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LYCÉE FRANÇAIS CHARLES DE GAULLE DE LONDRES CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

This policy is publicly available on the School website and is available to parents/carers of pupils in hard copy on request.

This is the Concerns and Complaints Policy of Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle de Londres (the “School”).

This Policy bears due regard to the following statutory guidance and regulations:

- DfE *Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (April 2017)*
- Part 7 of *The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations (2014)*

Scope

This policy applies to concerns and complaints raised by parents and carers of pupils of the School (including those pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (maternelle)).

This policy applies to the School’s four sites.

This Concerns and Complaints Policy does not apply to:

- prospective pupils or past pupils (unless the complaint is a continuation of a process that began when the pupil was still being educated at the School)
- concerns or complaints made by pupils themselves, or any person who is not a parent or carer of a pupil at the School.
- concerns or complaints raised on behalf of other parents/carers or a group of parents/carers; complaints must be raised directly by the parents/carers involved
- Admissions
- Complaints involving issues of child protection or safeguarding (then the School’s safeguarding and child protection policy will be followed)
- Exclusions (the School’s pupil behaviour and discipline policy will be followed)
- Whistleblowing (the School’s whistleblowing policy must be followed))
- Staff grievances (please refer to the School’s staff Handbook)
- Data Protection matters (please refer to the School’s Privacy Notice).

An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The school actively seeks to maintain an open dialogue with parents. The aim of this policy is to ensure that all concerns and complaints are managed sympathetically, efficiently, at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, and is fair to those concerned.

It is in everyone’s interest that any issues are resolved at the earliest possible Stage.

When used in this policy, “you” means the parent/carer of a pupil of the School who wishes to raise a concern/complaint.

Overview

This document sets out:

1. The School's approach to dealing with concerns or complaints
2. Concerns or complaints by parents/carers of pupils at the School
3. Concerns or complaints by persons other than parents/carers
4. Persistent or Vexatious Complaints and/or Harassment
5. Appendix: Overview of School's Concern and Complaints Procedure (diagram)

1. The School's Approach to Dealing with Concerns or Complaints

The School will treat all concerns and complaints seriously and take appropriate action to try and resolve them. It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Concerns and complaints can be investigated more effectively whilst information is fresh in the minds of all parties.

Expectations

A person who raises a concern or a complaint can expect the School to:

- explain how and when problems can be raised, and where to find this policy;
- make a copy of the policy available on request;
- respond within a reasonable time;
- be available for consultation within reasonable time limits, bearing in mind the needs of the pupils within the School and the nature of the concern or complaint;
- respond with courtesy and respect;
- attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with this policy;
- keep them informed of progress towards a resolution of the issues raised.

The School expects a person who raises a concern or a complaint to:

- treat all School staff with courtesy and respect;
- respect the needs and well-being of pupils and staff in the School;
- avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence to people or property;
- avoid any aggression or verbal abuse;
- recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the School a reasonable time to respond;
- recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time;
- (in the case of a complaint) follow the procedure specified in this policy.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

The School does not distinguish between “concerns” and “complaints” for the purposes of this policy: a concern or complaint is any matter about which a parent or carer of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the School. Issues raised at Stage 1 are classed as a concern. The issue will only be technically regarded as a complaint if it reaches Stage 3 (written complaint to a *directeur d'école* (Primary Headteacher) or a *proviseur adjoint* (Deputy Headteacher)). However please be assured that regardless of the Stage, concerns will be treated seriously throughout.

