

COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS & COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

Responsible Senior Manager: Deputy Principal Finance & Facilities

Effective Date: Dec 2025

Related Policies: Equity & Inclusion Policy

Approved By: Finance & Estates Cttee *

Next Review Date: Oct 2026

* Under delegated powers



Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to advise students, parents and customers on the service they can expect to receive and how the College deals, monitors, reports and reviews Compliments, Comments and Complaints (CCC). This will ensure that:

- good practice can be celebrated.
- poor experience for a customer can be rectified.
- points raised can be monitored, shared and fed into actions to ensure continuous improvement.

Scope

The Policy defines who is responsible for compliments, comments and complaints and the timescales in which the college will respond.

The key stages are:

- A - Making a Comment, Giving a Compliment and Making a Complaint
- B - The Complaints Handling Process
- C - Appeals
- D - Recording and Monitoring

Section A: Making a Compliment, Comment or Complaint

- 1.1 Students, parents or other stakeholders can contact the College either in person or in writing to offer a compliment, comment or make a complaint. The College recommends using the 'Contact Us' form found on the College's website.
- 1.2 The College will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within 2 working days providing it is made using the 'Contact Us' form. It may take longer to acknowledge complaints made in other ways.
- 1.3 The Curriculum Support & Customer Service Manager will maintain a record of CCCs.
- 1.4 The complainant will be given a reference number and a link to the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy upon acknowledgement.
- 1.5 Wherever possible complaints will be handled by the Curriculum Support & Customer Service Manager and / or a member of the College Leadership Team / Head of Faculty in the first instance. If the complaint is not satisfactorily resolved at Stage 1 of the process, then the complainant will be advised to proceed to Stage 2 and if not satisfactorily resolved at Stage 2 the complainant will be advised on how to appeal.
- 1.6 In exceptional circumstances a customer may wish to make an anonymous compliment, comment or complaint. Where an anonymous complaint has been received the College will make every effort to support it, although the level of investigation possible to resolve the situation may be limited. Where complaints relate to matters of safeguarding or other legal duties, the College may have a duty to refer the matter onwards to the Police or other statutory bodies and anonymity cannot be guaranteed.
- 1.7 Where a member of staff receives a compliment, comment or complaint outside of the recommended 'Contact Us' form they should send it to the Curriculum Support & Customer Service Manager immediately.

- 1.8 A complaint which relates to a senior member of College staff i.e. a member of the Executive Team (Executive Director HR & CS or Deputy Principal) should be put in writing to the Principal's Executive Assistant, HSDC, College Road, Waterlooville, Hampshire, PO7 8AA or by email to Lara.evans@hsvc.ac.uk
- 1.9 A complaint which relates to the Principal/Chief Executive Officer (CEO) should be put in writing to the Clerk to the Corporation, HSDC, College Road, Waterlooville, Hampshire, PO7 8AA or by email to jackie.eayrs@hsvc.ac.uk
- 1.10 The complainant will be expected to state clearly the nature of and grounds for the complaint and, if appropriate, provide copies of any related documentation. The complainant should also state the remedy they are seeking. It is not possible for a complainant to seek the disciplining of a senior member of staff since this is a decision for the Principal/Chief Executive Officer in respect of the Executive Director and the Corporation in respect of the Deputy Principals and Principal in accordance with the Instrument and Articles of Government of the College.
- 1.11 All complaints against senior staff will be considered under Stage 2 of the College's Complaints Policy as outlined in Section B below: The Complaints Handling Process.

Section B: The Complaints Handling Process

Stage 1

- 2.1 All Complaints received through the recommended 'Contact Us' form available on the College's website will be acknowledged within 2 working days. It may take longer to acknowledge complaints made in other ways. The Curriculum Support & Customer Service Manager will forward the complaint on to relevant staff (a member of the College Leadership Team or Head of Faculty) to investigate and will log the date of the interaction.
- 2.2 Normally, the College will respond to complaints within 10 working days but will endeavour to propose a resolution earlier where possible.
- 2.3 All complaints will be treated appropriately through dialogue and mutual understanding. The College will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed and resolved and such issues will be treated in confidence with impartiality. If the complainant is asked to attend in person as part of an investigation into a complaint, they will be able to bring a friend, relative or advocate with them.
- 2.4 Where it is not possible to resolve the complaint within the 10-day timescale, the complainant will be notified of progress and the likely date of resolution, by the member of staff investigating the complaint.
- 2.5 If the complaint cannot be resolved or the complaint is deemed too serious, the complainant will be advised of the next stage of the complaints procedure.
- 2.6 Once the College has responded to the complaint, the complaint will be closed unless the complainant responds to suggest otherwise. In this instance, the complaint will progress to Stage 2.
- 2.7 The complainant has 28 days to appeal any decision made by the College.

