BRADFIELD COLLEGE

Parental Complaints Procedure

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Version	**Author**	**Date**	**Changes**
1.0	Stuart Williams	9 May 2019	Reviewed and revised
1.1	Stuart Williams	5 October 2021	Policy reviewed (late) – no revisions required by regulations. Policy remains unaltered & as approved by Council in 2019.
1.2	Stuart Williams	13 September 2023	Policy reviewed – some changes in documents referenced (e.g. Independent Schools Standards 2023) and minor syntactical changes.
1.3	Stuart Williams	14 March 2024	Policy reviewed by Clerk to Council. Some procedures of solely internal relevance removed from the Policy document. Classification of [i] Headmaster's power to delegate his role to another appropriate person (para 10) and [ii] role of any Investigating Officer appointed (para 12)
1.4	Andew Logan	30 September 2025	Update to para 23.
1.5	Helen Perkins	1 July 2026	Updates and addition of unreasonable complaints (para 9) and Stage 3 proforma (appendix)

Parental Complaints Procedure

Last reviewed/revised: 1 June 2026

The College's procedures for dealing with complaints by pupils are published in the Pupil Handbook on the PARENT PORTAL of the College website.

Notice

In accordance with the Independent School Standards Regulations (ISSRs) Part 7(2023), this ***Parental Complaints Procedure*** is made available to (and may also be invoked by) all parents of current pupils and parents of former pupils provided the complaint was raised while the pupil was still registered at the College. Separate statutory processes apply to complaints relating to permanent exclusion or expulsion. This procedure is published under POLICIES on the College website.

1. Statement of intent

1.1. The importance of high-quality teaching and pastoral care lies at the heart of Bradfield's aim to provide each pupil an outstanding education for life.

1.2. If a parent makes a formal complaint, it will be treated as an expression of honest dissatisfaction, dealt with expeditiously and in accordance with these procedures.

1.3. Where a complaint raises a safeguarding concern or allegation, the matter will be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and managed in accordance with the College's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the latest *Keeping Children Safe in Education* statutory guidance. Such matters may be handled outside this procedure where required by statutory guidance.

1.4. The complaint will be treated confidentially, in accordance with the College's ***Confidentiality Policy*** (outlined in the College ***Pastoral Protocols: Information for Parents and Staff***).

1.5. No pupil will be penalised as a result of his/her parent making a complaint in good faith.

1.6. Parents may raise concerns or complaints regardless of whether the matter is informal, formal, safeguarding related or systemic in nature.

1.7. In circumstances where a parent of a current pupil or past pupil contacts an employee of the College to express persisting dissatisfaction about some matter, the employee will make the existence of this ***Parental Complaints Procedure*** known to the parent and ensure that he/she knows where the document is published and how it is made available to those wishing to consult it.

2. Eligibility to Make a Complaint

This procedure may be invoked by:

a. parents of current pupils; and
b. parents of former pupils, provided the complaint was raised while the pupil was still registered at the College.

3. Management of a Complaint: Stage 1 (Informal Resolution)

3.1. In accordance with paragraph 8.1 (d) of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2023, the College will make efforts to ensure that complaints are resolved quickly and without recourse to formal procedures.

3.2. Unless the complaint is against the Housemaster/mistress, a parent wishing to complain about some problem (either real or perceived,) should initially contact their son/daughter's Housemaster/mistress.

a. The Housemaster/mistress will acknowledge the complaint (normally on the day it is received and in every instance within 5 working days) and make a written record of it.

b. Once the complaint has been investigated, the Housemaster/mistress will write to the parent[s] outlining the conclusion of the enquiries and detailing their consequent actions. In many cases the matter will thus be resolved straightaway to the satisfaction of the parent[s].

c. If the Housemaster/mistress cannot resolve the matter alone, then he/she will consult the Second Master or one of the other Deputy Heads.

3.3. If the complaint is against the Housemaster/mistress, a parent wishing to complain about some problem (either real or perceived) should initially contact the Second Master.

a. The Second Master will acknowledge the complaint (normally on the day it is received and in every instance within 5 working days) and make a written record of it.

b. Once the complaint has been investigated, the Second Master will write to the parent[s] outlining the conclusion of the enquiries and detailing their consequent actions.

