



THE JOHN OF GAUNT SCHOOL
- A Community Academy -

Complaints Procedure

Originator	Reviewed by	Date of Review	Approved by	Date of Approval	Next Review Date	Website
School	Board	7/12/15	Board	8/2/16	Feb 2018	Yes

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1 Vision Statement

‘Creating an irresistible climate for achievement’

- We challenge, support and encourage every student to **achieve their potential**.
- We believe **effort** and **dedication** lead to success and we **raise aspirations**.
- We **personalise our provision** to meet the needs of individuals.
- We enable our students to flourish as **confident learners and leaders** of our community.
- We create a culture where all stakeholders **feel valued, supported and proud**.
- We **work collaboratively** to improve outcomes for our students and support other schools to improve.

1a Core Principles

As our vision statement makes clear, we aim to help all our students achieve success and we have high expectations of them. We appreciate the support received and welcome comments and suggestions for improvement.

2 Informal Procedures

Complaints and other issues should in the first instance and preferably be dealt with informally. Should you wish to contact the school for a specific reason you will find it helpful to know the name of the person who is most easily able to deal with your query. In many instances this will be a student’s tutor or House Leader. Further details on who to contact if you have specific queries can be found on our website <http://johnofgauntschool.org/information/contact-find-us> . For specific areas, you can address your compliments, comments, and complaints to the following people.

Curriculum and any general matters	Mr B Rhodes (Deputy Head) brhodes@jogschool.org
Examinations	Mrs D Cottle (Examinations Office) dcottle@jogschool.org
Student care, discipline and general matters	Mrs H Kerr hkerr@jogschool.org
Sixth Form	Miss L Brunt (Director of 6th Form) lbrunt@jogschool.org
Personal Development including careers, sex education and work experience	Mrs H Kerr (Personal Development Leader) hkerr@jogschool.org
Matters of concern	Mr M Gunston (Headteacher) snichols@jogschool.org
Governance and other issues	Mr D Whewell (Chair of Governors) via the school’s address, Tel: 01225 711156 or email whewell david@gmail.com

3. Formal Procedures

Formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further. The school has nominated the headteacher's PA, as complaints co-ordinator to have responsibility for the management of the school complaints procedure.

Formal complaints should be addressed to head@jogschool.org . If your complaint is about the Headteacher it should be directed to the Chair of Governors.

Principles

Our Complaints Procedure aims to:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible; be easily accessible and publicised;
- be simple to understand and use;
- be impartial;
- be non-adversarial;
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respect people's desire for confidentiality; address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
- provide information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

Investigating complaints

At each stage the complaints co-ordinator or nominated person should make sure that they:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of any interviews.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure the school wants to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

Complainants will be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence. We want to identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

The stages of complaints

This complaints procedure has three well-defined stages.

- **Stage one:** complaint heard by staff member (though not the subject of the complaint);
- **Stage two:** complaint heard by headteacher;
- **Stage three:** complaint heard by Governing Body's complaints appeal panel.

3a Step 1: Informal Resolution

We will make every attempt to contact you within 24 hours.

We will acknowledge your complaint, tell you what we have done, how we intend to proceed and when you will hear an outcome from us – normally this will be within 1 working week.

The receipt of your complaint and how it was resolved will be logged, and this record will be made available to the Governing body; however, details of the complaint and related correspondence will be kept confidential and only released where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them.

3b Step 2: Formal Resolution

If you are unhappy with how the school has dealt with your complaint in Step 1, please inform the complaints co-ordinator and it will be heard by the Headteacher.

In this case,

- we will acknowledge your complaint as soon as possible;
- we will make every attempt to contact you within 5 working days for clarification and discussion of your complaint, if necessary;
- we will make every attempt to respond to your complaint within 3 working weeks.

3c Step 3: Panel Hearing

If you are not satisfied with the response to your formal complaint as discussed in step 2 above, you can write to the Chair of Governors, c/o the school, to request a review of your complaint.

In this case,

- the Chair of Governors will acknowledge your letter as soon as possible, normally within 5 working days;
- a panel of three governors will be established, whose members have had no direct involvement in the issues at hand. This panel will invite you for a hearing as soon as possible. You may bring someone to support you to a panel hearing (eg. relative, teacher, friend). We will aim for the panel hearing to be set as soon as possible, normally within 3 working weeks.
- After the hearing, the panel's findings will be sent to you and to the person complained about (where relevant), and will be made available in school to the Head Teacher and Governors.

