writing under the formal part of the procedure. Patterns of concerns will be detected by their reporting at the relevant Senior Leadership Team meeting. However, there will be occasions when a parent will want to raise their concerns formally, and in such cases, they will be treated as complaints and the Complaints Procedure will be followed.

The Trust wishes to ensure that:

- parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
- the Trust responds to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way;
- parents realise that the Trust will listen and take complaints seriously; and
- the Trust will take action where appropriate.

This procedure incorporates a three stage process and is compliant with Part 7, clause 33 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution of Dissatisfaction or Concern

If parents have a concern or complaint, they should normally contact their daughter's Form Tutor, or an appropriate member of staff, by telephone, email or letter, or by an arranged meeting. The concern or complaint should normally be raised within thirty days of the event taking place, or of the matter first coming to the attention of the parents. The Form Tutor, or an appropriate member of staff, will endeavour to resolve the dissatisfaction or concern in a timely manner to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Tutor cannot resolve the concern alone, it is likely that a Form Tutor will discuss it with or refer this to: the relevant Head of Department, Head of Section, or appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Parents should expect a response within **5 working days** explaining how the School proposes to proceed and be given a date by which time to expect a written response, which should be no longer than a further **10 working days**. If the complaint is received in the week the term ends or in the holidays, parents should expect a response within **5 working days of the start of the next term** explaining how the School proposes to proceed and be given a date by which time to expect a written response, which should be no longer than a **further 10 working days from the start of the next term**.

The response will provide an outcome of the complaint, explain the conclusion, the reasons for it and, if appropriate, describe any action taken or proposed.

Parents may prefer to take the complaint directly to a more senior member of staff, for example, the Senior Deputy Head and the provisions of this Stage 1 – Informal Resolution shall apply.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

In the event that parents are not satisfied with the response (whether from the Form Tutor, or other senior member of staff) under Stage 1 above, they should put the complaint, and the reasons why they are not satisfied with the response, in writing either to the Head or, if the complaint is about or implicates the Head, to the Chairman of Governors. A formal complaint should normally be lodged within seven working days of the date of the verbal or written report to parent under stage 1.

The complaint should be lodged either:

With the Head

Parents should expect a response within **5 working days** explaining how the School proposes to proceed and be given a date by which time to expect a written response, which should be no longer than a **further 10 working days**. If the complaint is received in the week the term ends or in the holidays, parents should expect a response within **3 working days of the start of the next term** explaining how the School proposes to proceed and be given a date by which time to expect a written response, which should be no longer than a **further 10 working days from the start of the next term**.

Within the time periods set out above:

- (i) In most cases, the Head will speak to the parents concerned. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary, however, for the Head to ask the Senior Deputy Head or another appropriate member of staff to carry out investigations.
- (ii) The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Once s/he is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made with a written response to parents, informing them of the decision, giving reasons for the decision and, if appropriate, describe any action taken or proposed.

OR

To the Chairman of Governors (if the complaint is about or implicates the Head)

If the complaint is about or implicates the Head, parents may write to the Chairman of Governors with their complaint by contacting the Clerk to the Governors at the following address: Francis Holland Schools Trust, 35 Bourne Street, London SW1W 8JA, email clerk@fhst.org.uk.

Within **5 working days** of receipt of the complaint, the Clerk will refer the complaint to the Chairman of Governors who will nominate a Governor to consider the complaint and, via the Clerk, write to you with the name of the nominated Governor. If the complaint is received in the week the term ends or

in the holidays, parents should expect a response within **5 working days from the start of the next term**.

The nominated Governor will ask for a report from the Head and will examine matters thoroughly before responding and will normally do so **within 10 working days, from the date of their nomination**. If the complaint is received in the week the term ends or in the holidays, parents should expect a response within **10 working days from the start of the next term**.

Before responding, the nominated Governor will normally speak to the parents concerned, although if there is a meeting, the time limits set out above may extend the timeframe within which the nominated Governor would respond but this should be by no longer than **10 working days from the date of the meeting**. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

The nominated Governor will keep written records of all meetings held in relation to the complaint. Once (s)he is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made with a written response to parents, informing them of the decision, giving reasons for this decision and, if appropriate, describe any action taken or proposed.