3.4. Complaints against the Second Master should be referred to the Headmaster; complaints against the Headmaster should be referred to the Warden.

a. In circumstances where either the Headmaster or the Warden is in receipt of a complaint, they will acknowledge its receipt and make a written record of the concern. Written records will be retained securely in accordance with the College's record keeping and data protection obligations.

b. Once the complaint has been investigated, the Headmaster (or Warden) will write to the parent[s] outlining the conclusion of the enquiries and detailing their consequent actions.

3.5. If a Housemaster/mistress has to consult the Second Master or one of the other Deputy Heads) then, once the complaint has been investigated, the Housemaster/mistress will write to the parent[s] outlining the conclusion of the enquiries and detailing their consequent actions.

3.6. In the course of investigating a complaint, a Housemaster/mistress, Deputy Head or the Second Master will consult or inform the Head of Department when the conduct or competence of a member of staff in the Department is the subject of the complaint.

3.7. In the event that the Housemaster/mistress or Second Master fails to reach a resolution satisfactory to the parent[s], then the parent[s] will be entitled to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

3.8. Where a complaint includes an allegation of abuse, neglect, or risk of harm to a child, the matter will be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) within 24 hours. Such complaints will be managed in accordance with the College's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (2025), and the timeframes within, and may not progress through all stages of this procedure if statutory action is required.

4. Management of a Complaint: Stage 2 (Formal Resolution)

4.1. In accordance with Paragraph 8.1 of the Independent School Standards Regulations (2023), the College will provide arrangements for the Headmaster to formally investigate complaints.

a. If a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parent[s] should renew the complaint, in writing by letter or email, to the Headmaster within 10 working days of receiving the outcome from Stage 1. After considering the complaint, the Headmaster will decide on the appropriate course of action. The Headmaster reserves the right to delegate to an appropriate senior member of staff to conduct this part of the procedure on his behalf.

b. In circumstances when they have already been involved in Stage 1 procedures, the Headmaster will delegate the Stage 2 role to the Chief Operating Officer who will act on their behalf.

4.2. In most cases, the Headmaster (or his delegate) will meet the parent[s] to discuss the matter, normally within ten working days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

4.3. It may be necessary for the Headmaster (or his delegate) to carry out further investigations.

a. In such circumstances, he will appoint an Investigating Officer, usually a senior member of staff who has had no previous substantive involvement in the matters leading up to the complaint; the use of an Investigating Officer independent of the College is also possible. After investigation the Investigating Officer will produce a written report for the Headmaster (or his delegate).

b. The Headmaster (or his delegate), and any Investigating Officer, will keep written records of all meetings, investigations and decisions held in relation to the complaint.

c. Once satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, and the investigation is complete, a decision will be made by the Headmaster (or his delegate) and parent[s] will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmaster will give the reasons for his decision. Alternatively, the Headmaster (or his delegate) may choose to meet the parent[s] to discuss the matter and communicate his decision, in which case this will be followed up in writing to confirm the decision. Wherever possible, this meeting will take place within 20 working days of the initial complaint.

d. Should the complaint not be resolved within 20 working days of the Stage 2 request, or in the event that the Headmaster fails to reach a resolution satisfactory to the parent[s], then the parent[s] will be entitled to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 3 of this procedure. If parent(s) wish to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 3 of this procedure, they should inform the Clerk to the Governors in writing, together with the completed proforma at the Appendix, within 10 working days of the decision.

4.4. If the complaint is about the Headmaster, parents may submit their complaint to the Warden. The Warden will appoint a member of the governing body to consider the complaint and will write to the parent(s) within five working days with the name of the Nominated Governor. It may be necessary for the Nominated Governor to carry our further investigations and in such circumstances, they will appoint an Investigating Officer.

a. Once satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made by the Nominated Governor and the parent[s] will be informed of this decision in writing. The Nominated Governor will give the reasons for his/her decision.

b. Alternatively, the Nominated Governor may choose to meet the parent[s] to discuss the complaint and the reasons for the decision. Wherever possible, this meeting will take place within 20 working days of the initial complaint.

c. If the Nominated Governor fails to reach a resolution satisfactory to the parent(s), then the parent(s) will be entitled to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 3 of this procedure and they should inform the Clerk to the Governors in writing, together with the completed proforma at the Appendix, within 10 working days of the decision.

