



# **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

**Complaints Procedure for students, parents/carers and others with an interest in the college**

## Introduction

- 1.1. The College aims to provide a high quality of service and provision to students, their parents/carers, and others with an interest in the College. If you have a complaint\* about the quality of any aspect of this service or provision, please follow the Complaints Procedure set out below. It is designed to ensure that all complaints are considered in a fair, consistent and timely manner.
- 1.2. College staff will do their very best to help resolve all complaints. Please note that complaints will be dealt with in a confidential manner.

\*A complaint is defined as a clear statement of dissatisfaction with any aspect of service or provision of the College. For a complaint to be considered at Stage 2 it must be a written complaint, sent by post or by e-mail.

## Complaints procedure

- 2.1. In any organisation, there are times when complaints arise. Carmel College is committed to trying to resolve any such complaints as quickly, and as effectively, as possible. This procedure applies equally to anyone who has a complaint against the College.

### 2.2. Stage 1: Informal

Often the best way to resolve a complaint is to talk to the person / people directly concerned. At Stage 1 Informal, therefore, you are invited to raise your complaint directly with the person/people concerned, with the aim of resolving the complaint as soon as possible. If, however, you do not feel confident in taking this approach, please contact a Personal Achievement Tutor (students), a member of the Safeguarding Team (students), or a member of SLT (all others with an interest in the College), who will seek to resolve the complaint informally on your behalf. Other members of staff can also pass on your complaint to any of the above.

Records of all meetings and conversations to resolve the complaint informally should be kept by those involved.

If you do not want to follow the informal approach outlined above, or you have tried an informal approach and feel that the complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction, you should proceed to Stage 2. At Stage 2 you will be invited to put your complaint in writing.

### 2.3 Stage 2: Formal

If you wish to make a formal complaint, please submit in writing the complaint(s) that you would like to be investigated, to:

- **Email:** executiveco-ordinator@carmel.ac.uk
- **Postal address:** The Executive Co-ordinator to the Principalship, Carmel College, Prescott Road, St Helens, Merseyside, WA10 3AG

Your complaint will be dealt with much more effectively, if you provide as much detail and supporting evidence as possible about the complaint(s) that you wish to be investigated, along with details of any communication that you have already had with the College about the complaint (such as any records of meetings and conversations to try to resolve the complaint informally).

You will receive an acknowledgement of your formal complaint from the Executive Co-ordinator within **3 working days** of receipt (*please note: weekends and College holiday periods/closures do not constitute working days*), this may be via a telephone call or by email. In this acknowledgement, you will be informed of the Lead Manager who will investigate your complaint, along with their contact details. The Lead Manager will be your point of contact with the College throughout the investigation of your complaint at Stage 2.

The Lead Manager will organise an investigation of the complaint(s) that you have made. As part of the investigation, you may be invited to a meeting to discuss your complaint(s).

The outcome of the investigation will be reported to you in writing within **10 working days** of first contact with the Lead Manager (*please note: weekends and College holiday periods/closures do not constitute working days*). This will usually be by the same method of communication that you used to submit your formal complaint. For example, if you emailed your formal complaint, the investigation outcome notification will be sent to you by email. Postal correspondence will be by recorded delivery.

This written response will include full reasons for the conclusions reached as a result of the investigation and what action, if any, the College proposes to take to resolve the complaint. The response will respect the General Data Protection Regulations.

Please note:

- Where a complaint is found to have been made maliciously, this may lead to the application of the College's Disciplinary procedures for students, and potential criminal proceedings for others

## 2.4 Stage 3: Appeal

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation at Stage 2, you may appeal to the Principal. Your written appeal should be sent to:

- **Email:** executiveco-ordinator@carmel.ac.uk
- **Postal address:** The Executive Co-ordinator to the Principalship, Carmel College, Prescot Road, St Helens, Merseyside, WA10 3AG

Your appeal must be received by the College within **5 working days** of the receipt, by email or by post, of the notification of the outcome of the investigation at Stage 2 (*please note: weekends and College holiday periods/closures do not constitute working days*).