3d Step 4

If you are not satisfied with the panel's findings as discussed in step 3, you may be able to take your complaint to the Department for Education, see <http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/complaintsprocedure/>

We guarantee to investigate all matters thoroughly, fairly and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection or under other legal or regulatory obligation. Records will be kept for 3 years. We are pleased to work with parents, friends and neighbours for the good of the students, the school and its future improvement.

4 Managing and Recording Complaints

Recording complaints

The school will record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. The complaints co-ordinator will be responsible for the records and hold them centrally.

Governing Body review

The Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on an annual basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. Complaints information shared with the whole Governing Body will not name individuals. The monitoring and review of complaints by the school and the Governing Body can be a useful tool in evaluating a school's performance.

Publicising the procedure

There is a legal requirement for the complaints procedure to be publicised. Details of the complaints procedure will be included in:

- the information given to new parents when their children join the school;
- the school website.

5 PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH VEXATIOUS CORRESPONDENCE AND COMPLAINTS

5a Purpose of this procedure

A small percentage of people will correspond with or complain to the school or governing body in a way that could reasonably be described as obsessive, harassing or repetitious. This correspondence from a minority of individuals takes up a disproportionate amount of resource and can result in unacceptable stress for governors and staff. This procedure is designed to address vexatious correspondence and complaints. It should assist schools and governors to manage demanding or unreasonable behaviour from vexatious correspondents.

It is important that the use of this procedure does not prevent people from accessing school services to which they have an entitlement, and it is designed to ensure that their rights are protected, while ensuring that scarce resources are used fairly and effectively, and that governors and staff receive a reasonable degree of protection from the stress that can be caused by vexatious correspondence and complaints.

This procedure is not designed to address violent or threatening behaviour which needs urgent response.

5b Defining vexatious correspondence or complaints

Vexatious or persistent complaints and correspondence can be characterised in the following ways:

- Behaviour which is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious and/or;
- displays an insistence on pursuing unmeritorious issues and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason;
- displays an insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints or issues in an unreasonable manner;
- a “scatter gun” approach, with copies of letters being sent to several recipients on a regular basis, often including the media, the MP, the Department for Education and/or the Education Funding Agency and external regulators;

- repeated and/or frequent requests for information, whether or not those requests are made under the access to information legislation.

5c Using the procedure

If governors or staff identify behaviour that they think exhibits these characteristics, and which they believe may be vexatious, they should first discuss their concerns with the chair of governors. If the chair agrees with the assessment, the chair should prepare a brief statement of why the governors consider the complaint or correspondence to be vexatious, including its effect upon staff, governors and the school. This should be accompanied by a list of correspondence over the last six months, via email, telephone and letter, including information about whom the correspondence was addressed to, how many people/organisations it was copied in to on each occasion and a one line description of each piece of correspondence.

5d Handling correspondence and complaints that have been assessed as vexatious

- The first step for the chair of governors is to write to the correspondent advising them that their complaint and/or correspondence has been determined to be vexatious and giving the reason for that decision. The letter should state that any future correspondence will be passed direct to the chair of governors who will consider whether it raises any substantive new issue(s).
- The correspondent will be advised that if no substantive new issue is raised, any future correspondence will not receive a response. They will also be advised of their right to complain about the decision to the Secretary of State for Education.
- If future correspondence does raise significant new issues, it will be responded to. It may be appropriate for the response to be routed via the chair in order to prevent the renewal of “scatter gun” correspondence.
- They will be advised that the decision will be reviewed in six months from the date of the letter advising them that their complaint/correspondence had been determined to be vexatious.
- There is no internal route of appeal against the decision that a complaint or correspondence is vexatious.
- The chair will notify any colleagues whom they know are likely to receive correspondence of their contact details and ask them to pass any future correspondence from the vexatious correspondent to the chair.
- Where future correspondence does raise new issues, the chair of governors may decide that any meetings with staff or governors on the school site must be by prior appointment only, with a third person present.

5e Reviewing the decision

- Six months after the correspondent has been advised that their complaint and/or correspondence is vexatious, that decision will be reviewed.
- The chair will meet the governing body and the Headteacher to consider whether there has been any improvement in the vexatious behaviour over that time.
- The chair will write to the correspondent advising them of the outcome of the review. If the behaviour has improved, future correspondence can be treated in the normal way. If there has not been a significant improvement, the correspondent will continue to be treated as vexatious and will be reviewed every six months.

Flowchart

Summary of Dealing with Complaints

