



HAZELWOOD

INTEGRATED COLLEGE



Complaints Policy

Policy Responsibility: Principal & Chair of Board of Governors

Ratified by: Board of Governors

Date Ratified: May 2026

Next Review Date: June 2028

Our Vision: The Future We Are Building

At Hazelwood Integrated College, our vision is to be an *inclusive* and supportive school, where everyone is valued, motivated, and empowered to succeed.

Our Mission:

At Hazelwood Integrated College, we are committed to nurturing a community where every individual can GROW.

We celebrate Gratitude by recognising the value in others, foster Resilience by encouraging persistence and determination, provide Opportunities that are inclusive for all, and spark Wonder by inspiring curiosity and a love of learning. Through this, we aim to create an environment where everyone is valued, motivated, and empowered to achieve their fullest potential.



We create an environment where everyone is valued, motivated, and empowered to achieve their fullest potential through four core commitments:

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Gratitude

We recognise the value in others and appreciate the support and opportunities we are given.

Resilience

We encourage persistence and determination, helping pupils develop the strength to bounce back and learn from challenges.

Opportunities

We provide a wide range of academic, creative, and extracurricular opportunities that are inclusive for all.

Wonder

We inspire curiosity and a lifelong love of learning, sparking the natural drive to question, explore, and create.

At Hazelwood College we have the best interests of all our pupils and their families at the heart of the work we do. In that respect we encourage anyone with a concern to speak directly with a member of staff as soon as possible. This approach will allow us to work collaboratively to make every effort to resolve matters quickly and for the best interests of all involved.

Informally raising a concern

Many issues can be addressed informally by talking with relevant staff, who will always endeavour to help. Open communication between staff and parents / guardians is vital to the effective management of the school.

The first step is often discussing matters with your child’s Form Tutor or class teacher.

If your concern is of a more serious nature you may prefer to discuss it with a member of staff responsible for the area you are concerned about e.g. a Head of Department, the school SENCo etc. This may be by letter, telephone, or through appointment requested via school reception.

Many concerns can be resolved through simple clarification, or sharing of information, and most concerns can be resolved at this informal stage.

However, if you are dissatisfied with the response, you can bring the matter to the attention of a more senior member of staff with responsibility for the specific area in which you have concern.

You may be invited to come into school to discuss your concern, and it may be appropriate for another member of staff to be present. The school will always seek to find a resolve for a matter but cannot always guarantee an agreement on points of view.

Scope of complaints procedure

School staff and the Board of Governors recognise the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest possible stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

The school will not investigate anonymous complaints, unless deemed by the Board of Governors to be of a very serious nature. This will be at the discretion of the Chair of the Board of Governors.

Where it becomes evident at an early stage that a matter should be dealt with according to other established procedures or appeals mechanisms, this Complaints Procedure will be set aside in favour of the agreed procedure such as Child Protection, Special Education, Admissions, Suspensions and Expulsions, Grievance, Discipline, Bullying and Harassment or the Unsatisfactory Teaching Procedure.

Some examples of statutory procedures and appeal mechanisms are listed below.

Exceptions	Contact
Admissions / Expulsions / Exclusion of children from school	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Operations and Estates.
Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Children and Young Peoples Services
School Development Proposals	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Education
Child Protection / Safeguarding	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Children and Young People’s Services

Please contact the school as soon as possible if you have a concern or wish to make a complain. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, complaints will only be considered within 3 months of the origin of the complaint to the school.

Regardless of the nature of a complaint and whether it is upheld, the school shall not share detailed of any related sanctions imposed on staff, pupils or parents for reasons of data protection and confidentiality.

Aims of the complaint procedure

When dealing with complaints the school will:

- Encourage resolution of all concerns as quickly as possible
- Provide timely responses to concerns and complaints
- Keep you informed of progress
- Ensure a full and fair investigation of your complaint where appropriate
- Have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved
- Respect confidentiality
- Fully address complaints and provide an effective response
- Take appropriate action to rectify the issue and prevent it happening again where appropriate
- Be responsive to learning from outcomes which will inform and improve practice within the school.

A copy of this Procedure is available on the school's website or is available from the school on request.

RESOLVING CONCERNS – PROCESS

Concern about a member of staff (other than the Principal)

STEP 1

What to do first – Refer the matter to a member of the Pastoral or Curriculum team.

Most concerns and complaints can be sorted out quickly by speaking with a member of the Pastoral or Curriculum team, such as your child's teacher or Form Tutor, or for more serious matters a Head of Department or Head of Year. The member of staff will investigate your complaint and make every effort to resolve your problem. They will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong, and they will explain their own actions and point of view to you. This does not mean that in every case they will come round to your point of view, but it will help both you and the school to understand both sides of the issue. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising again.

STEP 2

Speaking with a member of the SLT (Assistant Principal or Vice Principal)

If the matter remains unresolved you can discuss it with the relevant Assistant Principal or Vice Principal. The member of staff may not be able to deal with your concerns immediately and will need some time to investigate and prepare a response. If additional time is required you will be informed of this. If your concern relates to an Assistant Principal or Vice Principal please direct your concern in writing to the Principal.

STEP 3

Writing to the Principal

If your concern has not been resolved at Step 1 and 2 you may wish to inform the Principal. You can write to the Principal, stating the grounds for your concern as concisely as possible and addressing the specific issues, what has been done so far and what you remain concerned about.

The Principal will endeavour to respond to you to resolve your concerns as soon as possible.