Stage 3 - Appeal

Queries or complaints about this procedure

Should the matter not be resolved at Stage 2 (above) parents may wish to invoke an appeal **within 10 calendar days of the date of written notification of the school's decision**, by notice in writing to the Clerk to the Governors at the following address: Francis Holland Schools Trust, 35 Bourne Street, London SW1W 8JA.

The Clerk will refer the matter to the Chairman of Governors who will refer the matter to a Complaints Panel (the "Panel") who shall be selected by the Chairman of Governors. The Panel shall comprise 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 School, and one of whom shall be appointed the chairman of the Panel. The chairman of the Panel, in consultation with the Chairman of Governors, reserves the right to substitute members of the Panel with other members of the Council of Governors.

A hearing before the Panel ("Hearing") will take place as soon as practicable, and normally within **15 working days** (this may be longer if the complaint is received during holiday periods but shall not be longer than 10 working days from the start of the next term) of receipt of the notice by the Clerk.

Parents will be asked if there are any papers they would like to have circulated beforehand. If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related information be supplied in advance of the Hearing. Copies of all papers shall be supplied to all parties usually not later than **5 working days prior to the Hearing**.

The parents may be accompanied to the Hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate and the companion should not be a lawyer. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.

The Hearing shall not be conducted in an adversarial way and the primary concern of the Panel is to deal with matters fairly and, therefore, the chairman of the Panel has discretion to conduct the Hearing (including deciding on who may attend) in any way which will achieve this. The chairman of the Panel can give directions, which may include adjourning the Hearing in order to request further information (from either the parents or the School or third parties) or otherwise carry out further investigations or call witnesses. At the Hearing the Panel shall consider the merits of the complaint in full.

After due consideration of all the facts the Panel considers relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make findings and recommendations, which it shall complete within **10 working days** of the Hearing.

The decision of the Panel will be final.

The Panel's findings and recommendations, if any, will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Chairman of Governors and, where relevant, the person(s) complained about.

The Panel's findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the Trust's premises by Governors and the Head.

Queries or complaints about this procedure

Please direct any queries or complaints about this procedure to the Clerk to the Governors at clerk@fhst.org.uk.

Records

A written record of all formal complaints shall be kept and whether they are resolved following a formal procedure (i.e. Stage 2) or proceed to Appeal (i.e. Stage 3) and action taken by the School as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). Records of complaints which do not have safeguarding implications will be retained for a minimum of 7 years (a period determined by the 6-year inspection cycle with allowance for unforeseen circumstances). Where there is a safeguarding angle records concerning allegations of abuse will be preserved for the term of the Independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

Confidentiality

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially, although the Panel's findings and recommendations will be available for inspection, as referred to above.

It is the School's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children. 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 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

Furthermore, knowledge of the complaint (and any relevant papers) will usually be limited to the person to whom the complaint is addressed, the Head, the Chairman of Governors, the COO, the Clerk to the Governors and those directly involved.

Action which needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints will be handled confidentially within the School.

Additional EYFS Arrangements

Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. Parents will be notified by ISI or Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received.

Francis Holland Schools Trust will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The

record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Retention of Records Policy.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the ISI:

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

Anonymity

Anonymous complaints may not be pursued.

Information requests

The complaints procedure is for genuine complaints or concerns and should not be used simply to obtain information from the School. Parents' rights to information are governed by the standard terms and conditions and by law.

Please refer to our Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice on the Trust website for details on how we process and use this data, and what rights you may exercise regarding your data under the law.

Leavers

If parents wish to complain about something affecting their daughter after she has left the School, this must take the form of a letter to the Head or Chairman of Governors **within one** month of leaving. A school leaver is defined as a pupil who leaves at the end of year 13 and their leaving date is August 31st. An in year school leaver is defined as a pupil who is no longer on the Trust's school roll, and has been registered on another school's roll, the date of enrolment at the pupil's new school is their leaving date. At the discretion of the Head or Chairman of Governors, such complaints may be dealt with outside of these procedures.

Serial or vexatious complaints

The Trust will follow the Department for Education advice *Best Practice Guidance For School Complaints Procedures 2020* in defining and dealing with complaints which might be considered serial or vexatious in nature. This advice may be viewed [here](#).

Number of complaints during the preceding and current school year

FHS Regent's Park		
Year	No. of Stage 2 Complaints	No. of Stage 3 Complaints
2022-2023	4	0
FHS Sloane Square		
Year	No. of Stage 2 Complaints	No. of Stage 3 Complaints
2022-2023	4	0