4.5. Any deviation from the normal timescale for dealing with complaints that is outlined in this policy will only be the result of exceptional circumstances which will be explained in detail in writing to parents at the time.

5. Management of a Complaint: Stage 3 (Panel Hearing)

5.1. Where a complaint is not resolved at Stage 2 of this process, independently facilitated voluntary mediation may be offered to the complainant as a potential route to resolution and closure.

5.2. In accordance with Paragraph 8.1 (f) of the Independent School Standards Regulations (2023), the College will also make provision for the complaint to be formally examined before a panel, if requested by the complainant.

5.3. If a parent requests the complaint be formally examined before a panel, the Warden will acknowledge the application and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as it is practicable for the Panel to be convened, and normally within 20 working days of the parent's request.

5.4. The Warden will appoint the Panel members and in accordance with the Independent School Standards Regulations (2023) Part 7, paragraph 33. The Panel will

a. consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint; and
b. include at least one member who is independent of the management and running of the College. Where this independent person is from a non- educational background, a retired Head (from some school other than Bradfield College) may also be asked to provide the Panel with advice on any ***strictly educational*** matters under consideration.

5.5. 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 will be supplied to all parties not later than three working days prior to the hearing.

5.6. In accordance with Paragraph 8.1 (h) of the Independent School Standards Regulations (2023) the parent[s] may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

5.7. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parental concerns immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. An Investigating Officer independent of the College may be used in such circumstances.

5.8. After due consideration of all facts it considers relevant, the Panel will make its findings to the Warden and may make recommendations.

In accordance with Paragraph 8.1 (i) of the Independent School Standards Regulations (2023), the Warden or a Panel member will write to the parent[s] informing them of the Panel's findings and recommendations, and the reasons for them, normally within 10 working days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final.

The Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be available for inspection at the College to members of the Bradfield College Council and the Headmaster.

6. Recording of meetings

6.1 To ensure open, respectful, and confidential discussions, it is not permitted to make audio, video, or digital recordings of any meetings or hearings held as part of the complaints process, unless by prior agreement of all parties present. This includes the use of any recording device, mobile phone, smartwatch or any other wearable technology.

6.2 Unauthorised recordings, or whole or partial transcripts, will not be considered as evidence for any part of the complaints process and the College reserves the right to terminate the complaints process if they become aware of an unauthorised recording.

7. Timescale for the Management of a Complaint

7.1 In accordance with Paragraph 8.1 (c) of the Independent School Standards Regulations (2023), the College undertakes to address complaints expeditiously and within a clear time frame.

7.2 All complaints will be acknowledged within five working days, if received during term time and as soon as practicable during College vacations.

7.3 Other than in exceptional circumstances, the first two stages of the procedure pursuing resolution of a complaint lodged during term time will be completed within 30 working days. The first two stages of the procedure will be completed as soon as practicable when a complaint is lodged during a vacation and their completion will not be delayed beyond 20 working days once term has resumed.

7.4 The third stage of the procedure will also be completed expeditiously and in the defined timescale.

8. Record Keeping

8.1 All meetings, investigations and decisions will be documented in writing.

8.2 In accordance with the Independent School Standards Regulations (2023) a written record will be kept of all formal complaints and the action taken by the school in response to them

(whether upheld or not). The Central Complaints Register will be maintained by the Headmaster's Office.

8.3 Written records will be retained securely in accordance with the College's recordkeeping and data protection obligations.

8.4 Records relating to **safeguarding concerns** will be stored and retained in line with safeguarding record-keeping requirements and Government guidance.