If you wish the matter to be raised more formally with the Principal you can raise a FORMAL COMPLAINT using the process overleaf.

MAKING A FORMAL COMPLAINT

STAGE 1

Complainants who are not satisfied with an informal resolution are asked to put their complaint in writing using the template form in [Appendix 1](#). Where this may present difficulties, please contact the school office to have reasonable arrangements made to support you. You can also ask for support from third party organizations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Complaints against school staff (except the Principal), should be made in the first instance, to the Principal in writing and with Appendix 1 completed. Please mark correspondence as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that are about the Principal, should be addressed to the Chair of Governors in writing and with Appendix 1 completed. Please mark correspondence as Private and Confidential and for the attention of the Chairman of the Board of Governors.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual Governor or the whole Board of Governors should be made in writing, with Appendix 1 completed and addressed to the Head of Finance and Corporate Services. Please mark correspondence as Private and Confidential.

The Principal will normally acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible, but within 10 school working days. This will be a short response. A final response will normally be made within 25 school working days of receipt of the complaint.

This response will be issued in writing and will indicate whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. If, for any reason, the consideration of a complaint takes longer to complete, you will be informed of revised time limits and kept updated on progress.

These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during school holiday periods.

If you remain unhappy with the outcome at Stage 1, the complaint may be progressed to Stage 2 which is overseen by the Board of Governors.

STAGE 2

If your complaint is about the Principal, or is unresolved after Stage One, please write to the Chair of the Board of Governors, care of the College, marked Private and Confidential and outline your complaint using the form in [Appendix 1](#).

Where this presents difficulties, please contact the College which will make reasonable arrangements to support you with this process.

The Chair will convene a committee to review the complaint.

The complaint will normally be acknowledged by the Chair as soon as possible but within 10 school working days. This will be a short response.

A final response will normally be made within 25 school working days from receipt of the complaint in writing on the form in Appendix 1.

The final response will be issued in writing from the Chair of the Committee convened to review the complaint and will indicate whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld.

If the complaint takes longer to complete you will be informed in writing of revised time limits and kept updated on progress. These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during College holiday periods.

If following Stage Two you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint you can refer the matter to the Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO). The response to a

Stage Two complaint will in its concluding letter advise that the complaint may be referred to the NIPSO if you remain dissatisfied.

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO)

The Ombudsman provides a free, independent, and impartial service for handling complaints about schools in Northern Ireland.

You have the right to complain to the Ombudsman if you feel that you have been treated unfairly or have received a poor service from a school and your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction.

A complaint should normally be referred to NIPSO within six months of the final response from the College.

Contact details for NIPSO are:

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman Office

Progressive House

33 Wellington Place

Belfast

BT1 6HN

Freepost: FREEPOST NIPSO

Telephone 02890 233 821

Free phone 0800 34 34 24

Email: nipso@nipso.org.u

What to expect under this procedure

Your rights as a person making a complaint

In dealing with a complaint we will ensure:

- Fair treatment
- Courtesy
- A timely response
- Accurate advice
- Respect for privacy – complaints will be treated as confidentially as possible allowing for the possibility of consultation with other appropriate parties about the complaint and
- Clear reasons for decisions.

Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint

In making a complaint it is important to:

- Raise issues in a timely manner
- Treat our staff with respect and courtesy
- Provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issues raised
- Use these procedures fully and engage with them at the appropriate levels.

Rights of parties involved during the investigation

Where a meeting is arranged the complainant may be accompanied but not represented by another person.

The process is non-adversarial and does not provide a role for any other statutory or non-statutory body.

Staff may seek the advice and support from their professional body or Trade Union and may also be accompanied by another person to meetings where it is accepted, by the Board of Governors and the Principal, that this will assist the investigation and resolution of the complaint.

A member of staff who is the subject of a complaint will be provided with full details of any allegations made against him/her before being required to respond to the matters raised. In many circumstances this may be best achieved by providing the member of staff with a copy of the letter.

Legal Representation

Legal representation, or representation by a person, or persons acting in a professional capacity **is not** permitted within this Procedure.

This Procedure does not take away from the statutory rights of any of the participants.

Where the complainant is a Governor

Where the complainant is a member of the Board of Governors, he/she will play no part in the management of the complaint as set out in this Procedure.

Unreasonable Complaints

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain.

There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaint's procedure having been completed and the complaint having been reviewed by the Ombudsman, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If they try to re-open the same issue, the Chair of the Board of Governors will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is closed.

If the complainant repeatedly continues to contact the School this will be considered a vexatious complaint and no response will be provided.

Withdrawing a complaint

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, they will be asked to confirm this in writing.

Review and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed and evaluated at least every three years by the Board of Governors, in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, considering changes to legislation and best practice advice and guidance from the Education Authority and/or the Department of Education.

Timeframe

The school will not investigate complaints about issues that occurred more than six months before the concern was first raised.

COMPLAINTS / FEEDBACK FORM



HAZELWOOD
INTEGRATED COLLEGE

Name:

Address:.....

Postcode:.....

Daytime Telephone Number:

Evening Telephone Number:

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If applicable, name of child(ren) and year at school:

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Your relationship to the school, e.g.: Student, Parent, Carer, Neighbour,
Member of the public:

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Please give details of your complaint:

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What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? Who did you speak to? When, and what was the response?

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What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

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Signature: _____ Date: _____

OFFICIAL USE

Date of acknowledgement: _____

By whom: _____

Complaint referred to: _____

Date: _____