



Newbattle Abbey
College

Colaiste Abaid a' Bhatail Nuaidh

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING REPORT 2025-2026

Annual Complaints Handling Report 2025-26

1. Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of complaints received and handled under the College's Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) during Academic Year 2025-26.

The College remains committed to resolving complaints quickly, learning from feedback, and using complaint information to improve services for students, visitors, customers and stakeholders.

Definitions

The following terms, as defined by the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO), are used in this report:

- **Stage 1** – early or frontline resolution, without the need for an investigation.
- **Stage 2** – after formal investigation.
- **Upheld** - the College found that something went wrong (fault, service failure or maladministration). The complaint is therefore upheld.
- **Not Upheld** - the College did not find evidence that it had acted wrongly or failed in its service. Therefore, the complaint is not upheld.
- **Partially Upheld / Some Upheld** - where a complaint has several elements, a finding is reached on each element. If some aspects are upheld and others are not, the overall outcome is described as partially or some upheld
- **Resolved** - the College was able to achieve an acceptable outcome without completing a full investigation. This usually happens when the College and complainant agree a satisfactory resolution.

Key Headlines

- The number of complaints remains low, and all complaints were resolved at Stage 1.
- Total complaints received in 2025-26: **11**
- Increase from previous year: **175%** (4 complaints in 2024/25)
- Stage 1 complaints closed within SPSO timescale: **10/11** (91%)
- Five complaints related to Afternoon Teas.
- Four complaints related to the volume of language school students on a public bus service.
- One complaint was in relation to staff conduct.

- One complaint was about the lack of markings on speed bumps in the Business Park.

2. SPSO Key Performance Indicators

KPI 1: Total Number of Complaints Received

Complaint Stage	2025-26	2024-25
Stage 1 Frontline Resolution	11	4
Stage 2 Investigation	-	-
Total	11	4

Commentary

There was a 175% (7) increase in complaints compared to last year, with five complaints relating to issues during the introduction of the new Afternoon Tea service, and four relating to the volume of language school students on the Borders bus service.

Overall student satisfaction (97%¹) remains high, and feedback from visitors and customers remains very good.

KPI 2: Complaints Closed Within SPSO Timescales

Stage	Target	Closed	Closed on Time	Compliance (%)
Stage 1	5 working days	11	10	91%
Stage 2	20 working days	-	-	-

Commentary

One complaint, relating to speed bumps in the Business Park, was not responded to within the target time due to a cross over in summer annual leave of key staff. The Senior Administrator will now ensure that a dedicated staff member always monitors the complaints inbox.

KPI 3: Average Response Time

Stage	2025-26	2024-25
Stage 1	5 working days	3 working days
Stage 2	-	-

Commentary

Average response times increased compared with 2024-25 due to one complaint that was not picked up and acknowledged within the target timescale.

KPI 4: Complaint Outcomes

¹ Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) 2025-26

Outcome	Stage 1	Stage 2	Total
Upheld	-	-	-
Partially Upheld	-	-	-
Not Upheld	-	-	-
Resolved	11	-	11
Withdrawn	-	-	-
Total	11	-	11

Outcome Summary

All complaints were resolved.

3. Complaint Themes

The College has adopted the standardised Complaint Categories developed by the College Development Network's Complaint Handling Advisory Group.

Complaints by Category:

Category	Number
Customer care (C1)	
Health & Safety	
Security	
Diversity & Equality	1
Data Protection	
Environmental	
Staff Conduct	1
Student Conduct	
Other	
Applications to Progression (C2)	
Marketing	
Application, Admission, Interview, Enrolment, Induction	
Progression, Articulation, Withdrawal	
Other	
Course Related (C3)	
Learning & Teaching	
Environment/Resources	
Course Management	
Facilitated Learning & Support	
Assessment, Exams & Certification	
Other	
Services (C4)	
Finance	
Funding/Bursary	
Student Records	

Providing Learning Support	
Library/Learning Technology	
Quality	
Other	
Facilities (C5)	
Catering	4
Student Accommodation	
Maintenance, Lifts, Car Parking	1
Other	
Others (C6)	
Others	4

Commentary

- Five complaints were received about the Afternoon Tea service.
 - Four of these related to the quality of food at the first (inaugural) event in October 2025. An apology was sent to all complainants along with a full refund and an offer of attending a subsequent event free of charge. Remedial action was taken promptly to ensure quality of service going forward.
 - A complaint about lack of accessibility was received after an event in July 2026; an elderly, disabled customer was left waiting at the lift for an unacceptable time and the table provided was not suitable for a wheelchair. An apology was given promptly and staff training will be provided before the next event.
- Four complaints related to the volume of Language School students on the Borders bus at peak times: these were handled by the College and passed to the Language School to action and respond, which they did. The root cause is the lack of buses/capacity on this route.
- One complaint was made regarding staff conduct. The immediate matter was resolved; due internal process is ongoing.
- One complaint related to speed bumps in the Business Park: the complainant initially claimed the bumps damaged her car, on route to parking for the Summer Fair, as the bumps are not appropriately marked. The College has suggested to the Trustees that the bumps are marked more clearly.

4. Learning and Service Improvements

- The Senior Administrator will now ensure that the complaints inbox is monitored at all times to ensure all complaints are responded to within SPSO timelines.

- Immediate action was taken to ensure quality of food and service at Afternoon Teas. No further negative feedback on the quality of food has been received. Staff training on managing accessibility will be provided before the next event. A full review of catering service is underway, to conclude in Autumn 2026.
- Staff training on complaints handling will continue to ensure all complaints are captured and recorded accurately.

5. Stage 2 and SPSO Escalations

There were no Stage 2 complaints or SPSO escalations in 2025-26 (there were no Stage 2 complaints and one SPSO escalation in 2024-25).

A complainant can escalate to SPSO if they are unsatisfied with the way the College has handled their complaint.

6. Three-Year Performance Trend

Measure	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Total Complaints	2	4	11
Stage 1 % on Time	2	4	10
Average Response Time	2 working days	3 working days	5 working days
Stage 2 % on Time	-	-	-
Average Response Time	-	-	-
Upheld/Partially Upheld	0	0	0

8. Conclusion

The number of complaints the College receives continues to be low. Although, statistically, the increase from last year stands out, it can be attributed to two factors:

- issues during the introduction of Afternoon Teas, and;
- the increase in off-season language school groups in conjunction with lack of capacity on the Borders bus service.

In all cases, action was taken to resolve the complaints at an early stage. The College has also improved its capturing and recording of complaints.

Our processes, procedures, staff behaviours and ongoing and effective dialogue with students, visitors and customers, ensure that almost all potential issues are routinely identified before a complaint is made.

When a complaint is received it is viewed as an opportunity to improve our practice and services. Managers have received in-house refresher training in complaints handling in the past year, and staff are aware of fundamental complaints handling procedures. Ongoing training and awareness raising will ensure that all complaints are captured and recorded accurately.