9. Unreasonable Complaints

9.1 Where a complainant's behaviour is judged to be unreasonably persistent, vexatious or abusive, the College reserves the right to restrict communication, decline to consider repeated complaints without new evidence, and implement proportionate measures to protect the wellbeing of staff and ensure the efficient operation of the school, while continuing to act fairly and transparently.

Such behaviour may be characterised by, but not restricted to:

a. Correspondence, email or telephone contact judged to be prolific, excessive, aggressive or abusive;
b. Refusal to articulate the complaint, specify the grounds of the complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint;
c. Refusal to follow stages, timelines and levels of delegation set out in this policy;
d. Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
e. Insistence upon pursuing unsubstantiated complaints and/or outcomes judged to be unrealistic or unreasonable;
f. Publishing unacceptable information in any form or media including social media, websites and newspapers; or
g. any other behaviour that is deemed to impact the wellbeing of staff or be contrary to the Parent Contract or Parent Partnership Code.

9.2 A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if it is manifestly unjustified, inappropriate or an improper use of formal procedure. In assessing this the College will consider:

a. The history and context of the complaint and whether it has reasonable foundation;
b. Whether the time and cost of investigating the complaint is proportionate to the issue(s), and/or likely to cause disproportionate disruption or distress;
c. If the purpose of the complaint is to obtain an outcome which is unavailable via this process, such as compensation or damages; and
d. Any other evidence that the complaint is being brought for improper purpose.

9.3 Wherever possible, the Headmaster will discuss any concerns with the parent(s) informally before dismissing the complaint as unreasonable, and normally only do so after consultation with the Warden.

9.4 Nothing in this Policy shall prejudice the College's right to require parents (for example, those who have been found to have raised a complaint in bad faith, or who have acted vexatiously) to withdraw their child from the College in accordance with Parent Contract.

10. Publication of the number of complaints

10.1 In accordance with Paragraph 7.3 (f) of the Independent School Standards Regulations (2023), the College will make available to parents of current and prospective pupils the number of complaints requiring formal resolution registered under this ***Parental Complaints Procedure*** in the preceding academic year. This figure will be published on the College website and will also be available to parents, the Independent Schools' Inspectorate and, on request, to the Chief Inspector of Schools and H.M. Secretary of State.

10.2 Number of complaints received under the formal procedure during the preceding academic year (2024/25) - 2

11. Parents' entitlements

11.1. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required by the Independent School Standards Regulations (2023), where disclosure is required in the course of the College's inspection, or where any other legal obligation prevails.

11.2. Parents are entitled to report any concerns about the safeguarding or welfare at the College to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1 9HA (Tel: 020 7600 0100), concerns@isi.net.

