

**COMPLAINTS POLICY**

COA INTERNATIONAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. INTRODUCTION, GUIDING PRINCIPLES, AND STAGES OF COMPLAINT

At COA International, we are committed to meeting the needs of our students. However, we recognise that not everything goes well for everybody all of the time. There are times when misunderstandings, confusion or genuine concerns give rise to complaints. This policy intends to provide a clear and transparent process to enable such complaints to be dealt with promptly, fairly and proportionately.

For the purposes of this policy, a 'parent' shall include a guardian, carer or any other person with parental responsibility for a child at the COA International; and 'School' means COA International, a limited company registered in England and Wales under company number 12688382, whose registered address is Office 4, 18 King Street, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 3DJ, United Kingdom.

This policy applies to complaints from parents of current students and to parents of former students if the complaint was initially raised whilst the student was on the School roll.

This policy has been approved by the Headmaster and is available on the School's website or on request from the Administrative Manager. If required, it can be made available in large print or another more accessible format. Suppose assistance is needed with making a complaint, for example, because of a disability. In that case, a parent should contact +44 (0) 1223616301 and ask for the Administrative Manager, who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.

All School staff are made aware of this policy and are expected to familiarise themselves with the procedures for dealing with complaints to ensure they can be of most assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.

The School's guiding principles in complaint resolution are:

- to give careful and prompt consideration to all complaints;
- to seek to achieve a just and fair outcome, taking due account of all relevant evidence;
- to attempt to resolve complaints through dialogue and mutual understanding, and at as early a stage as possible.

This policy outlines three stages of complaint:

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Stage 2: Formal Resolution

Stage 3: Panel Hearing

Where timescales are given in "working days", this is defined as Monday – Friday during term time (the dates of which are available on the School's website). Complaints received during holiday periods will be dealt with as soon as is practicable but are likely to take longer to resolve due to the unavailability of relevant staff. Under such circumstances, the complainant will be notified of any extension to the time scales and the reason(s) why an extension is necessary when the complaint is acknowledged.

## 2. STAGE 1: INFORMAL RESOLUTION

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns can be resolved quickly and informally. A parent with cause for concern or complaint should feel free to talk directly to a member of staff, telephone, or write with the details of the issue that concerns them. In the first instance, it is usually best to address a concern to the class teacher or Student Administrator, as they are often best placed to resolve the matter quickly. The parent may also refer a matter to the Headmaster or Administrative Manager, either directly or after an initial discussion with the class teacher or Student Administrator. We will acknowledge a written notification of a concern by telephone, email or by letter within two working days of receipt. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the appropriate staff member will arrange to speak with the complainant or invite them to a meeting within five working days of acknowledgement. This meeting may prompt further investigation or wider consultation,

but, in any event, this stage of the complaints process should be completed within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.

Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days of acknowledgement or if the parent and member of staff fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the parent will be advised to proceed with the complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

### 3. STAGE 2: FORMAL RESOLUTION

If a complaint has not been resolved on an informal basis, then the parent should make a formal complaint to the Headmaster. This must be done in writing, stating explicitly that they wish to invoke the formal complaints procedure. The Headmaster will acknowledge formal complaints within two days of being received in writing. In most cases, the Headmaster will meet or speak to the parent concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. However, it may be necessary for the Headmaster to conduct an investigation.

Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and the parent will be informed of this decision in writing, no later than 15 working days after the formal complaint was acknowledged. The Headmaster will give reasons for the decision reached. Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept. The complainant will be informed if, due to exceptional circumstances, any additional time is necessary to complete the investigation.

If the parent is still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of the complaints procedure.

### 4. STAGE 3: PANEL HEARING

If the parent wishes to proceed to Stage 3 (following a failure to reach a resolution earlier in the complaints process), they should write to the Administrative Manager, who is responsible for making the arrangements for a Panel Hearing. In the written request for a

Panel Hearing, the parent should state the grounds of the complaint and the outcome desired. They should also send a list of all the documents that they believe to be in the School's possession that they consider relevant in the matter and that they wish the Panel to see. Copies of all such documents shall be supplied to all parties not later than five working days before the hearing.

The Administrative Manager will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days and will schedule a meeting of the Panel within 10 working days thereafter. The Panel appointed by the Administrative Manager will consist of at least three people not directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. A friend or relative may accompany the complainant, but legal representation is not usually appropriate.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parent's complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. However, where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of the matters discussed at the hearing, the Panel will reach a decision. The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations shall be confirmed in writing to the parent and, where relevant, to the person complained about within five working days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Administrative Manager and the Headmaster.

#### 5. RECORD KEEPING AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The Headmaster will keep a written record of all formal complaints, including any action(s) taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether it is upheld) and of whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or progressed to a panel hearing.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously.

Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except as required by the School by paragraph 33 (k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards)

Regulations 2014; namely, where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them, or where any other legal obligations prevail. Records of individual complaints will be retained at least until the School's next inspection thereafter, in accordance with data protection principles, only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances. Senior Executives will maintain oversight of these records in order to determine the appropriate implementation of this policy and to respond to any patterns of complaints that may be apparent.

#### 6. OFFICE FOR STANDARDS IN EDUCATION (Ofsted) AND INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE (ISI)

The School's record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request. In the event of dissatisfaction with the above actions, the complainant may refer the matter to the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) or to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The contact details for these organisations are as follows:

Ofsted	Independent Schools Inspectorate CAP
Piccadilly Gate	House
Store Street	9-12 Long Lane
Manchester	London
M1 2WD	EC1A 9HA
<a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk">www.ofsted.gov.uk</a>	<a href="http://www.isi.net">www.isi.net</a>
<a href="mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk">enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk</a>	<a href="mailto:concerns@isi.net">concerns@isi.net</a>
0300 123 1231	0207 600 100

The School will notify parents about an inspection and supply parents with a copy of the final inspection report.

#### 7. ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

The School will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, if appropriate, the Administrative Manager or Headmaster will determine whether the complaint warrants investigation.

#### 8. MANAGING SERIAL AND PERSISTENT COMPLAINTS

The School will do its utmost to be helpful to people who make contact with a complaint, concern or request for information. However, there may be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant attempts to re-open the same issue, the School will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed. If the complainant contacts the School again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as serial or persistent, and the School may choose not to respond. However, this will not occur until the complainant has completed the three stages of the complaints procedure. The application of a serial or persistent designation for a complaint will be against the subject of the complaint rather than the complainant themselves.

#### 9. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The Headmaster will monitor the number and type of complaints received, and the operation of the procedures set out in this policy. The Headmaster will also review the policy at least annually to ensure it meets statutory requirements and reflects best practices.

Vladimir Krasniakov  
Headmaster

Date Reviewed	Approved By
16 of November 2020	Headmaster
16 of December 2021	Headmaster
28 of December 2021	Headmaster