

QUEEN ELIZABETH SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Complaints Policy and Procedures

1. Introduction

The College is committed to providing high quality provision and support to its students and to operating in a climate of fairness, equality and mutual respect. Suggestions about how College services may be improved will always be welcomed and given due consideration.

College staff will do their best to help you resolve any complaints and ensure fairness for everyone involved.

Any complaint will be treated as confidential, but it will usually be necessary to discuss the issue with any members of staff involved.

At any stage of the procedure, a decision may be made to deal with the complaint under a different and more relevant policy or process.

Complaints must be made within two calendar months of the incident. For complaints made after this time, no further action will be taken.

2. Principles

The College's complaints procedure is designed to:

- encourage the resolution of problems by informal means where possible;
- ensure that complaints are dealt with fairly, in an impartial, non-adversarial manner;
- allow the swift handling of complaints within established time-limits;
- keep people properly informed during the procedure;
- address all issues raised and provide an effective response.

3. Stage One – Informal Resolution

In the first instance, concerns should be raised with the relevant member of staff. This will often be a teacher or Progress Tutor, but you could also contact more senior members of staff. If your complaint is made directly to the Principal, it is likely that it will be forwarded to an appropriate member of staff. If you are not sure who to contact, the College reception will be able to help.

If you are a student at the College, you can raise concerns with your subject teachers or Progress Tutor or alternatively contact your Guidance Director.

It will always be our intention to resolve issues as quickly and effectively as possible. However, if it is not possible to resolve a concern informally, the issue should be taken to stage two of the procedure; formal resolution.

4. **Stage Two – Formal Resolution**

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of stage one or where your complaint is more serious in nature, the issue should be escalated to stage two. This entails writing directly to the Complaints Officer outlining the nature of the problem. Receipt of your correspondence will be acknowledged within five working days.

Your complaint will be reviewed and an appropriate investigating officer will be selected to carry out the investigation.

In order to establish the facts, the investigating officer will conduct any necessary activities such as interviews with the relevant parties, taking statements or reviewing materials.

The investigating officer will keep records of their activities and any documentation related to the issue.

The outcome of the investigation will be reported to you within 15 working days of the written complaint being received.

Outcomes at stage two will be classified as follows:

- **Upheld** - the complaint is justified and the College will take appropriate action in light of this
- **Partially upheld** – some aspect or aspects of the complaint are considered to be justified and action may be taken by the College in response
- **Not upheld** – the complaint is not justified

Where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome they have the right to an appeal.

5. **Stage Three – Appeal**

Where stages one and/or two have failed to resolve the situation, an appeal may be made. This should be done by writing to the Principal within 10 working days of receipt of the outcome of stage two. The grounds for appeal must be clearly stated by the complainant at this stage.

The Principal will review your appeal by taking into account any available information and considering in particular the grounds for appeal set out in the appeal letter.

As part of the review, the Principal may call the complainant and other relevant parties such as parents/carers to an appeal meeting.

The Principal will respond in writing within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal letter. There is no right of appeal against the Principal's final decision.

Appeals made about decisions, sanctions or exclusions arising from a student failing to comply with College expectations will be dealt with through the same process.

6. Stage Four – Due Process Appeals

Beyond stage three, your only recourse to appeal is if you believe that the College has not correctly followed the procedure outlined above.

If you believe that this is the case, you should contact the Director of Governance at the College address. This must be done within 10 working days of the decision letter being received.

A representative of the Corporation (nominated by the Chair) will investigate the matter to establish whether or not due process has been followed, and will respond within 10 working days.

7. Record Keeping

A record of all complaints at stage two and above will be retained by the College in accordance with the College's records management policy.

8. Unreasonable Complaints

Whilst the College is committed to dealing fairly with all complaints, we still also protect staff from unacceptable behaviour including abusive, offensive or threatening words or actions.

Where a complainant acts in an unreasonable manner, or where complaints are deemed to be vexatious, the procedure will be ended by reason of the conduct of the complainant.

9. Contact Details

The College Principal

Mr Tim Fisher
Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College
Vane Terrace
Darlington
DL3 7AU
Telephone: 01325 461315

Chair of the College Corporation

Mr Iain Clyde
Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College
Vane Terrace
Darlington
DL3 7AU
Telephone: 01325 461315

ESFA Institution Complaints

Customer Service Team
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

Children's Services

Darlington Borough Council
Town Hall
Feethams
Darlington
County Durham
DL1 5QT