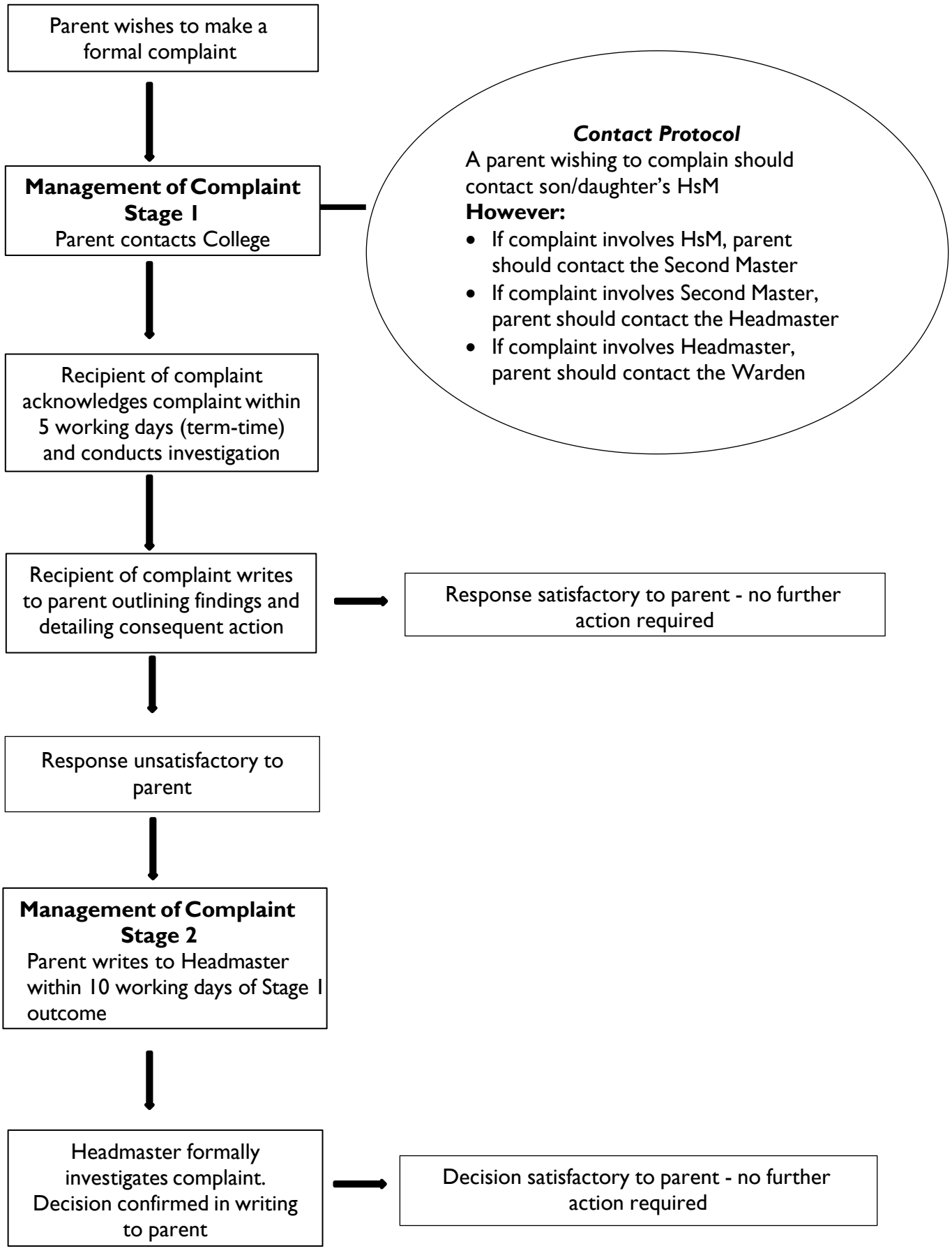
11.3. Parents of pupils resident overseas may pursue a complaint through an agreed representative, particularly if there are language barriers.

