COMPLAINTS POLICY

Date of Policy	September 2026
Approved by Principal	September 2026
Next Review Date	September 2027
Leads for Review	Registrar, Principal

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PART OF CATS GLOBAL SCHOOLS

Introduction

The School is committed to providing the best teaching and pastoral care it can for its students. It is hoped that any worries or complaints can be dealt with informally and directly through School staff. If not, the School has a formal complaints procedure. A complaint is any matter about which students, parents or other stakeholders are unhappy and seek action by the School. Formal complaints are extremely rare, reflecting the good relationships between these parties that enable most matters to be resolved informally.

The details below are not provided to limit the availability of the statutory complaints process to parents and if parents deviate from the process by mistake, for example by omitting to state that something is a 'Formal Complaint', then the procedure will be maintained in line with the policy.

All boarding related complaints (parents and students) are also dealt with under this complaints policy. The school's written record of complaints identifies those complaints relating to boarding provision, and action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

This Policy does not cover the items below and the separate policy listed should be referred to:

- If a student has been permanently excluded or has been asked to leave (Student Behavior Policy)
- If a child protection issue has arisen (Safeguarding Policy)
- If a student or parent believes that there has been a material error or irregularity in the assessment or examinations process and they want to appeal (Examination Policy)

This policy includes complaints about advice given to applicants, students and parents regarding visa applications, CASs and UK immigration rules. Any such complaints should be made to the School using the stages detailed below.

Any concern about the safety of a student should be communicated immediately via the emergency telephone: +44 7860 586528

Where the term "working days" is used this shall mean any day that is not a Saturday or Sunday or a bank holiday and which falls within term time as published on the website. However, wherever possible we will try to resolve any issues or complaints during holiday periods as quickly as possible, but delays may occur due to staff holidays or other matters outside of our control.

Students and/or parents will not be discriminated against or suffer any recrimination as a consequence of making a complaint. This complaints policy is part of the School process of

quality review and any complaint or concern is therefore valued as useful feedback rather than criticism.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

For all matters in which you consider there is cause for a complaint, please address it initially to the Student Communications Team at CATS Cambridge (studentcommunications@catscambridge.com)

The School will acknowledge your complaint within 2 working days and highlight the steps that will be taken in order to achieve a positive resolution. This will include reference to the personnel involved. The School will seek to provide you with a resolution within 10 working days of the complaint being received.

This process allows the complaint to be considered initially on an informal basis. If you are not satisfied with the response in Stage 1, you may escalate the complaint to Stage 2. Stage 1 concerns can be raised up to three months after the date of the incident causing concern.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint in Stage 1 and wish to take the matter further, you should contact the Headteacher of CATS Cambridge. Please be aware of the following points when taking your complaint to Stage 2:

- Under 18 students must ask their parents to submit a formal complaint (Stage 2 and Stage 3) on their behalf, unless there are exceptional circumstances preventing this
- You must be dissatisfied with the response you have received in Stage 1;
- You must make your complaint in writing and stipulate that it is a 'Formal Complaint' escalating from Stage 1 to Stage 2;
- You may ask a friend, relative or agent to help you with your communication or do it on your behalf.
- Where a complaint is found to be justified, remedial action will be taken.

Contact the Headteacher of CATS Cambridge via:
studentcommunications@catscambridge.com

The Headteacher will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days. The Headteacher will then provide you with a final response within 15 working days of the complaint being received. The response will explain the decision, the reasons for the decision and action taken or proposed.

This process allows the complaint to be considered formally by the Headteacher. If you are not satisfied with the response in Stage 2, you may escalate the complaint to Stage 3.

Complaints raised about the Headteacher

Formal complaints about the Headteacher can be sent to the Chair of Governors via e-mail to: chairofgovernors@catsglobalschools.com.

The Chair of Governors may deal with the Stage 2 complaint in the same manner as described for other complaints, or may recuse themselves at this stage and pass the complaint to another governor to be addressed in the first instance, so that they are then free to sit on the Panel in Stage 3 if required.

