

Complaints from Parents of Pupils Policy

This policy applies to:

Francis Holland Regent's Park

Francis Holland Sloane Square

Francis Holland Prep

Where there are differences between the schools these have been clearly highlighted.

Policy owner	RP: Head SSq: Head Prep: Head
Type of policy	Regulatory - Regulation number: Part 7 para 33 Demonstrate the manner in which parental complaints of current pupils are managed.
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Linked Policies	Exclusion Policy

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Introduction

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. The Trust strives to enjoy close relationships with parents, and to offer exceptional pastoral care and high academic standards. It welcomes comments, concerns, and praise, and acknowledges a parent's right to complain or to raise a concern.

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 the first stage of this procedure, but progress to stage 2, the formal stage, it will be defined as a 'formal complaint'.

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 act where appropriate.

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.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

Many issues and concerns can arise on a day-to-day basis that can usually be resolved quickly and informally through discussion and liaison with a pupil's Form Tutor. A complaint is a formal expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School falls within the scope of this procedure. A complaint may arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong or failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for pupils and parents can be assured that pupils will not be penalised for a complaint that they raise in good faith.

If parents do have a complaint or a concern to raise, the Trust's complaints procedure will be followed.

This procedure incorporates a **three stage process** and is compliant with Part 7, clause 33 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Although this Complaints Procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils. We are conscious that where complaints are lodged at or near the end of a school term, it can often be difficult to progress investigations quickly when the relevant parties are unavailable. Consequently, the timescales for responses set out below in our stages will be adhered to wherever possible but are not to be taken as absolute.

"Parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a pupil about whom the complaint relates.

STAGE 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION OF DISSATISFACTION OR CONCERN

If parents have a concern or complaint, they should normally contact the pupil's Form Tutor, or an appropriate member of staff, by telephone, email, 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 parent's/parents' satisfaction. If the Form Tutor cannot resolve the concern alone, it is likely that the 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.

Complaints made directly to a Head of Department or member of the Senior Leadership team will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor/Head of Year unless Head of Department/member of Senior Leadership team deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.

Parents should expect a response/acknowledgement where possible within **five working days**. If the complaint is received in the week the term ends or in the holidays, parents should expect a response usually within **five working days of the start of the next term** explaining how the School proposes to proceed.

The School will then aim to provide a response which will provide an outcome of the complaint or concern raised, ideally and where possible within **fifteen working days** of the above acknowledgement. This response may be verbal or in writing with a record kept of any communication.

Parents may prefer to take the complaint directly to a more senior member of staff, for example, the Senior Deputy Head or on occasion the 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 Chair of Governors. A formal complaint should normally be lodged within **five working days** of the date of the verbal or written response to the parent under stage 1.

The complaint should be lodged either:

With the Head

Parents should typically expect a response within **five working days** explaining how the School proposes to proceed. If the complaint is received in the week the term ends or in the holidays, parents should expect a response within **five working days of the start of the next term** explaining how the School proposes to proceed.

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 conduct investigations.
- (ii) The Head will keep records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a written response will be made to parents describing any action taken or proposed action. Parents should expect this response within **fifteen working days** from the date when the school communicated how it intends to proceed.

OR

To the Chair 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 Chair 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.
or by email clerk@fhst.org.uk.

Within **five working days** of receipt of the complaint, the Clerk will refer the complaint to the Chair of Governors who will nominate a Governor to consider the complaint and, via the Clerk, write to the parent(s) 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 **five 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 fifteen 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 **fifteen working days from the start of the next term**.

Before responding, the nominated Governor will normally speak to the parent/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. This timeframe should be extended by no longer than **fifteen 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 the parent(s), 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 five working 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 Chair of Governors who will refer the matter to a Complaints Panel (the "Panel") who shall be selected by the Chair 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 Chair of the Panel. The Chair of the Panel, in consultation with the Chair 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 **fifteen working days** of the receipt of the notice by the Clerk (this may be longer if the complaint is received during holiday periods or if there are difficulties convening the Panel).

The parent(s) 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 **five working days prior to the Hearing**.

The parents may be accompanied at 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 Chair of the Panel has discretion to conduct the Hearing (including deciding on who may attend) in any way which will best achieve this. The Chair of the Panel can give directions, which may include adjourning the Hearing in order to request further information (from either the parent(s) or the School or third parties) or otherwise conduct 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 **fifteen 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 parent(s), the Head, the Chair 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.

Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Once the complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented at all three stages as detailed in this Policy, the matter will be considered closed, and complainants should not expect the Trust to deal with it/consider it further.

Any further contact may be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this Complaints Policy/Procedure. Any action taken by the Trust with regards serial/vexatious complaints will follow current Government guidance ['Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures' DfE 2021].

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 pupils. 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 Chair 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 managed 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.

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 a pupil after they have left the School, this must take the form of a letter to the Head or Chair 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 Chair 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 RECEIVED DURING THE PRECEDING YEAR**(For current School Year please contact the respective School's Head's PA)**

FHS Regent's Park		
Year	No. of Stage 2 Complaints	No. of Stage 3 Complaints
2023-2024	4	0
2024-2025	3	0
FHS Sloane Square		
Year	No. of Stage 2 Complaints	No. of Stage 3 Complaints
2023-2024	2	0
2024-2025	1	0
FHS Prep		
Year	No. of Stage 2 Complaints	No. of Stage 3 Complaints
2023-2024	2	0
2024-2025	5	0