



GODOLPHIN

Complaints Policy

(Regulatory)



Reviewed: August 2023
Next Review: August 2024
Reviewed by: Head/Head of Prep

See also:
[Living together at Godolphin – Complaints by Students](#)

Complaints Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Godolphin ("the School") aims to maintain high academic standards and cultural achievement within a caring environment. We seek to encourage responsibility and personal fulfillment so that students attain their maximum potential. The School is dynamic and works with the community to prepare its students for life-long learning and adult independence.
- 1.2 We value and respect all students equally and provide equality of opportunity wherever possible.
- 1.3 However, if parents of students do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with respect and in accordance with this Complaints Policy. This is a whole-school policy, which also relates to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Although this Complaints Policy is made available to parents of prospective students, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current students.
- 1.4 If you have any concerns about safeguarding, please contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Mr Richard Dain immediately: DainR@godolphin.org and refer to the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

2 Overarching principles

- 2.1 We aim to ensure that our Complaints Policy:
 - 2.1.1 is simple to understand and use
 - 2.1.2 is impartial
 - 2.1.3 is non-adversarial
 - 2.1.4 enables a full and fair investigation
 - 2.1.5 respects confidentiality where necessary
 - 2.1.6 addresses all the points at issue and provides an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
 - 2.1.7 provides information to the School's senior management team so that services can be improved, where necessary.
- 2.2 This Complaints Policy is compliant with [The Independent School Standards - Guidance for independent schools \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) April 2019, [National Minimum Standards for boarding schools \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) 2022 Standard 14, and the [Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) paragraphs 3.75 and 3.76 as of September 4 2023.

- 2.3 Details of the Complaints Policy, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, will be made available to parents of students and of prospective students and provided, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate. This information may be requested from the Clerk to the Governors.
- 2.4 The School will make its complaints procedure available on its website and will also ensure that any parents who request it are sent a copy of this document. This procedure will only be available for use by parents of students that have left the School where the complaint was initially raised while the student was still attending the School.
- 2.5 In the Senior School, students themselves are referred to the document *Living together at Godolphin – Complaints by Students*, which explains how they can seek help and, if necessary, make a complaint. In the Prep, pupils are encouraged to talk to an adult member of staff, for example, their form teacher about any concerns they may have.
- 2.6 It is the School's aim to address any complaints in a positive manner and as quickly as possible and all parents and students are encouraged to tell the School of any worries and concerns before they become major issues.

3 Concerns and complaints

- 3.1 This policy distinguishes between a concern and a complaint in the following way:
 - 3.1.1 A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.
 - 3.1.2 A complaint may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.
- 3.2 Concerns can often be resolved without the need to use the stages of the Complaints Procedure. The School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve them as quickly as possible.
- 3.3 A concern should be raised with the most appropriate member of staff and can be raised in writing, including by email, by telephone or in person.
- 3.4 If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the School Business Manager will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the School Business Manager will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartiality is more important than seniority.

3.5 If you feel that your concern has not been satisfactorily dealt with, you may pursue it as a complaint.

4 How to make a complaint

4.1 A complaint may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong or has failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

4.2 Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially and that a student will not be penalised for a complaint made in good faith.

4.3 A complaint can be made in person, in writing, including by email, or by telephone. It may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, if the third party has appropriate consent to do so.

4.4 Types of complaint and where to direct them:

4.4.1 Education Matters

If the complaint relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, it should be discussed with the student's Tutor in the first instance. The Tutor will help parents to put their concerns, if necessary, to the appropriate Head of Department or the Academic Deputy. If the concern relates to the Tutor, the Head of Year should be contacted.

4.4.2 Pastoral care

If the complaint relates to a matter outside the classroom, parents should contact the Housemistress (boarders) or the Head of Year (Sarums) in the first instance who will refer parents as appropriate to the Pastoral Deputy, Head of Year or, if necessary or if they wish, to the Head. If the complaint relates to the Housemistress/ Head of Year parents should refer directly to the Pastoral Deputy.

4.4.3 Disciplinary Matters

A complaint about disciplinary matters should be first raised with the Housemistress/ Head of Year who may refer parents to the member of staff who imposed the sanction. If the matter is still unresolved parents will be referred to the Senior Deputy Head.

4.4.4 Financial Matters

A complaint about matters relating to fees or extras should be addressed to the School Business Manager.

4.4.5 Godolphin Prep

In the Prep, academic, pastoral or disciplinary matters should be raised with the pupil's teacher or tutor who may be able to resolve the matter. Parents may prefer to raise their concern or complaint with the Prep Head.

