

# Bedales Schools’ Complaints Procedure for Parents

## INCLUDING EYFS

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|                                   |                         |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
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*Tick relevant box(es) how this Policy should appear:*

|                               |          |   |
|-------------------------------|----------|---|
| Inspector Folder & ISI Portal |          | ✓ |
| Website                       | Upload   |   |
|                               | Signpost | ✓ |
| Internal only                 |          |   |
| Parent Portal                 |          |   |
| For Students/Students         |          |   |

# Complaints Procedure for Parents

## Introduction

Bedales Schools prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its students. There may however be times when there are concerns from parents that they feel need to be addressed and when these arise we look to resolve these concerns as quickly as possible with parents. 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' complaints procedure is made available to all parents of current students on the school's website and a copy can be requested from the school office. We will ensure that parents of current students who request it are made aware of this document.

In accordance with paragraph 25(g) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, Bedales Schools will make available to parents of students 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 immediately preceding school year.

## What Constitutes a Complaint?

This policy reflects that the school does not distinguish between 'concerns' and 'complaints'. 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 acted unfairly or has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done.

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

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Equally importantly, no student or prospective student will be penalised for a complaint made by a parent or by a student.

## Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

For the purposes of complaints, a school day is Monday to Saturday during term-time.

All complaints will be handled with due care and sensitivity. They will be acknowledged within five school days. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school will complete Stage One of the procedure within 14 school days of receipt of the complaint. Should a complaint be escalated to Stage two by the parents then we will look to complete Stage two within 14 school days of that escalation.

If a complaint is escalated from Stage Two to Stage Three, the Appeal Panel Hearing, we aim for the process to be completed and the outcome advised within 28 school days of the request by parents for escalation. 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 day period and a revised time frame agreed. Further details of timings within Stage Three are given on pages three and four.

### Stage one - Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. Although all formal complaints will be made in writing, this does not mean that the formal stage is automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing, for example, by email. Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the preliminary stage and only then if the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage.
- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's class teacher, tutor or house staff, 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.
- Informal complaints made directly to a Head of Faculty or Head of Department, the Head of Bedales Prep or Head of Bedales Pre-prep or one of the Deputy Heads at Bedales Senior will also be investigated, consulting with others as appropriate.
- If the informal complaint is against the Head of Bedales Prep or Head of Bedales Pre-prep or one of the Deputy Heads at Bedales Senior, parents should make their complaint directly to the Head of Bedales Schools.
- If the complaint is against the Head of Bedales Schools, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors via the Clerk to the Governors (the Bursar).
- Once the outcome of the informal complaint has been communicated to parents, it will be assumed that the matter is resolved unless the parents write to escalate the complaint to a formal complaint.

### 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 of Bedales Schools within five school days of the outcome of the informal complaint being communicated to them.
- The Head of the relevant school will 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 during this meeting or conversation.
- If further investigation or consultation is needed, the Head of the respective school or, if necessary, the Head of Bedales Schools will make appropriate arrangements. Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be made.
- Once the relevant 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 normally within 14 school days.
- If the formal complaint is against the Head of Bedales Schools, the Chairman of Governors will appoint one Governor to call for a full report and for all the relevant documents via the Clerk to the Governors. 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, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Governor will give reasons for their decision normally within 14 school days.
- Once the outcome of the formal complaint has been communicated to parents, it will be assumed that the matter is resolved unless the parents write to escalate the complaint to a Panel Hearing.

### Stage three - Panel Hearing

- If the complaint cannot be resolved at the formal stage, then the parents should seek

to invoke Stage three (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should do so by writing to the Clerk to the Governors, who will convene a Complaints Panel which will conduct a full-merits hearing of the complaint.

- The Panel will consist of two Governors, neither of whom have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, 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 date for the hearing to take place normally within ten school working days, unless the parents indicate that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further.
- 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 normally be supplied to all parties not later than seven days prior to the date of 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 Head of Bedales Schools and/or the Head of the Pre-prep or Prep will attend the panel hearing.
- 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 reach a decision and make a finding.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its findings or recommendations and its reasons within seven school days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings or recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise to the parents and, where relevant, the person complained about. These will also be made available for inspection on the school premises by any member of the governing body and the Head, Bedales Schools.

#### Persistent correspondence

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy.

#### 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 complaints, (regardless of whether they are or are not upheld). The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the last school year (2022/23) was none.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Records of complaints which do not have safeguarding implications will be retained for a minimum of seven years. Where there is a safeguarding angle to a complaint and there is an accusation against a member of staff, any records will be preserved for the term of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

## EYFS Further Complaints

If you have exhausted the school's complaints procedure and still think that we have acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedures in relation to your complaint, you can contact Ofsted or the Service for Young Children, Hampshire County Council.

You can complain via the gov.uk website to Ofsted if you think an early years service is not being managed properly and needs inspecting. Ofsted does not investigate issues relating to individual children. For example, it does not investigate complaints about a child being excluded from the early years setting or not being offered a place.

You can only complain to Ofsted if you have already followed the school's own complaints procedure. You should get a response within 30 working days; this will tell you if Ofsted will investigate or not, and why.

Ofsted can also be contacted at [CIE@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:CIE@ofsted.gov.uk) or on 0300 123 4666

ISI can be contacted at [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net) or on 02076000100

## Further complaints

The Department for Education (DfE) cannot investigate individual complaints about private schools. But it has certain powers as a regulator if the school is not meeting standards set by DfE for:

- education
- student welfare and health and safety
- school premises
- staff suitability
- making information available to parents
- spiritual, moral, social or cultural development of students

DfE will consider any reports of a major failure to meet the standards. It can arrange an emergency inspection to look at student welfare and health and safety, and make sure serious failings are dealt with.

DfE can ask the school inspectorates to take minor complaints into account when the school is next inspected.

You can complain to the DfE about the school by filling in the school complaint form which is available on the gov.uk website.