



LEICESTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL TRUST COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

Leicester Grammar School (LGS), Leicester Grammar Junior School (LGJS), and LGS Stoneygate (LGSS), which form part of Leicester Grammar School Trust (LGST), have long prided themselves on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this procedure.

This policy applies to all parents of pupils at the schools within LGST, namely LGS, LGJS and LGSS, including, where applicable, parents of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and parents of past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered.

This policy can be used only if other processes or policies (e.g. exclusion) do not cover the matter.

LGST makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils on the individual school's website and it is available during the school day at each school office upon request.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1) (b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, LGST will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints policy and procedures and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year for LGS, LGJS or LGSS.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A COMPLAINT?

A complaint is an 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 is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, 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 your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

THE THREE-STAGE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- Stage 1 - Informal Resolution It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Form Tutor (at LGS) or Class Teacher (at LGJS / LGSS). In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Tutor or Class Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult the appropriate Year Head (at LGS) or the Headteacher (at LGJS / LGSS).
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department/ Deputy Head/ the Headmaster (LGS) / the Headteacher (LGJS or LGSS) will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor or Class Teacher unless the Head of Department/ Deputy Head/ the Headteacher (LGJS or LGSS)/ the Headmaster (LGS) deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form Tutor or Class Teacher will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within five school days or in the event that the Form Tutor or Class Teacher 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.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster of LGS, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Trustees. If the complaint is against the Headteacher of LGJS or LGSS, it should be made directly to the Headmaster of LGS, who is also Principal of the Trust.

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 Headmaster (LGS) / Headteacher (LGJS or LGSS) within a further 5 school days. The Headmaster/Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the preliminary stage (informal resolution) and only then if the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage.
- In most cases, the Headmaster/Headteacher will meet with or speak to the parents concerned, normally within 5 school days and at most normally within 15 school 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 Headmaster/Headteacher to carry out further investigations.
- The Headmaster/Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headmaster/Headteacher 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 of this decision in writing, normally within 5 school days. The Headmaster/Headteacher will also give reasons for this decision.

- If the complaint is against the Headteacher of LGJS or LGSS, the Principal will call for a full report from the Headteacher and for all the relevant documents. If the complaint is against the Headmaster (LGS), the Chairman will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all the relevant documents. The Principal/ Chairman may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Principal/ Chairman is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Principal/ Chairman will give reasons for his decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should within 5 school days indicate a wish to proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to the Chairman of the Board who has been appointed by the Trustees to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of 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. The Chairman of the Board, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place, normally within 10 school 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, normally not later than 5 school days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. Recording the hearing will be prohibited.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 5 school days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chairman of Trustees and the Headmaster/Headteacher. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chairman of Trustees and the Headmaster/Headteacher.

TIMEFRAME FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged, normally within 5 school days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure normally within 20 school days. Stage 3, the Panel Hearing, would normally be completed within a further 20 school days.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, 'school days' refers to the term-time school days as published in the school calendar.

Whilst efforts will be made to adhere to these timescales and to achieve prompt resolution of complaints (both informal and formal) during unusual events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, this will not always be possible, especially during periods of remote learning and working.

RECORD OF COMPLAINTS

Following the resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a record of all formal complaints (Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints), whether they are resolved or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will 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.

The Trust will also keep records of informal complaints for management purposes only, allowing the pattern of concerns and complaints to be monitored regularly by appropriate members of the schools' senior leadership teams. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year for individual schools is available to parents on request.

LGST will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all formal 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 for seven years or longer if there is a safeguarding concern.

SPECIAL PROVISION FOR EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)

LGJS is registered for EYFS. Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and parents will be informed of the outcome of this investigation within 28 days. Records of such complaints are kept for at least seven years.

Parents can make a complaint to OFSTED and/or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) if they so wish, although it is expected that complaints will go through the school's complaints procedures first. Details to contact Ofsted and/or ISI are:

- Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 1234 234 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

OFSTED and/or the Independent Schools' Inspectorate, on request, will be provided with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

COVID-19

In the event of disruption caused by COVID-19 or the absence of a member of staff relevant to a complaint through illness/self-isolation, the school reserves the right to delay the processes outlined here for up to 14 days to enable any required period of self-isolation to have occurred so that a full investigation of the complaint can happen. The same flexibility will be shown to any parent unable to attend a meeting through a period of illness or self-isolation.

In the academic year 2022/23, the following number of formal complaints (stage 2) was received: Leicester Grammar School – one, Leicester Grammar Junior School – nil, LGS Stoneygate – nil.

In the academic year 2022/23, the following number of formal complaints (stage 3) was received: Leicester Grammar School – nil, Leicester Grammar Junior School – nil, LGS Stoneygate – nil.

Appendix 1 – Unreasonable Complaints

LGST is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the Trust or an individual school within the Trust. 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. We define unreasonable behaviour as that which causes a significant level of disruption to the running of the school or hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process whilst still wishing their complaint to be resolved
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education

- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headmaster/Headteacher, Principal or Chairman will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before dismissing a complaint as unreasonable. If the behaviour continues, the Headmaster/Headteacher, Principal or Chairman will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the Trust or one of the individual schools within the Trust, causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school/Trust.