

Three Schools' Complaints Procedure for Parents Policy

INCLUDING EYFS

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Author	The Bursar
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Tick which category this document refers to:

ISI requirement to be made available	✓
ISI requirement to be on website	
Website	
Internal only	

Introduction

Bedales School has prides 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 complaints procedure. Bedales School makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils from the school office on request. Bedales Schools will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published and available.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this complaints procedure if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the school.

In accordance with paragraph 25(3)(g) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, Bedales School 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 school's complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the immediately preceding school year.

Terminology

“Bedales School” comprises Bedales, Dunhurst and Dunannie schools.

“Parent(s)” means holder(s) of parental responsibility for a pupil about whom the complaint relates.

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, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the school is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, failed to do so something that it should have done or has 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 raise in good faith.

This policy does not cover expulsions or removals of pupils from school; these are dealt with under the Expulsion and Removal from School Policy.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

For the purposes of complaints, a school day is Monday to 1pm Saturday during term-time, except when there is a long leave or half term.

All complaints will be handled with due care and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within five school 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 Stage one of the procedure within 14 school days and Stage two also within 14 school days.

If a complaint is taken to Stage three, the Appeal Panel Hearing, the process will be completed and the outcome advised within a further 28 school days. In exceptional circumstances, for example, a complex matter that may require the involvement of lawyers or other parties with time frames over which the school may have limited or no control, the outcome may take longer. In such cases, parents will be informed by the school within the initial 28 school day period and a revised time frame agreed. Further details of timings within Stage three are given on pages three and four.

The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

This procedure has three stages and it is envisaged that all complaints will run through the stages sequentially as it is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. Should a parent seek to by-pass any of the stages by, for example, writing directly to a governor, then this matter would be redirected to the Clerk to the Governors who would decide by whom the complaint should be best dealt with.

Stage one - Informal Resolution

- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's class teacher, tutor or houseparent, who will then consult with others and investigate as necessary. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the class teacher, tutor or houseparent cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult the relevant head of department or deputy head.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, the Head of Dunhurst, the Head of Dunannie or the Senior Deputy (Operational & Pastoral) at Bedales will usually be referred to the relevant form teacher or houseparent unless the Head of Department, the Head of Dunhurst, the Head of Dunannie or the Senior Deputy (Operational & Pastoral) at Bedales deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The class teacher, tutor or houseparent 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 14 school days or in the event that the class teacher, tutor or houseparent and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage Two of this complaints procedure.
- If the complaint is against the Head of Dunhurst, the Head of Dunannie or the Senior Deputy (Operational & Pastoral), parents should make their complaint directly to the Head, Bedales Schools.
- If the complaint is against the Head, Bedales Schools, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors via the Clerk to the Governors (the Bursar).

Stage Two - Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head, Bedales Schools. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head of the relevant school will aim to meet or speak to the parents concerned within five school days of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter. If

possible, a resolution will be reached at this Stage.

- If further investigation or consultation is needed, the Head of the respective school or, if necessary, the Head, Bedales Schools will make appropriate arrangements to carry out further investigations.
- The Head of the respective school or other nominated investigating teacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head of the relevant school is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the matter will be passed to the Head, Bedales Schools and a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head, Bedales School will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- In the event of the Head, Bedales Schools being unable to resolve a complaint satisfactorily, parents will be advised to proceed to Stage three of this procedure.
- If the complaint is against the Head, Bedales Schools, the Chair of Governors will appoint one Governor to call for a full report from the Head, Bedales Schools and for all the relevant documents. The Governor 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 Governor is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Governor will give reasons for his/her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage three of this Procedure.
- A written record is kept of all Stage two complaints, whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing and the action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld or not).

Stage Three - Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage three (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 three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place within ten school 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 material shall be supplied to all parties not later than five days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied at the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- The manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- 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 should be carried out.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage Two decision was a reasonable one and make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within five working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is

necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Head, Bedales School.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all formal complaints and whether they are resolved at the formal Stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint, whether or not the complaint is upheld. The school processes personal data in accordance with its Privacy Notices. When dealing with complaints the school (including any panel member appointed under the Stage Three 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 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 of the hearing
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the school's privacy notices, but potentially including sensitive data such as information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint.

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 notices and Record Retention policy, but in most cases for a period of at least seven years after the pupil leaves the school.

Bedales School will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of complaints taken to stages 2 or 3 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.

For the academic year 2018/19 the school received four formal complaints.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to the ISI if they believe the school is not meeting EYFS requirements.

Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 1234234 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net