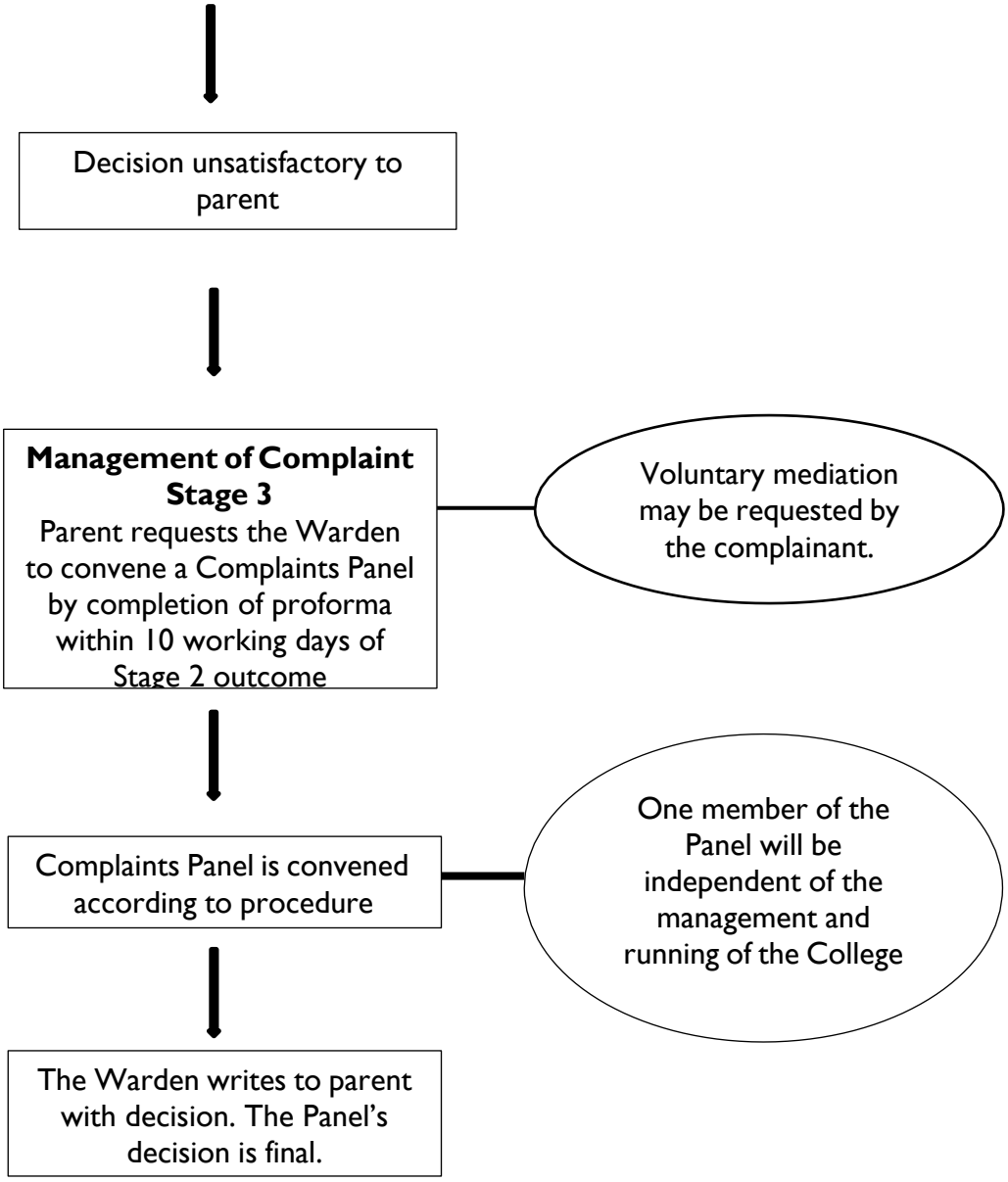
12. Additional information

12.1. This ***Parental Complaints Procedure*** is also available in hard copy, as a discrete document, from a pupil's Housemaster/mistress or from the Second Master's Office.

12.2. This ***Parental Complaints Procedure*** will likewise be made available, on request, to the Inspectorate, the Chief Inspector and H.M. Secretary of State.

Process for dealing with Parental Complaints:





** Other than in exceptional circumstances, the first two stages of the procedure pursuing resolution of a complaint lodged during term time will be completed within 30 working days. The first two stages of the procedure will be completed as soon as practicable when a complaint is lodged during a vacation and their completion will not be delayed beyond 20 working days once term has resumed.*

Appendix:

Proforma to Accompany a Written Notice of Request for a Stage 3 Appeal

Full name of Pupil	Date of birth:
Name of Complainant:	Relationship to Pupil:
Contact telephone number:	Contact email:

1. Please specify precisely the decision of the Head against which the appeal is being made:
2. Please state precisely the grounds on which the appeal is being made. Include in your statement any matters of procedural concern that you intend to raise:

3. Please list all documents in support of your case which would like an Appeal Panel to consider: (Please number all relevant documents and include these in your written submission. In case of electronic communications please provide printed copies. Please note that all documents to be considered by the Panel must be included within this pack – new evidence cannot normally be submitted at the time of the Appeal.)
4. Please specify the outcome you are seeking:
5. Do you intend to be accompanied by anyone else at a Panel Hearing? If so, please include this person's details and their connection to you. (N.B: Legal representation is not normally appropriate and requires the prior approval of the Chair of the Panel and, in such instances, the Head reserves the right to be supported in the hearing by the College's legal representatives)

Print name:
Signature:
Date: