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# **COMPLIMENTS COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY**

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**SEPTEMBER 2019**

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## **PURPOSE**

The Park College (the College) is committed to providing a professional service to the highest standards. The College welcomes all feedback from individuals and organisations that work with us and use our services. We expect everyone to be treated with dignity and respect and compliments show that we are appreciated. We will share compliments with our staff team.

The College acknowledges that occasionally things may go wrong. Complaints can be a valuable tool and provide us with the opportunity to listen, respond and improve our services.

This policy sets out the responsibilities of the College Directors and the way in which compliments, comments and complaints should be made and the action that will be taken.

## **SCOPE**

This policy does not cover situations where a member of the College staff wishes to raise a complaint or grievance. In these circumstances individuals should follow the procedures in their staff handbook.

The College will be unable to respond to anonymous complaints but will log and consider their content and any necessary action. This is in particular when these relate to potential safeguarding issues.

There are separate policies for the following situations and complaints will be referred to the relevant policy for action:

Whistleblowing

Anti – Bullying

Student Exclusions

Data Breach

Data Protection

Data Retention

## **AIMS**

The aims of this policy are to:

- ensure everyone knows how to provide feedback and how a complaint will be handled
- be investigatory and not adversarial, allowing for impartiality
- ensure complaints are dealt with fairly and within clear timeframes
- bring about a resolution as swiftly as possible
- provide information to the Directors and College Principal to improve our service and celebrate success.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Student information and personal documents relating to members of staff is confidential. Please refer to the College data policies.

## COMPLIMENTS

### *Verbal*

All feedback is welcome, we are pleased to receive compliments which do not have to be in writing. They help us to know how the College is performing and say thank you to any staff concerned. We will share any verbal compliment with the member of staff and also log your comments.

If you wish to have an informal discussion, please make an appointment with a member of staff or the College Principal.

### *Written*

If you wish to provide a compliment via written feedback, this can be emailed to [catriona@theparkcollege.org](mailto:catriona@theparkcollege.org)

Alternatively, you can write to the College as follows:

Catriona Guyler-Kone  
The Park College  
Bishops House  
5 Kennington Park Place  
London SE11 4AS

## COMPLAINTS

### **Stage One - Raising a Concern**

#### *Verbal concern*

Wherever possible, concerns should be discussed with a member of staff or the College Principal. Most concerns can and should be addressed and resolved in this way. Verbal complaints will be recorded in the complaints register and assigned a unique reference number. The outcome will also be recorded here.

Any concerns relating to safeguarding of students will be reported to the College Safeguarding Lead- Steph Lea, and the College Principal. The College safeguarding policy will be then be followed.

Often, individual student complaints may be expressed through behaviour changes. As such, where this is happening in College, staff will closely monitor these instances and take action where appropriate.

Where a member of staff is raising a grievance, the process set out in their staff handbook should be followed.

Any cases of whistleblowing will be investigated under the College whistleblowing policy

Occasionally a resolution is not reached on the matter or is too serious to be resolved in this way. In these circumstances the following formal process should be followed.

## **Stage Two – Making a Formal Complaint**

### ***Written complaint***

A written complaint should be submitted to the college principal within 3 months of the incident in question. Where this route may raise a conflict of interest, the complaint should be made to the College Directors. The complaint form is attached at annex A to this policy or can be requested from the College reception.

Completed forms should be returned to [see above comments for responsible person/s] by hand, post or email. On receipt of the form, it will be recorded in the complaints register and assigned a unique reference number.

Please include as many details as possible and attach any supporting documentation. Please also detail if there are any witnesses that will need to be called to a meeting or to provide additional evidence.

If the complainant requires assistance to complete the form, they may wish to ask someone to transcribe and submit the form on their behalf. If requested, College staff can also help.

Formal written complaints will be acknowledged, in writing, within 5 College working days.

### ***Investigation***

Complaints can be varied and not all will concern a member of the College staff. Where this is the case, they will be informed that an investigation is taking place and provided with a copy of the complaint. They may be accompanied at any formal interviews and meetings by a friend/representative. After investigation and collection of any relevant evidence, the member of staff concerned will be provided with a copy of the case. Once they have had time to consider the evidence the staff member and their representative will be invited for a final meeting to present their views and any evidence of their own.

Students may only be interviewed where appropriate and if they are accompanied by another adult/advocate representative.

