



Harrison College Ltd

Complaints Policy

A complaint can be made verbally or in writing and can be made against a student, a member of staff, a Director or a College Stakeholder.

All complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with in accordance with the College's Complaints procedure.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 We strive to provide a good education for all our students. Staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all Parents/Guardians/Carers and Stakeholders. However, the College is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints. The Complaints Policy sets out the procedures that the College follows in such cases.
- 1.2 If any Parents/Guardians/Carers or Stakeholders are unhappy with the education that their young person is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the College, we encourage them to contact the College immediately to relay their concerns to the appropriate person. Concerns are best raised as early as possible.
- 1.3 The appropriate person will depend on the nature of the concern, the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is thought to be involved in your concern.
- 1.4 Depending on the nature or severity of the complaint, it may be deemed necessary to implement a suspension of the student, staff member or alleged perpetrator to ensure the safety and duty of care to all members. This will be carried out according to the relevant policies and will remain confidential while the matter is investigated. At this point, this process may be paused or ceased to allow the relevant procedure and policy to take place.
- 1.5 Any suspension will require the authorisation of a Director and could be sanctioned for the duration of the investigation.
- 1.6 All Parents/Guardians/Carers have the right, as a last resort, to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education, if they still feel that their complaint has not been properly addressed having participated in the stages contained within this policy.

2. Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 The College aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with a complaint.
- 2.2 We give careful consideration to all complaints, and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding. In all cases where it includes a young person, we put the interests of the young person above all else. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.
- 2.3 The college reserves the right to deal with the complaint and enter at any stage of the process depending on the nature and seriousness of the complaint.
- 2.4 The college reserves the right to cease this process for matters which do not fall under this policy. The complainant will be informed of this decision as applicable.

3. The Complaints Process and Stages

Informal stage (1 & 2)

3.1 The complaints process can be looked at by following informal and formal processes. There are stages within each one of these. Ideally the complaint will be first looked at during an initial discussion where it will be agreed that there is no further need to pursue the concern into a complaint. However, the circumstance and nature of the complaint may mean that the complaint can be dealt with at any stage on the complaint's procedure whether it be through informal or formal means.

3.2 **Informal stage:** Regardless of stage, where a Parent/Guardian/Carer or Stakeholder is concerned about anything to do with the progress or well-being of a student at the College, they should, in the first instance, bring the matter to the attention of the college where a discussion will be had.

In our experience, most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. All staff work very hard to ensure that each student is happy at the College and is making good progress; they naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that the College can take action before it seriously affects the young person's progress.

At this initial discussion stage with a member of the college staff, it is anticipated a resolution can be agreed, if not, the complainant will inform the member of staff at the end of the discussion, or by notifying the college within 24hrs through written or verbal means, and request that the complaint is referred to stage 1 informal.

3.3 **Stage 1 informal;** this is where an '*appropriate person*' will be allocated to look further into the complaint which may comprise of a face to face or telephone meeting with the complainant to gain further understanding or detail. This discussion may result in a resolution and no further escalation is needed. In the case of a resolution not being agreed at this stage, the complainant will request at this time or through notifying the college within 24 hours for it to be referred to stage 2 informal.

3.4 **Stage 2 informal;** an 'appointed person' will investigate this complaint further. Most complaints are normally resolved with the involvement of the 'appointed person' following a face to face meeting or telephone call with all parties concerned.

Formal stage (3 & 4)

3.5 **Stage 3 formal;** Where the informal process has not produced an agreed outcome, stage 3 will consist of the complaint being dealt with formally by a member of the senior leadership team. They will not have been the 'appointed person' during the informal stage.

3.6 The complainant must inform the senior manager allocated within 1 week of the stage 2 informal outcome being communicated to them, of their reasons for continuing the complaint and their anticipated outcome. This can be written or given verbally.

3.7 An in-person meeting, Teams/telephone call or email communication will be agreed as the method for presenting and discussing the evidence presented between the complainant and the senior leader. The senior leader may need to further investigate any claims or to gain

further clarification and will have 1 week to complete this after the stage 3 meeting has taken place.

- 3.8 No later than 1 week from the stage 3 formal discussions taking place, the outcome will be communicated to the complainant. It is anticipated that this stage will have produced a resolution and recorded as a final decision.
- 3.9 **Stage 4 formal;** In the case where the complainant is still not happy with the outcome of the formal stage 3, they can request an appeal. Stage 4 is the appeal stage.
- 3.10 The appeal will consist of an Independent Review of the complaint and be heard by two college directors of the Board or an agreed external appropriate professional. They will review the evidence and minutes presented in stage 3 and ascertain if the decision made was fair and accurate.
- 3.11 The Appeal will be conducted, and the complainant will be invited to a meeting to hear the decisions of the case and put forward their reasons for appeal. The directors may wish to invite other people to attend in order to hear all areas of relevance.
- 3.12 Where necessary the Board may consult with the LA if the student's continued placement at the College is at risk. In the event that the original decision is upheld and, in the worst case scenario, it is the dismissal of a student from College due to the severity of the complaint, the College will call an urgent Statutory Review of the student's EHCP and advise the LA that Harrison College is no longer a suitable placement.

Staff complaint

4. Should any Parent/Guardian/Carer or College Stakeholder have a complaint about a member of Harrison College staff, they should first make an informal approach to the Principal (unless the complaint is about the Principal, in which case one of the members of the Board of Directors should be approached), who is obliged to investigate it (see stages below). At this point, a decision will be made on where the complaint sits and a separate process may be deemed more appropriate to deal with the allegation and require a different investigation*. This could be confidential in nature between the staff member and the college or investigating body.

*Complaints that fall under a LADO disclosure will be dealt with through the Harrison College Safeguarding and Child Protection policies following LADO referral or the low level harms process.

- 4.1.1 **Informal stage initial discussion;** The Principal (or Director in question) will do all they can to resolve the issue through dialogue with both parties which may be through telephone calls, emails or face to face discussions. An outcome will be communicated.
- 4.1.2 If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome, they can make a formal complaint, as outlined below.
- 4.1.3 **Formal complaint;** Only if the informal complaint fails to resolve the matter should a formal complaint be made and dealt with by the Board of Directors.

- 4.1.3.1 The complainant should send a written complaint to the Board of Directors, stating the nature of the complaint, and how the College has dealt with the complaint so far.
- 4.1.3.2 The Board of Directors must consider all written complaints within three weeks of receipt. The Board will arrange a meeting to discuss the complaint and will invite the person making it, 3 days notice, to attend the meeting so that they can explain the complaint in more detail.
- 4.1.3.3 After hearing all the evidence, the Directors will consider their decision and inform the complainant of the outcome and their decision in writing. The Directors will do all they can at this stage to resolve the complaint.
- 4.1.3.4 **Independent review:** if the complainant is not satisfied with this final decision. They could appeal. A further meeting will be chaired by an independent person(s), who will consider all the evidence and make a final judgement in an attempt to resolve the complaint.
- 4.2 If the complainant is still not content that the complaint has been dealt with properly, then they are entitled to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education.

5. Monitoring and Review

- 5.1 The Principal will log all complaints received by the College, and record how they were resolved.
- 5.2 The Directors will monitor the complaints procedure in order to ensure all complaints are dealt with properly.
- 5.3 Directors will receive a confidential report and examine this log on a termly basis.
- 5.4 Directors will consider any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process and will make any modifications necessary to this policy.
- 5.5 This policy is made available to all Parents/Guardians/Carers and Stakeholders at the point of a concern being raised so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.
- 5.6 The complainant will be signposted to the Harrison College website where the latest version will always be available
- 5.7 A paper copy can also be requested as well as formats in different languages
- 5.8 This Policy will be reviewed every two years, or before if necessary.