



4 - 18 yrs Co-educational Independent Day School

Arnold Lodge

Complaints

Procedure *including*

EYFS

Approved by: Dai Preston, Headteacher

Date: 31st August 2025

Last Reviewed: September 2025

Review Period: Biennial

Next Review Due: September 2026

Introduction

Arnold Lodge School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint they can be expected to be treated by the school in accordance with this Procedure. Our aim is to have an open organisation, climate and culture.

Aims

The school recognises and acknowledges parents' entitlement to complain. Arnold Lodge welcomes all constructive feedback and will endeavour to provide the best educational provision possible at all times.

We hope to work with you in the best interests of the children and young people in our care.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. A concern or a complaint may be made if a parent thinks that the school has:

- > done something wrong
- > failed to do something it should have done
- > acted unfairly

We consider a complaint to be one which is made formally in writing and has failed to be resolved by stage 1 of the complaints procedure and has then been escalated to Stage 2. A complete record of formal complaints (from stage 2) and actions will be kept. Findings that proceed to a panel hearing will be available on the school premises for inspection by the Directors. We will aim at all times to:

- > Be impartial and non-adversarial
- > Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- > Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- > Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- > Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- > Make sure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- > Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- > Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation process

Complaints Procedure

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full. To support this, we will make sure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

In addition, it addresses duties set out in the [Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework](#) with regards to dealing with complaints about the school's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.

Legislation and Guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to [the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils at the school.

It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on [creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations](#), and refers to [good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE).

Scope

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Exclusion
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline
- Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

Persistent correspondence

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy.

Stages of complaint procedure

Stage 1 - Informal Complaint

Stage 1

Informal Complaints may be made initially on an informal basis by letter, telephone call, e-mail, verbally or during a meeting. They should normally be raised with the form tutor, mentor or class teacher in the first instance, or with the relevant subject teacher if the concern is an academic issue. Any concern referred to a member of staff should be resolved normally within five working days.

Concerns made directly to a member of Senior Leadership Team or the Head will usually be referred to the relevant teacher unless deemed more appropriate to be dealt with personally.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

2(i)

If the concern persists and cannot be resolved on an informal basis, it should be taken to the Head as a written letter of complaint (whether written by email or by hand). The Head, or the member of staff the Head deems most appropriate to handle the complaint, will then investigate the matter and reply normally within 10 working days.

The investigating officer for any such complaints will have the authority and standing to investigate the matter and the ability to make recommendations for improvement should any arise. ALS' Compliance Officer, Mrs Helen King, will often act as the investigating officer for Stage 2 Complaints (unless where the complaint refers to a member of the operations team at a comparable or higher level of authority than the Compliance Officer).

The Compliance Officer has the authority and standing to make recommendations to the Head and Leadership Team should there be any. The Compliance Officer also has direct access to the Board of Directors should this be required.

2(ii)

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation normally within 28 working days. EYFS parents have the right to complain directly to Ofsted and/or ISI about the fulfilment of the EYFS curriculum requirements but this is only the case once the EYFS complaint has gone through the whole of the school's complaints procedure.

The record of complaints must be made available to OFSTED and ISI on request.

A written record of all complaints that reach stage 2 will be kept and such record cover whether they are resolved following this procedure, or proceed to panel hearing and cover the action taken by the school (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If parents are still not satisfied with the response they may request that the complaint be placed in the hands of a panel of at least three people who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom is independent of the running of and management of the school. For example, the panel might consist of two directors and an outside professional. The Directors will be responsible for the appointment of the panel normally within 28 working days of a request for a hearing. Parents may attend and be accompanied by a friend if they wish. Legal representation is not appropriate at such a hearing.

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should write to Mrs Di Gardner, School Director at the school's address. Mrs Gardner will then call a hearing of the Complaints Panel and will take responsibility for assembling an appropriate panel as outlined above.

The panel's findings and recommendations will be communicated in writing or electronically to the complainants, Head and, where relevant, the person who is the subject of a complaint, normally within 5 working days. The Panel's findings are final.

A written record will be kept of all complaints and will show whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and will list the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

These records are kept securely within the Head teacher's office and will remain confidential, except where the Directors or the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

These records should be made available to Directors and ISI Inspectorate if requested.

Our 'normal' response times should be met as often as possible. Some flexibility may be required in instances of staff absence or outside of term time where it may be difficult to investigate concerns and complaints. Parents will always be informed where there may be reasonable delays.

All complaints will be retained for seven years.

Referring complaints on completion of the schools procedures

The Independent Schools Inspectorate

Notwithstanding the procedures explained in this document, at the completion of the whole complaints procedure (including panel hearing) parents have the right to address complaints to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). We will provide the ISI, on request, details of all complaints.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Parents with children in the Early Years Foundation Stage can make a complaint to OFSTED and/or ISI in regards to the delivery of the EYFS curriculum, following completion of the whole of the complaints process (including panel hearing). The record of the complaint will be made available to OFSTED upon request. Complainants will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.

OFSTED

Piccadilly Gate,
Store Street,
Manchester
M1 2WD

Ofsted Helping: 0300 123 4666

<https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/online-complaints>

ISI: CAP House

9-12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA

ISI: 020 7600 0100

Email: concerns@isi.net

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure and the complaint is regarding the school not meeting standards set by the DfE in any of the following areas, the complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE:

- Education
- Pupil welfare and health and safety
- School premises
- Staff suitability
- Making information available to parents
- The spiritual, moral, social or cultural development of pupils

The DfE will consider reports of a major failure to meet the standards. Where appropriate, it can arrange an emergency inspection to look at pupil welfare and health and safety, and make sure that the school deals with serious failings.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

The Directors and School Head Teacher will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Senior leadership team where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

Anonymous Complaints

It is at the Headteacher's discretion what action, if any, should be taken in response to anonymous complaints.

The number of Complaints that reached Stage 3 received by the school in the previous academic year [2024-2025] is 0.

This policy is available on the school website www.arnoldlodge.com

Concerns & Complaints Procedure

