



Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedure

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. Blackpool Sixth Form College's Charter and Equality policies set out the standards and services our customers (students, parents, staff, members of the public) can expect the College to provide.
- 1.2. Anyone not satisfied with the level of service should feel able to approach relevant staff to address their concern promptly and directly. They should be confident that they can report the matter openly and be sure that the College will deal with the dissatisfaction courteously, sympathetically, fairly and objectively.
- 1.3. A mature and self-critical organisation will actively seek suggestions in order to improve its services. Making such customer feedback successful and straightforward is also important. For this reason, the College undertakes a range of student and parent satisfaction surveys, regularly liaises with neighbours and key partners and has established an appropriate range of forums to enable students to express their views within a framework where action is anticipated.
- 1.4. Information about complaints will be used to prevent recurrence and raise the standard of College services. The College's Senior Management Team and its Governors will regularly monitor complaints and act wherever necessary to address the issues raised.
- 1.5. This Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedure provides the framework within which anyone who has experienced dissatisfaction with College services can raise their concerns and the framework within which the staff should deal with complaints from students, parents, customers, employers, contractors, local residents, visitors and others. It does not replace College procedures for academic appeals, grievances and disciplinary action: those procedures should be used where appropriate.
- 1.6. In addition, this Policy and Procedure recognises the importance of giving validation and praise to individuals when compliments are received from customers and partners.
- 1.7. Concern or dissatisfaction should be raised in the first instance with the person or area concerned as soon as possible and not later than within five working days of the incident. This may be a student's tutor or other member of staff. The member of staff dealing with a complaint should make every reasonable effort to resolve the complaint promptly at local level. At this level the college staff should seek to resolve the complaint immediately or at least within five working days.
- 1.8. Compliments may be received verbally or in writing and may be received directly by the individual in receipt of the praise or by a direct line manager. College staff should seek to share compliments in a genuine and generous manner.

2. Procedures for Complaints

2.1. Stage One – Informal

- Verbal complaints made to Reception and staff in public areas should be referred to the appropriate manager of the area which is the subject of complaint. If a complaint is about a member of staff it should be referred to their Head of Department or service or other line manager.
- If a member of staff is unable to resolve the issue, the complaint moves to Stage Two.
- A record of the complaint and action taken should be sent to the PA for the Deputy Principal.
- If there are reasons why anyone does not wish to resolve the matter informally they should follow the formal complaints procedure. The complainant should at this point be directed to the Deputy Principal.

2.2. Stage Two – Formal

- If the complainant cannot resolve the issue they should make a formal complaint, usually in writing, to the Deputy Principal. Other College managers may become involved in resolving the complaint if necessary and as designated by the Deputy Principal. If appropriate a meeting will be offered between the complainant and other parties involved to arrive at an agreed resolution.
- The complainant(s) will need to provide details of their complaint, usually in writing, and within five working days of the event. The details required are:
 - The nature of the complaint
 - The date on which the incident occurred
 - Contact address and telephone number
 - Whether anyone else was affected or witnessed the event
- The College cannot deal with anonymous complaints because it would be unable to provide a personal response. However, wherever possible and if requested, the College will not disclose the complainant's identity in the course of the investigation. Students can be assured that nothing will appear in their academic records to indicate that they have made a complaint.
- Complainants will be advised that while confidentiality will be respected as far as possible, it is usually not possible to resolve complaints without disclosing the complainant's identity to relevant parties in order for the issue to be resolved fairly.
- The College will respond within two working days to indicate that an investigation is being undertaken and aim to conclude an investigation and respond within ten working days of receiving a complaint.
- The Deputy Principal will investigate details of the complaint and decide to:

- Dismiss the complaint as unfounded, giving reasons.
- Propose an amicable settlement.
- Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, take appropriate steps to address the issue and to avoid a similar problem arising in future.

3. Appeals

- If a complainant is dissatisfied with the response to their complaint, they may appeal in writing to the Principal. The Principal will investigate the complaint and respond within 10 working days. The Principal will decide to:
 - Dismiss the complaint as unfounded.
 - Refer the complaint back to an area and propose an amicable settlement.
 - Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, recommend appropriate steps are taken to address the issue and to avoid a similar problem arising in future.
- The decision of the Principal is final and the complainant will be advised in writing of the outcome within ten working days.

3.1. Taking a Complaint Further

- If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the College's response following appeal s/he should seek advice from the Deputy Principal on how to take their complaint further.
- Only after all College procedures for dealing with complaints have been exhausted should a complaint be referred to Lancashire Learning and Skills Council. This does not apply where a complaint is the subject of legal proceedings or relates to the quality of service provided by external bodies such as an examination board.

3.2. Complaints against the Principal or Members of the Governing Body

- Complaints against the Principal should be addressed to the Chairperson of Governors c/o the Clerk to the Corporation. Complaints against the Governing Body should also be addressed to the Clerk to the Corporation.
- For any instances where it is felt that the complaints procedure does not set down a precise course of action, reference should be made back to the underlying principles of natural justice and equity: when in doubt the basic principles of appeal and fair hearing should apply.

4. On receipt of a formal compliment, a member of the senior team will send a copy of the letter received with an acknowledgement on behalf of SMT and the Governors, where appropriate.

5. Monitoring Complaints and Compliments

The Deputy Principal and Heads of Departments should maintain a confidential record of complaints and action taken. These records will inform the quality assurance processes. These will be recorded electronically. The PA for the Deputy Principal will maintain a central record of all complaints and compliments and outcomes. A written analysis of complaints and compliments will be given to the Senior Management Team termly.

5.1. An annual report will be presented to the Board of Governors. Analysis of complaints will be according to the following categories:

- 1 Teaching and Learning
- 2 Admissions and Guidance
- 3 Examinations and Assessment
- 4 Student Behaviour
- 5 Resources and Accommodation
- 6 Staff
- 7 Support Services and Administration
- 8 Customer Care
- 9 Equality (including access)
- 10 Catering
- 11 Other (to include exceptional or one off complaints)

5.2. Teaching areas will be identified in the report by curriculum area only. The College will preserve individual anonymity in monitoring documents.

5.3. The report will include a section on compliments received and recognition given.

6. Publication

This Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedure will be published in the College Charter, and made available to parents during new parents' meetings at the beginning of each academic year and directly to students via the tutorial programme.

7. Suggestion Boxes are located at the main Reception and in the College's LRC/Library.

7.1. The Suggestion Boxes are emptied by the PA to the Deputy Principal on a monthly basis. The DP will respond in writing if individuals have given contact details.

Revision

This policy will be due for revision in September 2008.

The Blackpool Sixth Form College Procedure for Dealing with Complaints