- 4.5 Complaints against a student should be made to your child's form tutor in the first instance.
- 4.6 Complaints against school staff (except the Head) should be made in the first instance to the Head via the school office or email: Head@godolphin.org. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
- 4.7 Complaints that involve or are about the Head should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the Clerk to the Governors: D'Arcy-IrvineA@godolphin.org. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
- 4.8 Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governors via the school office or email: D'Arcy-IrvineA@godolphin.org. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
- 4.9 In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure.
- 4.10 We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Head or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation (for example in relation to a Child Protection issue).

5 **Time limit for bringing a complaint**

- 5.1 You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.
- 5.2 We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

6 **Scope of this Complaints Procedure**

- 6.1 The procedure set out below covers all complaints about any provision of facilities or services by the School. Other school policies and statutory procedures will apply to other complaints, including: Child protection and safeguarding matters; Whistleblowing; Staff grievances; Staff conduct; Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN).

- 6.2 If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.
- 6.3 If a complainant commences legal action against the School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

7 Resolving complaints

- 7.1 There are three stages to the School's Complaints Procedure:

Stage 1: Informal complaint

Stage 2: Formal complaint

Stage 3: Panel hearing

- 7.2 At each stage in the procedure, the School will endeavour to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

7.2.1 an explanation

7.2.2 an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better

7.2.3 an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur

7.2.4 an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made

7.2.5 an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint; and/or

7.2.6 an apology.

- 7.3 If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

- 7.4 It is not within the powers of the panel to make any financial reward, nor to impose sanctions on staff, students or parents. The panel will generally make findings and recommendations to the Head and/or Governing Body for consideration in addition to offering one of the above solutions.

8 Stage 1 – Informal complaints

- 8.1 It is to be hoped that most complaints can be expressed and resolved quickly and on an informal basis. We accept that it may be appropriate for some complaints to be dealt with at Stage 2 at the outset.
- 8.2 Complaints should be raised with the member of staff/individual concerned.
- 8.3 The recipient will make a written record of the complaint and the date on which it was received. During term time, the recipient will acknowledge your complaint in writing within 24 hours of receipt and try to resolve the matter within 5 days of receipt.
- 8.4 On some occasions, the complaint raised may require investigation or discussion with others (for example, a Head of Department/Head of Year, the Deputy Head and/or the Head (Senior School/Prep), as appropriate). At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response within 7 days of the date of receipt of the complaint. It is anticipated that the vast majority of complaints will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way.
- 8.5 If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

9 Stage 2 – Formal complaints

- 9.1 All formal complaints must be made in writing and addressed to the Head, (unless they are about the Head), via the school office or by email: Head@godolphin.org. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
- 9.2 The Head will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 days. Where necessary, the letter or email will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome is sought.
- 9.3 In most cases, the Head will meet or speak with the complainant, normally within 7 days of receiving the formal complaint, to discuss the matter.
- 9.4 The Head will investigate the complaint, calling for a full report and copies of all relevant documentation.

Note: The Head may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the final decision.

- 9.5 During the investigation, the Head (or investigator) will:
 - 9.5.1 if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish; and
 - 9.5.2 keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

- 9.6 At the conclusion of their investigation, the Head will provide a formal written response to the complaint which will be sent to the complainant within 14 days of receipt of the complaint.
- 9.7 If the Head is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.
- 9.8 The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions that the School will take to resolve the complaint.
- 9.9 The Head will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.
- 9.10 If the complaint is about the Head or a member of the governing body, the Chair of Governors (or a suitably skilled governor as nominee) will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.
- 10 Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**
- 10.1 If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3.
- 10.2 This is the final stage of the Complaints Procedure. The Complaints Panel will consist of at least three persons appointed by the Chair (or Vice Chair) of Governors and who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint; usually two governors and a third person who is independent of the management and running of the school. Examples of persons likely to be suitable for the role of the independent panel member would be serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force.
- 10.3 A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk to the Governors, via the school office, within 5 days of receipt of the Stage 2 response. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.
- 10.4 The Clerk to the Governors will co-ordinate the Stage 3 process. A Chair of the panel will be nominated from within the group of panel members appointed to deal with a complaint. All Panel members will be familiar with and have access to this Complaints Policy.
- 10.5 The Clerk to the Governors will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 days. This letter will inform the complainant of the next steps, proposed date of the

hearing and request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the panel.