Stage 2

- 2.8 At the second stage, the complaint should be made in writing or by email to the Principal's Executive Assistant, HSDC, College Road, Waterlooville, Hants, PO7 8AA.

- 2.9 The complaint will be acknowledged within 2 working days and the matter will be investigated as soon as possible by a member of the College Executive Team.
- 2.10 A full and considered response to the complaint will be given within 10 working days and any actions that need to be implemented taken as soon as possible thereafter.
- 2.11 In exceptional circumstances it may not be possible to give a final response within 10 working days, in such cases the complainant will be kept fully informed of the reasons for the delay and progress towards the resolution of the complaint.

Stage 2 - Complaints Against Senior Staff:

- 2.12 A complaint against a Vice-Principal or Deputy Principal will be acknowledged by the Principal's Executive Assistant within 2 working days.
- 2.13 The Principal's EA will refer the complaint for investigation to a Deputy Principal in respect of the Executive Director and to the Principal in respect of a Deputy Principal.
- 2.14 A full and considered response to the complaint will be given within 10 working days (term time only) and any actions that need to be implemented taken as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 2.15 In exceptional circumstances, it may not be possible to give a final response within 10 working days, in such cases, the complainant will be kept fully informed of the reasons for the delay and progress towards the resolution of the complaint. Complaints made during College holidays may take longer to investigate but every effort will be made to respond in a timely manner.
- 2.16 If a complaint is received anonymously, it will not be appropriate to ignore such correspondence. Steps will be taken to establish whether, on the information available, a problem can be identified. If a problem is identified, remedial action will be taken. It may, however, be difficult to carry out a more detailed enquiry into a complaint without being able to interview the complainant and obtain the information that would be necessary to undertake a more robust inquiry.

Stage 2 - Complaints against the Principal/Chief Executive Officer (CEO):

- 2.17 A complaint against the Principal/Chief Executive Officer will be acknowledged by the Clerk to the Corporation within 2 working days.
- 2.18 The Clerk to the Corporation will refer the complaint for investigation to one or more members of the Board (excluding the Chair of Corporation), provided in each case that they have not been involved in the matters subject to the complaint.
- 2.19 A full and considered response to the complaint will be given within 15 working days (term time only) and any actions that need to be implemented taken as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 2.20 In exceptional circumstances, it may not be possible to give a final response within 15 working days, in such cases, the complainant will be kept fully informed of the reasons for the delay and progress towards the resolution of the complaint. Complaints made during College holidays may take longer to investigate but every effort will be made to respond in a timely manner.
- 2.21 If a complaint is received anonymously, it will not be appropriate to ignore such correspondence. Steps will be taken to establish whether, on the information available, a problem can be identified. If a problem is identified, remedial action will be taken. It may, however, be difficult to carry out a more detailed enquiry into a complaint without being able to interview the complainant and obtain the information that would be necessary to undertake a more robust inquiry.

Stage 3

- 2.22 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 and 2 of the complaints procedure, they can appeal in writing to the Principal. The Principal will review the matter and the decision will be final.

Stage 3 – Complaints Against Senior Staff:

- 2.22 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure, they can appeal in writing to the Principal for cases related to the Executive Director and to the Chair of HR Committee for cases related to a Deputy Principal. The Principal and Chair of the HR Committee will review the matter, and the decision will be final.

Stage 3 – Complaints Against the Principal/CEO

- 2.23 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure, they can appeal in writing to the Chair of Corporation. The Chair will review the matter, and the decision will be final.

Section C: Appeals to external agencies

- 3.1 In the event of the complaint not being resolved following appeal to the Principal, the complainant may contact the Education Skills Funding Agency. Please check their website for further details.
- 3.2 If the complaint relates to Higher Education provision, the complainant can utilise the awarding University's own Complaints Policy. Indeed, HSDC may involve the University where the matter cannot be resolved within the College.
- 3.3 If the student is not happy with the outcome of a complaint made to HSDC and / or the University's decision, they can request a 'Completion of Procedures Letter' informing of the right to bring the complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. More information can be found via the website <http://oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia/how-to-make-a-complaint.aspx>

Section D: Recording and monitoring Compliments, Comments and Complaints

- 4.1 The Curriculum Support & Customer Service Manager will keep a record of all Compliments, Comments and Complaints. Termly reports will be presented to the Executive and annual reports to the Governors on the numbers, types and resolution of complaints.
- 4.2 This Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Director of MIS & Business Processes.