Points to note:

- The School's aim is to resolve complaints as quickly and as informally as possible, and the School will endeavour to follow the timescales set out in this policy. However, where this is not possible, the School will keep you informed and provide an appropriate new timescale.
- Timescales in this policy refer to 'days'. These are defined as **School days**, when the School is open and staff and pupils are required to attend.
- If a written complaint (Stages 3 to 5) is received during a School holiday period or when the School is otherwise closed, the complaint will be progressed in accordance with this policy within 5 School days from when the School re-opens.
- The *Proviseur* (Headmaster), *directeurs d'école* (Primary Headteachers) and *proviseurs adjoints* (Deputy Headteachers) will review on an annual basis the operation of the complaints policy, the number of complaints received and the stage at which they were resolved.
- individual complaints will not be heard by the whole Senior Leadership Team (*Proviseur, directeurs d'école* and *proviseurs adjoints*) at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of the complaints appeal panel, or any panel that may be set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.
- Where a concern or complaint relates to the *Proviseur, directeurs d'école* and *proviseurs adjoints* alternative arrangements will be put in place to allow the concern or complaint to be considered appropriately. These arrangements will be notified to you following receipt of your concern or complaint.
- The *Proviseur* will not act unilaterally outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages, in case he/she is needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the process. If at any stage a concern is raised with the *Proviseur*, he/she will refer the issue to the appropriate member of staff and advise you of the procedure.
- Written complaints under the terms of this policy (Stage 3 onwards) will be shared internally with the *Proviseur*.
- EYFS specific provision: the parents of EYFS (*petite section and moyenne section*) pupils may, if their complaint specifically relates to the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, and they are not satisfied with the School's response (provided in accordance with Section 2 hereafter), complain to Ofsted. Ofsted's contact details may be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

2. Concerns or Complaints by Parents/Carers of Pupils at the School

2.1 Six-stage procedure

The School operates a six-stage procedure for parents/carers. If a parent or carer of a pupil has a concern or complaint they should **follow the stages in order (starting with Stage 1, even where the parent or carer wishes to raise a complaint)**, until their concern is resolved.

Stage 1: Raise your concern with a member of staff

In the first instance, you should discuss the issue with the member of staff involved or most closely involved. The member of staff will consider the concern objectively and impartially.

Timescale for response: You will receive a verbal or written response within 5 School days.

If more time is required to investigate or to arrange a suitable time for discussion, you will be informed of the likely timescale within 5 School days.

Stage 2: Meet with a member of staff

If you are not satisfied with the response to the concern made in accordance with Stage 1, you may request a meeting with a member of staff. A member of the Senior Leadership Team will normally allocate an appropriate member of staff to meet with you, but the School will respect your views if you indicate that you would have difficulty discussing the concern with a particular member of staff. In these cases, you should refer the concern to the *directeur d'école* of your child's primary School or a *proviseur adjoint* if your child attends the School's secondary school, who may refer such concern to another member of staff to investigate.

Timescale for response: The School will set up a face to face meeting within 10 School days.

If more time is required to investigate, or to arrange a suitable time for a meeting, you will be informed of the likely timescale within 10 School days.

Stage 3: Written complaint to a *directeur d'école* (Primary Headteacher) or a *proviseur adjoint* (Deputy Headteacher)

If you are not satisfied with the response to the concern made in accordance with Stage 2, you may submit a written complaint to the *directeur d'école* of the primary School attended by the pupil or a *proviseur adjoint* of the School (if the pupil attends the School's secondary School), within 10 School days of Stage 2 being concluded. You may submit your complaint either by post or email, marked for the attention of the relevant *directeur d'école* or *proviseur adjoint*.

Ecole de Marie D'Orliac	Direction.fulham@lyceefrançais.org.uk
Ecole Malraux	Direction.malraux@lyceefrançais.org.uk
Ecole de Wix	Direction.wix@lyceefrançais.org.uk

Ecole de South Kensington	Direction.sk@lyceefrançais.org.uk
Collège	secretariat-prov-adjoints@lyceefrançais.org.uk
Lycée	secretariat-prov-adjoints@lyceefrançais.org.uk
British Section	secretariatsb@lyceefrançais.org.uk

Please state that you are making a complaint under Stage 3 of the Complaints Policy.

