

Complaints Policy and Procedures (Local Community)

This policy statement sets out the College's approach to dealing with concerns and complaints from members of the local community. A comprehensive *Complaints Procedure (Local Community)* document is also available from the College office on 01376 321813.

The local community includes neighbouring residents and organisations which hire the College premises for their own functions.

1. We value **good relations with our local community in East Braintree** and will, therefore, do everything we can to establish and maintain them. This includes seeking to resolve any concerns or complaints promptly, and to the satisfaction of all concerned.
2. We welcome **feedback** on what members of the local community feel we do well, or not so well, as a school. We will consider carefully all feedback, whether positive or negative, and will review our policies and practices accordingly.
3. We will **acknowledge** all written concerns and complaints within **three working days** of receipt and will respond fully, or send a holding response, within **ten working days** of receipt. School holiday periods do not count as working days, and it is not normally possible to deal with complaints when the College office is closed.
4. We will **treat all concerns and complaints seriously and courteously** and will advise complainants of the College's procedures for dealing with their concerns. In return, we expect complainants to **behave respectfully towards all members of the College community**. In particular, any disagreement with the College should not be expressed inappropriately, especially not in front of students or other visitors to the College.
5. It is not always possible for the relevant member of staff to see immediately complainants who **arrive unannounced** at the College. Please see further guidance on this matter in our *Complaints Procedure (Local Community)* document.
6. All College staff, teaching and non-teaching; and members of the Governing Body, will receive a copy of this policy statement and will be familiar with the College's procedures for dealing with parental concerns and complaints, to which they will have access as required.
7. The College's procedures will be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary.
8. Staff and governors will receive **training** in handling concerns and complaints as appropriate. This may be on an individual basis or as a group activity for all staff or for specific groups, such as the office staff or members of the Governing Body.
9. Whilst we will seek to resolve concerns and complaints to the satisfaction of all parties, it may not be possible to achieve this in every case. We will, therefore, use our option to **close a complaint** before all the stages of the College's procedures have been exhausted, if we believe this to be appropriate.
10. Where we are unable to resolve a complaint at school level, we will co-operate with any national appeals process where cases are referred to that office after consideration by the Governing Body of the College.

Procedures

Introduction

We value highly our links with the local community of East Braintree and always seek to be good neighbours. If, therefore, there is any aspect of the College's activities which is a cause for concern to the local community, we would like to know about it as soon as possible so that we can address it without delay.

Complaints from the local community might include such incidents as a football straying from the school field into a neighbouring resident's garden, or perhaps an issue over noise in the evenings when the College premises are occasionally let to third parties.

Contacting the College

1. Please contact the College on **01376 321813**, or by email to admin@alechunter.essex.sch.uk, explaining that you wish to express a concern or make a complaint as a member of the local community, and ask to be put through to the Headteacher or a Deputy. You can also put your concerns in a letter to the Headteacher at the College, Stubbs Lane, Braintree CM7
2. If the Head or Deputy Head is unable to speak to you immediately, they will get back to you as soon as possible, and within three working days. If you have contacted us by email, we will acknowledge the message within three working days and will respond in full within ten working days of receipt of the message in the College.
3. 'Working days' means days on which the College is open. We cannot normally deal with calls or emails during school holiday periods when the College is closed.

How we will follow up your concern or complaint

4. The Head or Deputy Head will look into the problem, which may involve talking to students or other members of staff, and will get back to you within the response times stated. We aim to resolve any concerns or complaints informally where possible and, except for the most serious incidents, will normally seek to do this by telephone or in person.
5. In the unlikely event that your concern or complaint is about the personal conduct of the Headteacher, please put your concerns in writing to the Chair of Governors, c/o the College, either as a letter or in an email to admin@alechunter.essex.sch.uk. The response times stated above also normally apply to Chair of Governor's correspondence.
6. If your concern or complaint relates to a third party's use of the College premises, our expectation is that the organisation concerned will have their own procedure for dealing with complaints and we will forward your concern to them for a response. In such cases, it would be helpful for you to put your concerns briefly in writing so that we have a written record of the incident.

Closure of complaints

7. Very occasionally, the College will feel that it needs, regretfully, to close a

complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied.

8. We will do all we can to resolve a complaint against the College but sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all of the complainant's wishes. Sometimes it is, therefore, a case of "agreeing to disagree" as we cannot allow unresolved issues to detract from our responsibilities to our students and staff.

What to do if you are not happy with the way we have dealt with your concern or complaint

If you are not happy with the way the Head or Deputy Head has dealt with your complaint, please put your concerns in writing to the Chair of Governors, c/o the College, either as a letter or in an email to admin@alechunter.essec.sch.uk. The response times stated above also normally apply to Chair of Governor's correspondence.

At present, the Chair of Governors is the last recourse for complaints about the College. However, the Government has announced, in its Education White Paper, Autumn 2010, that it is intending to set up formal appeals arrangements beyond the Governing Body. The College's complaints documentation will be updated accordingly once these arrangements are in place.

In the meantime a complaint may be made to the Secretary of State for Education if a person believes that a governing body or LA is acting "unreasonably," or is failing to carry out its statutory duties properly. The complainant should set out fully the concerns and reasons why the complaint is being submitted, enclosing all previous correspondence relevant to the complaint. The address is:

The Secretary of State for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
LONDON
SW1P 3BT