The Principal or their designate, will review your appeal and will respond in writing with a final decision within **10 working days** of receipt of your appeal (*please note: weekends and College holiday periods/closures do not constitute working days*). This will usually be by the same method of communication that you used to submit your appeal. For example, if you emailed your appeal, the appeal outcome notification will be sent to you by email. Postal correspondence will be by recorded delivery.

This written response will include full reasons as to whether the appeal has been upheld or not, and, if upheld, what action the College proposes to take to resolve the complaint. The response will respect the General Data Protection Regulations.

The Principal / Principal's designate decision is final, there is no further right of appeal.

## 2.5 Stage 4: Procedural appeal

The decision reached at Stage 3 is final and is not open to further appeal. Your only recourse of appeal beyond Stage 3 is an appeal to the College's Governing Body **if** you believe the College has not followed the procedures outlined in Stage 2 and Stage 3 above. If you think that this is the case, you must submit in writing a Stage 4 Procedural Appeal. Your Procedural Appeal must be received by the College within **5 working days** of the receipt, by email or by post, of the notification of the outcome of the appeal at Stage 3 (*please note: weekends and College holiday periods/closures do not constitute working days*).

Your Procedural Appeal should be sent to:

- **Email:** [clerk@carmel.ac.uk](mailto:clerk@carmel.ac.uk)
- **Postal address:** The Clerk of the Governing Body, Carmel College, Prescott Road, St Helens, Merseyside, WA10 3AG

You will receive an acknowledgement of your procedural appeal within **3 working days** of receipt of appeal (*please note: weekends and College holiday periods/closures do not constitute working days*), this may be via a telephone call or by email. In this acknowledgement you will be informed of the representative of the Governing Body who will investigate your procedural appeal.

The representative of the Governing Body will respond in writing with a final decision within **10 working days** of their receipt of your procedural appeal (*please note: weekends and College holiday periods/closures do not constitute working days*).

This written response will include full reasons as to whether the procedural appeal has been upheld or not and, if upheld, what action the College proposes to take to resolve the matter. The response will respect the General Data Protection Regulations.

## 2.6 Record Keeping

If a complaint reaches Stage 2, formal records are kept. These formal records will be used to help improve the quality of service and provision on offer at the College.

## 2.7 Timescales

If it is not possible to meet the timescales for response to your complaint outlined above, you will be notified by the Executive Co-ordinator to the Principalship, including the reason(s) why, and a revised timescale for response will be agreed.

## 2.8 Complaints relating to official qualifications

If your complaint relates to a qualification aim, and you are not satisfied that the College has resolved your complaint satisfactorily, you are entitled to contact the appropriate awarding body. Each awarding body specify that the centre (College) is best placed to investigate any complaint but will address your complaint, if this avenue has been exhausted.

The contact details for the awarding bodies that the College works with can be found on their website. The College works with the following awarding bodies:

- AQA
- Pearson
- WJEC

- OCR
- NCFE
- The University of Liverpool

## 2.9 Complaints outside the scope of the above procedures

These are:

- Complaints which have an alternative avenue of recourse, for example, exclusion (Student Disciplinary Policy)
- Complaints dealt with by other College policies and procedures, for example, fraud (Whistleblowing Policy)

If at any stage in these procedures it becomes clear that the complaint falls outside the scope of these procedures, you will be informed by the investigating officer, and directed to the most appropriate policy and procedure.

## 2.10 Equality and Diversity

Records of written complaints at Stage 2 and beyond (by email or by post) and their outcomes will be reported to the Senior Leadership Team and to the Quality and Standards Committee of the Governing Body on an annual basis. This will include an analysis of the gender, race and disability of those who made a written complaint, as is possible, from the information provided by the complainant (at enrolment for students).

