

# Bedales School Complaints Procedure for Parents

## INCLUDING EYFS

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

ISI Documents Folder		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Website	Upload	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Signpost	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Internal only		<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent Portal		<input type="checkbox"/>
For Students/Students		<input type="checkbox"/>

# Complaints Procedure for Parents

## Introduction

Bedales School 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 the 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 School complaints procedure is made available to all parents of current students on the School's website and in the School office during the school day. Bedales School will ensure that parents of students who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Bedales School will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Although this Procedure is made available to parents of prospective students, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current students.

Complaints by parents of former students will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the student to which the complaint relates was still registered as a student at the School.

Concerns raised by boarders about the operation of the boarding provision can be raised to the Deputy Head Pastoral for the Senior or Prep School. Stage One and Two of the complaints process is available to boarding students should they wish to raise a complaint. Boarders raising a concern or complaint in good faith would not be penalised for doing so.

The School will be mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in the application of this policy. "Parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current student about whom the complaint relates.

## 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 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 acted unfairly or has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. There may also be other circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.

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 will be penalised for a complaint made by a parent or by a student.

### Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled with due care and sensitivity and within reasonable timeframes. 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 a further 14 school days of that escalation. For written complaints relating to the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, the School will aim to notify complainants of the outcome of any investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.

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 timeframes 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 below.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.

### Stage one - Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally to the parents' satisfaction.
- 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.
- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's class teacher, tutor or houseparent. If the class teacher, tutor or houseparent cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult with the relevant Head of Faculty, Head of Department or Deputy Head.
- 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 usually be referred to the relevant class teacher, tutor or houseparent unless it is deemed more appropriate for the recipient to deal with the matter personally.
- 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 School.
- If the complaint is against the Head of Bedales School, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors whose contact details are available from 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.

- A written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received will be made. Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the informal resolution stage and only then if the satisfactory resolution cannot be achieved and the complainant intends to escalate a matter to the formal stage.

### 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 School within five school days of the outcome of the informal complaint being communicated to them. The Head of Bedales School may in some circumstances deem it appropriate to nominate a staff member to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Head (or their nominee) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- The Head of Bedales School (or their nominee) 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.
- It may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out. The Head of Bedales School (or their nominee) will determine who should carry out any investigation and this may be someone external to the School.
- Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be made.
- Once the relevant Head of Bedales School (or their nominee) 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 of Bedales School (or their nominee) will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Head of Bedales School (or their nominee) will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 15 working days of the complaint being put in writing.
- If the complaint is against the Head of Bedales School, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors in writing. The Chair of Governors will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the references to the Head of Bedales School (or their nominee) are to the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to determine the complaint against the Head.
- 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 Stage Three of this procedure.

### Stage three - Panel Hearing

- If the complaint cannot be resolved at the formal stage, then the parents may 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 within five working days of receiving the decision at Stage two, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal. To the extent the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated due to extenuating circumstances which have impeded the parents from taking action, the parents should request an extension in writing. Such a request should be made to the Clerk to the Governors in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. This will be considered. In the event the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated (including to the extent applicable any extensions if agreed) the School reserves the right to conclude the complaint process and not progress the matter to Stage 3.
- The Clerk to the Governors who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of two Governors, neither or whom have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one further member whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Clerk to the Governors will appoint one Panel member to act

as Chair of the Panel. The Clerk to the Governors on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint within five working days and schedule a hearing to take place within 20 working 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 or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five working 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 be appropriate.
- The Head of Bedales School (or nominated stage 2 decision-maker) shall attend the panel hearing and shall be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate.
- The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and 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 the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage two decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:
  - dismiss the complaints(s) in whole or in part;
  - uphold the complaints(s) in whole or in part;
  - make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its findings or recommendations and its reasons 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 (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents and, where relevant, to the person complained about, the Chair of Governors, and the Stage two decision-taker if not the Head of Bedales School. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be made available for inspection on the School premises by any member of the governing body and the Head of Bedales School.

#### 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 Stage two or proceed to a Stage three 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 School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 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 student
- Description of the issue

- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name and contact details 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/minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice or Data Protection Policy, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy.

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 Notice, Data Protection Policy and Retention of Records Policy. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector (see above), there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (eg. in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

The record of complaints will identify those complaints related to boarding provision and indicate action taken, whether or not the complaint was upheld.

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the last school year (2023/24) was none.

### EYFS Further Complaints

Parents of EYFS students should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted.

Bedales School will provide ISI/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 in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Retention of Records Policy.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the ISI:

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)

[ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA](#)