

Complaints Procedure for Parents

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This policy is endorsed by	The Governors and Heads
This policy is owned by	The Headmaster of Bedales Schools
This policy is maintained by	The Headmaster of Bedales Schools

Introduction

Bedales Schools has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this procedure. Bedales Schools makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and in the school office during the school day, and [insert school name] will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and the form in which it is published or available.

In accordance with paragraph 25(3)(g) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, Bedales Schools will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or the ISI for the purposes of section 162A(1) of the Education Act 2002 (as subsequently amended), details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Written Complaints relating to the requirements under the Statutory Framework for the EYFES:

Bedales Schools will provide Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.

Complaints to OFSTED regarding EYFS Service Providers:

Parents may also complain directly to Ofsted if they wish. Ofsted may be contacted on 08456 014772.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within five working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 28 days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- 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 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)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 25(3)(g) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required by the ISI under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended), or under other legal authority.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's class teacher, tutor or house staff. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the class teacher, tutor or house staff cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Head of Department, the Head of the School, or the Headmaster, Bedales Schools.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, the Head of the School, or the Headmaster, Bedales Schools will usually be referred to the relevant tutor or house staff unless the Head of Department, the Head of the School, or the Headmaster, Bedales Schools deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The class teacher, tutor, or house staff will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within two working weeks or in the event that the tutor, class teacher, subject teacher or house staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this Procedure.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Headmaster, Bedales Schools, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors via the Clerk to the Governors.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Managing Head of the Senior School, the Head of Dunhurst or the Head of Dunannie as appropriate. This person will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Managing Head of the Senior School, the Head of Dunhurst or the Head of Dunannie will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within two days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Managing Head of the Senior School, the Head of Dunhurst or the Head of Dunannie to carry out further investigations.
- The Managing Head of the Senior School, the Head of Dunhurst or the Head of Dunannie will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Managing Head of the Senior School, the Head of Dunhurst or the Head of Dunannie 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 Managing Head of the Senior School will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- In the event of their being unable to resolve a complaint satisfactorily with the Head of Dunannie or the Head of Dunhurst or the Managing Head of the Senior School, or if the complaint is about one of these three persons, the parents should ask for their complaint to be referred up to the Headmaster, Bedales Schools, before recourse to Stage 3. When such a referral is made, the complaint procedure will run in accordance with Stage 2.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, Bedales Schools, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Managing Head of the Senior School, the Head of Dunhurst or the Head of Dunannie and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chairman is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chairman will give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to The Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of two Governors and a person of local standing independent of the management and running of the School. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within ten days.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 7 days prior to the hearing.

- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it would be carried out.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it normally within 7 days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise to the parents, the Headmaster, Bedales Schools, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained about.