The *directeur d'école* or *proviseur adjoint*, as applicable, will investigate with a view to resolving the issue. This may involve meeting with you. As part of the investigation, the *directeur d'école* or *proviseur adjoint* may delegate the task of collating information to another staff member, but not the decision or action to be taken.

Timescale for response: The *directeur d'école* or *proviseur adjoint* will acknowledge your written complaint within 5 School days; and write to you with the outcome of his/her investigation within a further 10 School days. If more time is required to investigate, you will be informed of the likely timescale within 10 School days.

Stage 4: Written complaint to the *Proviseur* (Headmaster)

If you are not satisfied with the response to the concern made in accordance with Stage 3, you may make a written complaint to the *Proviseur*.

You will need to write to the *Proviseur*, care of the School, or by email addressed to the *Proviseur* (at the following address: secretariat-proviseure@lyceefrançais.org.uk) within 10 School days of the date of the letter notifying you of the outcome of Stage 3.

Please state that you are complaining under Stage 4 of the complaints procedure. You should provide a copy of your written complaint at Stage 3, a copy of the *directeur d'école's* or *proviseur adjoint's* letter concluding Stage 3 and give details in writing of why you are not satisfied with the outcome. The *Proviseur* will investigate with a view to resolving the issue. This may involve meeting with you and the *directeur d'école* or *proviseur adjoint*.

Timescale for response: The *Proviseur* will acknowledge your written complaint within 5 School days; and write to you with the outcome of their investigation within a further 10 School days. If more time is required to investigate, you will be informed of the likely timescale within 10 days.

Stage 5: Written complaint to the *Conseiller Culturel*, acting on behalf of the School's proprietor

If you are not satisfied with the response to the concern made in accordance with Stage 4, you may take your complaint to the *Conseiller Culturel* by writing to the *Service de Coopération et d'Actions Culturelles (SCAC)* registered address: 21 Cromwell Road, South Kensington SW7 2EN London

You will need to write to the *Conseiller Culturel* within 10 School days of the date of the letter notifying you of the outcome of Stage 4. Please state that you are complaining under Stage 5 of the School's complaints policy. You should provide a copy of the written complaint at Stage 3, a copy of the letters concluding Stages 3 and 4, and give details of why you are not satisfied with the outcome so far.

The *Conseiller Culturel* will investigate and make every effort to resolve the issue. This may involve meeting with you, the *Proviseur* and the *directeur d'école* or *proviseur adjoint*.

Timescale for response: The *Conseiller culturel* will acknowledge your written complaint within 5 School days; and write to you with the outcome of his/her investigation within a further 10 School days. If more time is required to investigate, you will be informed of the likely timescale within 10 days.

Stage 6: Hearing before a Panel

If you are not satisfied with the response to the concern made in accordance with Stage 5, you may request that your complaint is considered by a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the School's proprietor and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

You will need to write to the *Conseiller Culturel* within 10 School days of the date of the letter notifying you of the outcome of Stage 5, notifying that you wish your complaint to be heard by a complaints appeal panel and giving the details of why the response at Stage 5 is not satisfactory to you.

Panel hearings will normally be held within 20 School days of receipt of a request. One person on the panel will be independent of the management and running of the School. A parent may attend the hearing if they so wish, and may be accompanied to this meeting by one other person. The provision to allow a parent/carer to be accompanied at the Panel Hearing does not confer the right to have a legal representative to make representations on their behalf at the Hearing.

The panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of this complaints policy. The panel will make findings and recommendations within 5 School days of the hearing and a copy of these will be (i) given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, and (ii) available for inspection on the School premises by the School's proprietor and the *Proviseur*.

Timescale for response: The Chair of the Hearing Panel will:

- Acknowledge your written request for an appeal panel within 5 School days; and
- Convene a hearing panel meeting within a further 20 days; and
- Write to you with the panel's findings, within 5 School days of the meeting. This letter will confirm the end of the involvement by the School and the School's Proprietor in the complaint and explain any further rights of appeal.