## Review of Complaints Procedures and Communication of Review

- 3.1 The Senior Leadership Team own these procedures. Once any review of these procedures is approved by Governors, staff, students, their parents / carers and others with an interest in the College will be notified of the new procedures via tutorial, the Parent/Carer newsletter or social media, as appropriate, and the revised procedures will be published on the College website.

## Equality Impact Assessment

| Question   | Response  |
|--|---|
| <b>1. Name of policy being assessed</b>  | Complaints Procedures   |
| <b>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy</b>   | The purpose of these procedures is to clearly detail for students, their parents / carers and others with an interest in the College the process for making a complaint to the College.                     |
| <b>3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</b> | Feedback from an external investigating officer of a parent/carer complaint (January 2023).<br>Feedback from SLT.<br>Feedback from the College's Equality and Diversity Manager.                            |
| <b>4. Who is affected by the policy?</b>   | Carmel staff / students / parents and carers/ others with an interest in the College  |
| <b>5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy?</b>                                  | These procedures will be the basis for all student and / or parental / carer and/or others with an interest in the College complaints received by the College.<br>The procedures will be reviewed annually. |

| Protected Characteristic Group | Is there a potential for positive or negative impact? | Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used   | Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment made) |
|--------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Disability                     | Positive Impact                                       | The policy allows all students / parents / carers and others with an interest in the College to raise concerns about any aspect of the College's work that they believe has not been to a satisfactory standard. | N/A  |
| Gender reassignment            | Positive Impact                                       | As explained for disability  |  |
| Marriage or civil partnership  | Positive Impact                                       | As explained for disability  |  |
| Pregnancy and maternity        | Positive Impact                                       | As explained for disability  |  |
| Race                           | Positive Impact                                       | As explained for disability  |  |
| Religion or belief             | Positive Impact                                       | As explained for disability  |  |
| Sexual orientation             | Positive Impact                                       | As explained for disability  |  |
| Sex (gender)                   | Positive Impact                                       | As explained for disability  |  |
| Age                            | Positive Impact                                       | As explained for disability  |  |

**Evaluation:**

| Question   | Explanation / justification   |  |
|--|---|--|
| Is it possible the proposed policy could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?   | The procedures are applicable to all to follow. There is no perceived discrimination or unfair disadvantage to any individual or group. |  |
| Final Decision:  | Tick the relevant Box   | Include any explanation / justification required                                       |
| 1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will <b>proceed</b> .  | ✓   | The procedure is consistent in its approach to receiving and responding to complaints. |
| 2. You can decide to <b>stop</b> the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups   |   |  |
| 3. You can <b>adapt or change</b> the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias  |   |  |
| 4. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the aim of the policy or practice (e.g. in extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore you are going to <b>proceed with caution</b> with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision. |   |  |

| Version | Date     | Author(s)       | Comments  | Approval Route/ Date                                     | Date of Next Review |
|---------|----------|-----------------|---|--|---------------------|
| 1       | May 2023 | Angela Williams | Based on good practice exemplars from the Sixth Form College sector | SLT May 2023<br>Q&S Committee June 2023<br>FGB June 2023 | May 2025            |

|                                     |  |   |                               |   |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>File Name/Path</b>               | O:\Policies\2022-2023 Policies           |   |                               |   |
| <b>Intranet Path</b>                | Connect \ Departments \ College Policies |   |                               |   |
| <b>Circulation List</b>             | Principalship                            | x | College Union Representatives |   |
|                                     | Full Governing Body                      | x | HR Department                 | x |
| <b>Author / Responsibility</b>      | Senior Leadership Team (SLT)             |   |                               |   |
| <b>Reviewed by</b>                  | Quality & Standards Committee            |   |                               |   |
| <b>Approved by</b>                  | Full Governing Body                      |   |                               |   |
| <b>Date of last Policy approval</b> | 27 June 2023                             |   |                               |   |
| <b>Review interval</b>              | Every 2 years                            |   |                               |   |