Stage 3 – Appeals Procedure and Panel Hearing

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint in Stage 2 and wish to take the matter further, you should contact the Chair of Governors. Please be aware of the following points when taking your complaint to Stage 3:

- The appeal request should be received within 10 working days of receipt of the Stage 2 response
- You must be dissatisfied with the response you have received in Stage 2 and be able to explain the reasons for your dissatisfaction with the Headteacher's decision;
- You must make your complaint in writing and stipulate that it is an 'Appeal against the Headteacher's decision' escalating from Stage 2 to Stage 3;
- You may ask a friend, relative or agent to help you with your communication or do it on your behalf.

  Contact the Chair of Governors:
  FAO The Chair of Governors
  chairofgovernors@catsglobalschools.com

- The letter will be initially acknowledged by the Chair of Governors within two working days of receiving the complaint, indicating the action that will be taken and the likely timescale.
- The Chair of Governors will then convene a panel and schedule a hearing date which will be as soon as possible and within 20 days from receipt of the complaint, though this may not be possible if the complaint is received outside term time.
- The panel shall be made up of at least three persons each of whom is not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member of the panel shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Members of the CATS Global Schools (CGS) Leadership and Management Executive Team and staff or governors working in any school within the CGS group, are not considered to be independent.
- The complainant must be informed of the date of the panel hearing a minimum of 10 working days prior to the panel happening and reasonable efforts must be made to find a convenient time for the complainant as well as the Panel.

- The Panel may decide to require additional material or further particulars of the complaint, or any related matter, in advance of the hearing. Any such additional material or further particulars shall be supplied to all parties at least 5 working days before any hearing to consider the complaint and, if necessary, the hearing date shall be deferred.
- The complainant(s) may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, friend or agent. Legal representation is prohibited during the internal appeals stage.
- The parents' right to request and attend a panel however is not forfeit because they have threatened or initiated legal proceedings.
- Where a parent has requested a panel hearing, the panel hearing will take place unless the parent later indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further.

The Panel Hearing

The hearing will be a private proceeding chaired by one member of the Panel (chosen by themselves) and will be conducted in an informal manner. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in or arising from the proceeding shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media.

All those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the chair. If the hearing is terminated for this reason, the original decision will stand. Any complainant who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and their comment will be documented.

The Panel is not empowered to make any financial award nor impose sanctions on staff, students or parents.

At the hearing the Panel will attempt to achieve a resolution. Where a resolution has not been reached and where the Panel is satisfied that it has established all the relevant facts (if necessary having carried out further investigations) and has duly considered all that the complainant and the School has said, the Panel shall make its findings and recommendations (if any). If the Panel considers that the complaint has been proven, it will uphold the complaint. If the Panel does not consider that the complaint has been proven, it will dismiss the complaint. These decisions will be made on the balance of probabilities. The decision of the Panel will be final.

The Panel's findings and any recommendations and its reasons for them, shall be recorded in writing and sent (not later than 10 working days from the date of the final hearing) to the complainant(s), the Headteacher and, where relevant, the person(s) complained about. The

decision, findings and any recommendations will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher.

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy.

Confidentiality and Records

Complainants can be assured that all concerns and complaints are treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records are kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School by paragraph 33 of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014; where disclosure is required by the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

The record of complaints must state whether the complaint has been resolved following a formal procedure or whether it has proceeded to a panel hearing. It must also give details of the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints, regardless of whether the complaint has been upheld.

In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will be kept for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances. For reference, DfE have confirmed that it is necessary to retain complaints which do not have safeguarding implications for a minimum of 7 years (a period determined by the 6-year inspection cycle with allowance for unforeseen circumstances). Where there is a safeguarding angle, it will be necessary to retain it much longer.

Information on the number of formal complaints from the last school year is available upon request from studentcommunications@catscambridge.com.

This policy is made available to parents on request and via the School's website.

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