

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE RELATING TO EXTERNAL EXAMS POLICY

Date Reviewed: October 2024

Next Review: October 2025

This policy will remain valid until the end of the academic year 2024-25 and should be read in conjunction with the PGHS Complaints and Concerns policy published on the school's website.

Purpose of the policy

This policy confirms Palmers Green High School's compliance with JCQ's General Regulations for Approved Centres (5.3, 5.8) in drawing to the attention of candidates and their parents/carers our written complaints policy which covers general complaints regarding the centre's delivery or administration of a qualification and our internal appeals procedure.

Grounds for complaint

A candidate (or their parent/carer) may make a complaint on the grounds below (this is not an exhaustive list).

Teaching and learning

- Quality of teaching and learning, for example
 - Non-subject specialist teacher without adequate training/subject matter expertise utilised on a long-term basis
 - Teacher lacking knowledge of new specification/incorrect core content studied/taught
 - Core content not adequately covered
 - Inadequate feedback for a candidate following assessment(s)
- Pre-release/advance material/set task issued by the awarding body not provided on time to an exam candidate
- The taking of an assessment, which contributes to the final grade of the qualification, not conducted according to the JCQ/awarding body instructions
- Candidate not informed of their centre assessed marks prior to marks being submitted to the awarding body
- Candidate not informed of their centre assessed marks in sufficient time to request/appeal a review of marking prior to marks being submitted to the awarding body
- Candidate not given sufficient time to review materials to make a decision whether to request a review of centre assessed marks
- Candidate unhappy with internal assessment decision (complainant to refer via Deputy Head of centre to the centre's internal appeals procedure)
- Centre fails to adhere to its internal appeals procedure

Access arrangements and special consideration

- Candidate not assessed by the centre's appointed assessor
- Candidate not involved in decisions made regarding their access arrangements
- Candidate did not consent to record their personal data online (by the non-acquisition of a completed candidate personal data consent form)
- Candidate not informed/adequately informed of the arrangements in place and the subjects or components of subjects where the arrangements would not apply
- Exam information not appropriately adapted for a disabled candidate to access it
- Adapted equipment/assistive technology put in place failed during exam/assessment
- Approved access arrangement(s) not put in place at the time of an exam/assessment
- Appropriate arrangements not put in place at the time of an exam/assessment as a consequence of a temporary injury or impairment
- Candidate unhappy with centre decision relating to access arrangements or special consideration (complainant to refer via Deputy Head of centre to the centre's internal appeals procedure)
- Centre fails to adhere to its internal appeals procedure

Entries

- Failure to clearly explain a decision of early entry for a qualification to candidate (or parent/carer)
- Candidate not entered/entered late (incurring a late entry fee) for a required exam/assessment
- Candidate entered for a wrong exam/assessment
- Candidate entered for a wrong tier of entry

Conducting examinations

- Failure to adequately brief candidate on exam timetable/exam regulations prior to exam/assessment taking place
- Room in which exam held did not provide candidate with appropriate conditions for taking the exam
- Inadequate invigilation in exam room
- Failure to conduct exam according to the regulations
- Online system failed during (on-screen) exam/assessment
- Disruption during exam/assessment
- Alleged, suspected or actual malpractice incident not investigated/reported
- Eligible application for special consideration for a candidate not submitted/not submitted to timescale
- Failure to inform/update candidate on the accepted/rejected outcome of a special consideration application if provided by awarding body

Results and Post-results

- Before exams, candidate not made aware of the arrangements for post-results services and the availability of senior members of centre staff after the publication of results
- Candidate not having access to a member of senior staff after the publication of results to discuss/make decision on the submission of a review/enquiry
- Candidate request for return of work after moderation and work not available/disposed of earlier than allowed in the regulations
- Candidate (or parent/carer) unhappy with a result (complainant to refer via exams officer to awarding body post-results services)
- Candidate (or parent/carer) unhappy with a centre decision not to support a clerical re-check, a review of marking, a review of moderation or an appeal (complainant to refer via the Exams Officer to the centre's internal appeals procedure)
- Centre fails to adhere to its internal appeals procedure
- Centre applied for the wrong post-results service/for the wrong script for a candidate
- Centre missed awarding body deadline to apply for a post-results service
- Centre applied for a post-results service for candidate without gaining required candidate consent/permission