If a longer period is required to investigate the matter, the response may go beyond this timeframe, but you will be kept informed of this.

2.2 Records

A record of all complaints (meaning complaints from Stage 3) and their outcome will be kept by the School (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

At the School's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date and time when the issue was raised
- Name of the complainant
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue

- The desired outcome of the complainant
- How the complaint is investigated (including written records of interviews held)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails, records of phone conversations and minute of any meetings)
- Results and conclusions of investigations
- Any action taken
- The complainant's response (satisfaction or further pursuit of complaint)

The school has not received any Stage 3 and above complaints during the academic year 2021-2022.

2.3 Confidentiality

All concerns and complaints will be treated confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required by Paragraph 33(k) of Part 7 of 'The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations' 2014 where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

3. Concerns or Complaints by Persons other than Parents/Carers of Pupils at the School

You cannot complain directly to the School if you do not have a child registered at the School.

4. Unacceptable behaviour, Persistent or Vexatious Complaints and/or Harassment

The School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. The School will not normally limit the contact parents/carers raising a concern or complaint have with the School. However, the School does not expect its staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Definition of a persistent/vexatious complainant

For the purpose of this policy, a persistent/vexatious complainant is someone who frequently raises or complains about issues, either formally or informally, and whose behaviour is unreasonable. Such behaviour may be characterised by:

- a) actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- b) prolific or excessive contact (in person, by post, email or telephone) about an issue or concern;
- c) using Freedom of Information requests excessively and unreasonably;
- d) an insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes;
- e) an insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- f) an insistence on only dealing with one particular member of staff on all occasions, irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation in the School to deal with such matters;

- g) an insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a concern or complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the School.

Definition of harassment

For the purpose of this policy, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions as in (a) to (g) above in such a way that they:

- a) appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of staff and/or
- b) cause ongoing distress to individual member(s) of staff and/or
- c) have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the School community and/or
- d) are pursued in a manner which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient. This could include situations where persistent demands and criticisms, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health; and/or affecting the recipient's ability to do his or her job by taking up a disproportionate amount of time.

School Actions in the case of unacceptable behaviour, persistent or vexatious complaints and/or harassment

In the first instance the School will verbally inform you that your behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable or unacceptable and, if it is not modified, action may be taken in accordance with this policy. This will be confirmed in writing. If the behaviour is not modified, the School will take some or all of the following actions as necessary, having regard to the nature of your behaviour and its effect on the School community:

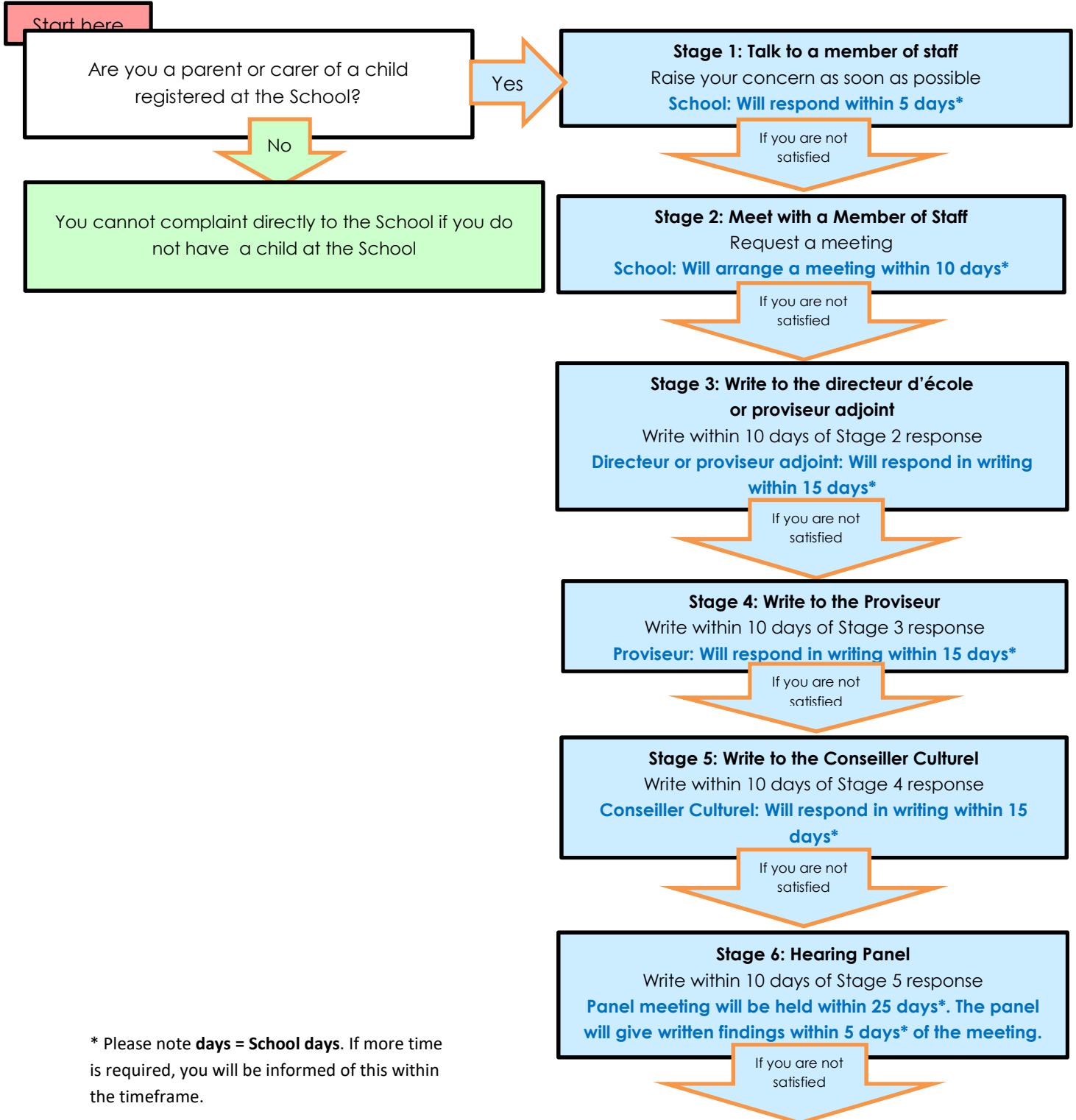
- inform you in writing that your behaviour is now considered by the School to be unreasonable/unacceptable and, therefore, to fall under the terms of this policy;
- inform you that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties;
- inform you that, except in emergencies, all routine communication between yourself and the School should be by letter only;
- (in the case of physical, or verbal aggression) take advice from HR/Legal Services and consider warning you about being banned from the School site; or proceed straight to a temporary ban;
- consider taking advice on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation;
- consider putting in place a specific procedure for dealing with your complaints, i.e. you will not be able to deal directly with the Proviseur but only with a third person to be identified by the Proprietor, who will investigate, determine whether or not the concern/complaint is reasonable or vexatious and then advise the Proviseur accordingly.

Please note - legitimate new complaints may still be considered even if the person making them is, or has been, subject to the policy for dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints and/or Harassment. If a complainant's persistent complaining/harassing behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the School may resume the process identified above at an appropriate level. In these

circumstances professional HR or legal advice may be sought. This part of the procedure may apply where a person continues to raise complaints or concerns despite the School having addressed the matter.

Appendix: Overview of School Complaints Procedure

See sections 2 and 3 of this policy for details



* Please note **days = School days**. If more time is required, you will be informed of this within the timeframe.

If you have followed all the stages but remain dissatisfied

Please see the government's guidance at www.gov.uk/complain-about-school