

Complaints Procedure

Introduction

Bedales Schools regards relationships with parents as very important, and aims for open and easy communication between home and school. It also aims to provide teaching and pastoral care of the highest order. If, however, parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure.

Definitions

Complaints will be made to staff in different positions of responsibility. These guidelines incorporate categories typical to each, or all, of the three schools. The 'Head' refers to the Headmaster or Headmistress of Dunannie, Dunhurst or Bedales.

The Headmaster of Bedales Schools, as such, will be a point of reference for complaints which have not been resolved in Dunannie or Dunhurst, before they are referred to the Complaints Panel.

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 the appropriate member of staff - tutor, class teacher, subject teacher or house staff. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the tutor, class teacher, subject teacher or house staff cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a head of Department/the Deputy Head/the Head.

Complaints made directly to a head of Department/the Deputy Head/the Head will usually be referred to the relevant tutor, class teacher, subject teacher or house staff unless the head of Department/the Deputy Head/the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally. In Dunannie, because of the smaller scale of the school, it will often be the case that complaints are made directly to the headmistress, and will be happily and informally resolved at that stage.

The tutor, class teacher, subject teacher 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.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- a) If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- b) In most cases, the Head 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.
- c) It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations.
- d) The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

- e) 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 his/her decision.
- f) If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure. (However, parents of pupils in Dunannie and Dunhurst should note point (g) below.)
- g) In the event of their being unable to resolve a complaint satisfactorily with the Headmistress of Dunannie or the Headmaster of Dunhurst, parents of pupils in those schools should ask for their complaint to be referred up to the Headmaster of Bedales Schools, before recourse to Stage 3.

When such a referral is made, the complaint procedure will run in accordance with Stage Two (a) to (f).

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, panel members must be people that have not been involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. 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 two days prior to the hearing.

The parents may 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 immediately 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, which it shall complete within seven days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of. The findings will also be available for inspection by Governors and/or the Head and will be held in the Clerk's office.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School except where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them.