For all other complaints the investigation will include the review of supporting documentation, and witnesses may be called for interview where identified by the complainant.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with the College while a complaint is being processed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

### ***Outcome***

In all cases, within ten College days of sending the written acknowledgement, the complainant will receive a written decision on the complaint, or an explanation of why a decision could not be reached in this timeframe. In the event of the latter, a reasonable date will be provided by which the written outcome of the investigation will be forwarded. The outcome may be one of the following:

- uphold the complaint in whole or part with an explanation and/or apology
- explanation of steps taken to ensure the situation does not reoccur
- a review of this policy and/or College systems and procedures
- dismiss the complaint in whole or part with an explanation

### **Stage Three – Appeal**

If the complainant wishes to appeal the outcome of the investigation into their complaint, they must complete the form at Annex B and write to the College Directors within 15 College working days of receiving the written decision. Any additional supporting evidence, not submitted with the original complaint, should also be attached, together with the names of any witnesses that parties wish to call.

If assistance is required to complete the form, the complainant may wish to ask someone to transcribe and submit the form on their behalf. If requested, College staff can also help.

The request for an appeal will be acknowledged, in writing, within 5 College working days. College Directors will consider the appeal and determine whether further face to face interviews are necessary. Where witnesses have been identified, the College Directors will always meet with these persons.

College Directors will write to the complainant within 15 College working days from the date of the acknowledgment letter. The decision letter will set out one of the following:

- that no further action will be taken by The College
- specify changes to the Stage Two written response and actions

## DEALING WITH UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS/COMPLAINANTS

Complaints should be dealt with fairly and impartially, and colleges should not normally limit the contact complainants have with the college. However, the College will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour towards staff, and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Unreasonable complainants are defined as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the College, hinder the College's consideration of their or other people's complaints'.

A complaint/complainant may be regarded as unreasonable 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 and being invited by the Principal or Directors to resubmit their complaint;
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with this Compliments and Complaints Policy or with good practice;
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be considered and commented on, or 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 resolve a complaint, and seeks to have them replaced;
- Changes the basis of their 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 a complaint, where the College's Compliments and Complaints Policy has been fully and properly implemented and completed;
- Seeks an unrealistic or unachievable outcome;
- Makes excessive demands on College time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email or by telephone while the complaint is in process;
- Refuses to cease behaving unreasonably, despite being asked to in writing by the Principal;
- Makes a complaint knowing it to be false;
- Makes a complaint using falsified information;
- Publishes information in relation to a complaint in the media, including but not limited to social media websites and newspapers;
- Behaves maliciously face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically;
- Behaves aggressively face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically;

- Uses threats, intimidation or violence face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically;
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically.

Whenever possible, the Principal will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally if their behaviour is deemed to be unreasonable. If the unreasonable behaviour continues the Principal will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the college causing a significant level of disruption, the college may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts that can be made in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the Principal will contact the police immediately, and will write to the complainant outlining their concerns and actions taken and stating that the police have been contacted. Actions taken may include banning an individual from the College.

Where the Principal or College Directors decide that a complaint is unreasonable, and is satisfied that the complainant has not resubmitted their complaint despite being given the opportunity to; or that the complainant is behaving unreasonably, despite being asked in writing by the Principal to cease this behaviour, they may dismiss the complaint and consider it to be resolved through lack of co-operation by the complainant, and the process to be completed.



**COMPLAINT FORM**

**ANNEX A**

Please complete all sections and return to the College Principal.

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary and attach all supporting documentation

<b><u>Name:</u></b>	
<b><u>Address</u></b>	
<b>Post code:</b>	<b>Signature:</b>
<b>Daytime tel. no:</b>	
<b>Date of the incident complained of:</b>	
<b>If the complaint is about a member of staff, please enter their name below:</b>	
<b>Please summarise your complaint:</b>	
<b>Please summarise what outcome(s) you seek:</b>	
<b>The names of your witnesses must be given here:</b>	

College Directors cannot consider this form at stage 3 until stage 2 has been completed

Please complete all sections and return to the College Directors

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary. Any supporting documents should be submitted with this form, including any witness statements.

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Date of incident:**

**Signature:**

**Please summarise the reason(s) for your dissatisfaction with the outcome of the investigation of your complaint:**

**Please state what outcome(s) you seek:**

**The names of your witnesses (if any) must be given here:**

**Dates and times that you and your witnesses cannot attend a meeting should you be called in the next two months :**