Raising a concern/complaint (Stage 1)

If a candidate (or their parent/carer) has a general concern or complaint about the centre's delivery or administration of a qualification they are following, Palmers Green High School encourages the candidate (or their parent/carer) to try to resolve the matter informally in the first instance by contacting the Exams Officer with their concerns. If a complaint fails to be resolved informally, the candidate (or their parent/carer) is then at liberty to make a formal complaint.

Raising a formal complaint (Stage 2)

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the candidate (or their parent/carer) should submit a formal complaint in writing to the Exams Officer and Head of Centre within 10 working days of receiving the outcome of the informal concern and should include:

- the complainant's name and full contact details;
- state the grounds for raising a formal complaint and
- detail any steps already taken to resolve the issue and what would be considered as a good resolution to the issue(s);
- provide any evidence or copies of any relevant documents to support the claim
- the outcome desired.

The School will acknowledge a notification by telephone, e-mail or letter within five (5) working days of receipt within term time and if the notification is received during a school holiday then as soon as practicable, and no later than within five (5) working days of the start of the following term. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

Investigation

The Exams Officer and Head of Centre will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. It may be necessary for them, or a nominee agreed with the Head, to carry out further investigations in the most appropriate manner. The Head, or their nominee, may request further information from parents and may wish to speak to them personally and to others who have knowledge of the circumstances. Written records of all meeting and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept.

Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Head will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within twenty-eight (28) working days of receiving the complaint or as soon as practicable if the written complaint is received during or immediately before a school holiday. On occasion, the Head may engage an independent consultant to investigate a complaint. If so, every effort will be made to keep to the stated timeframe but the complainant will be kept informed of any potential delays.

Appeal against an Outcome (Stage 3)

Following the outcome, if the complainant remains dissatisfied and believes there are clear grounds, they may request a hearing before a Complaints Panel. If the complainant seeks to invoke Stage 3 they should do so in writing to the Clerk to the Governors within 10 working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal.

Acknowledgement

The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge receipt of the Stage 3 request by telephone, email or letter within seven (7) working days of receipt within term time and if the notification is received during a school holiday then as soon as practicable, and no later than within seven (7) working days of the start of the following term.

Complaints Panel

The Complaints Panel ("Panel") will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member of the Panel will be independent of the management and running of the School. The Complaints Panel will appoint one of the Panel members to act as the Chair of the Panel. The Head will not be part of the Panel.

Convening the Panel

The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then schedule a hearing to take place within 28 working days of the complaint being acknowledged. Should the period of twenty-eight (28) working days include a school half term or holiday there may be a delay to the convening of the Panel which will then be convened as soon as practicable. If the parents cannot attend the date offered by the panel for the hearing all reasonable efforts will be made to find an alternative date within the 28 days.

Conduct of the Panel

Please refer to the PGHS Complaints and Concerns policy published on the school's website.

Timeframe

The Panel's findings and any recommendations shall subsequently be confirmed in writing to the parents, the Chair of the Court of Governors, the Head and, where relevant, to the person complained about, within ten (10) working days. Reasons for the Decision will be given. A copy of the minutes will be shared with the parents, the Chair of the Court of Governors and the Head. The Decision and any recommendations will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Court of Governors and the Head.

Persistent Correspondence

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this may be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

Confidentiality

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

Recording Complaints and Use of Personal Data

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the formal stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a Panel Hearing (Stage 3) and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). The record of complaints shall be kept for a period of 25 years from the pupil's date of birth (or indefinitely if the matter relates to a safeguarding concern).

Use of Personal Data

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints, the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name and contact details of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes/minutes of the hearing

- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice and/or Data Protection Policy, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice, Data Protection Policy and the Storage and Retention of Records and Documents Procedures but in most cases for a period of 25 years from the pupil's date of birth or indefinitely if the matter relates to a safeguarding concern.