- 10.6** The Clerk to the Governors will aim to convene the hearing within 14 days of receipt of the Stage 3 request (but may fix a later date if necessary). The Clerk to the Governors will inform the complainant, any witnesses, the panel and the Head of the date, time and location of the hearing at least 5 days in advance.
- 10.7** If the complainant rejects three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the hearing which will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.
- 10.8** The Clerk to the Governors will ensure that the venue and proceedings are accessible to all attendees.
- 10.9** The complainant and Head may submit written material to the panel for consideration at the hearing. Any written material to be considered at the hearing will be collated and circulated to all parties at least 5 days before the date of the hearing. The panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties.
- 10.10** A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Legal representation will not usually be appropriate. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate, and this will be permitted where the panel considers it to be necessary. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.
- 10.11** The panel will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. 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 2 days prior to the hearing.
- 10.12** A panel hearing will take place unless the complainant indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed with the panel hearing. If the complainant has not specified in writing that they are satisfied, the panel hearing will proceed even if the complainant does not attend in order to bring the matter to a conclusion.
- 10.13** The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending to electronic recordings must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

- 10.14** The panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. All attendees will be invited to speak at the hearing. The panel is under no obligation to hear oral evidence from any witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account.
- 10.15** Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- 10.16** After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and can:
- 10.16.1** uphold the complaint in whole or in part; and/or
 - 10.16.2** dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- 10.17** If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the panel will:
- 10.17.1** confirm the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint; and/or
 - 10.17.2** where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues arising in the future.
- 10.18** The Chair of the panel will provide the complainant, the School and, where relevant, the person complained about, with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 days of the hearing.
- 10.19** The decision of the panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations will be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, to the subject of the complaint. The findings will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair (or Vice Chair) of Governors and the Head.
- 10.20** If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of Governors is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.
- 10.21** Godolphin is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening. Action which needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of any complaint will be handled confidentially within the School.

11 Recording Complaints

- 11.1** The School will keep written records of all formal complaints, which will be recorded on a register held by the Head's PA, noting whether they were resolved following a formal procedure or a panel hearing. A written record will also be kept of action taken by the

School as a result of a formal complaint regardless of whether it is upheld.

- 11.2 The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. Records of complaints will be held by the School after the resolution of the complaint in line with the School's data retention policy. The record of complaints will be available on the school premises via the Head and Chair of Governors and will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.
- 11.3 All correspondence, statements and records relating to 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 2008 Act requests access to them; or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- 11.4 The records for EYFS complaints are kept for a minimum of three years. On request, the School will provide ISI and/or OFSTED with a written record of all complaints relating to EYFS made during any specified period and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

12 Summary of timescales

12.1 During school Term time:

- 12.1.1 Stage 1 - Informal Resolution: Resolved within 7 days or progress to Stage 2.
 - 12.1.2 Stage 2 - Formal Resolution: Acknowledge within 3 days of receipt of the complaint. Complainant invited to an informal meeting to resolve within 7 days of receipt of the complaint. The Head will provide a formal written response to the complainant within 14 days of receipt of the complaint.
 - 12.1.3 Stage 3 - Panel Hearing: Complaint to be escalated within 5 days of the complainant receiving the Stage 2 decision letter. Acknowledge within 3 days of receiving the Stage 3 complaint. Date of hearing to be set normally no later than 14 days after receipt of the Stage 3 complaint. Supply all parties with: written materials no later than 5 days prior to hearing; and copies of any additional particulars no later than 2 days prior to hearing. A decision letter will usually be sent within 5 days of the date of the hearing.
- 12.2 Complaints will not usually be progressed during school holiday periods. During holiday periods the School will notify parents of a practical timescale for resolution of the matter.
 - 12.3 Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of the Complaints Procedure above. Any complaints relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) will be resolved and parents informed of the outcome within 28 days of the complaint being received by the School.

13 Other Relevant Bodies

- 13.1** The School hopes that through this policy it will be able to satisfy the concerns of parents. If it does not, if the matter concerns welfare issues involving abuse by an adult, parents may contact the Designated Officer for Allegations from Wiltshire Council, the contact number for whom is listed in the Safeguarding Policy. Alternatively, students and their parents who have a complaint about welfare may contact the Children's Commissioner about their concerns on 0800 528 0731 or via the website: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk
- 13.2** If parents are unsatisfied with the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, they can contact OFSTED and/or ISI, as follows:
- 13.2.1** OFSTED can be contacted at: OFSTED, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD. Alternatively, OFSTED can be emailed at enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or parents can telephone 0300 123 4666..
- 13.2.2** ISI can be contacted at: Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA. Alternatively, ISI can be emailed at concerns@isi.net or parents can telephone 0207 600 0100.
- 13.3** Any record of complaints about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be made available to OFSTED and ISI on request.
- 13.4** If the parents' complaint is about boarding and the School has not resolved the matter to their satisfaction, parents may contact ISI, as above.

