

Parental Complaints Policy and Procedures

This policy applies to all parents in the school including those of EYFS pupils and children in our Nursery Provision

Introduction

Parents and schools working together

We value the involvement of parents in the life of our school and there are many opportunities for parents to take part in their child's education.

It is natural that parents may from time to time be concerned about some aspect of their child's education or welfare at school. This may, for example, be due to a misunderstanding about the school's approach to aspects of the curriculum, or about the way in which we deal with behavioural problems.

We therefore welcome enquiries from parents about these and other matters and are confident that, in the vast majority of cases, we can reassure parents by explaining our policies and practices, and how they affect their child.

With a commitment from all concerned to resolve any such concerns calmly and rationally, we can work with parents to try to achieve the most appropriate solution which is in their child's interests.

Parents are welcome to see a copy of many of our school policies. This policy is made available on the school website or it can be requested from the school office.

This policy is written with reference to parents of current registered pupils (i.e. those pupils on the current school roll), and parents of past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered as a pupil of the school. This policy does not include parents of prospective pupils (i.e. those who have yet to join the school).

Our policy is that parental concerns and complaints should be dealt with as soon as possible. This is because we want to build and maintain good relations with parents and to work with them to provide the best possible education for their child. Complaints must be raised within three months (in the absence of mitigating reasons) of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. Complaints made outside this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. Complaints made outside term time will be considered to have been received on the first day after the holiday period. Where this policy refers to working days, it should be noted that this refers to working days within the school's term times, as defined by the term dates published on the school's website.

We recognise that parental concerns can give rise to stressful situations for families and the school staff. We therefore ask parents to bring their concerns to us in a spirit of positive willingness to seek a solution.

From time to time, situations can arise where parents feel that they must state their concern more formally. The procedures set out in this document explain how we handle such cases.

The school keeps written records of all complaints received at stages 2 and 3 below, at which stage they were resolved (i.e. at the formal stage or following a panel hearing), and any action taken by the school as a result of these complaints, whether or not they were upheld. These records are kept for at least seven years unless there is a safeguarding issue, in which case the procedures in the Safeguarding Policy are followed, and they are therefore kept 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.

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 where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Circumstances that are beyond our control, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, may be taken into account with regard to response times due to any disruptions and staff absences. However, we will endeavour to respond within the appropriate timings whenever possible.

Any complaints made against the school must remain confidential. Parents may only request information about the number of complaints made in the previous academic year.

There have been ZERO Stage 2/3 complaints during the last academic year 2024/25.

Our procedures for dealing with complaints

The concerns of parents and others are handled under the following general procedures. The procedure is divided into three stages:

Stage 1 – informal consideration of your complaint

This stage in our procedures deals with all complaints. Wherever possible, we prefer to resolve any matters informally, so as to make the best use of valuable time in supporting all the children in our care.

- 1.1 If parents would like to discuss any concerns about their child's education or welfare at school, they should speak, write or email to their child's class teacher in the first instance, or contact the school to arrange an appointment to meet with the subject teacher concerned or the Deputy Head/Head of Juniors. We will then explain what action we can take to help. We will direct complainants to these procedures when we acknowledge the complaint.
- 1.2 If the complaint concerns the Principal, it should be directed to the Principal for his resolution informally.
- 1.3 The complaint will be acknowledged and a resolution given within 5 working days.
- 1.4 Parental concerns will be dealt with in a confidential manner and with respect. It is the school's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children. We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside school aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the police.
- 1.5 If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures, as required by law.



Stage 2 – Formal consideration by the Principal

- 2.1 If parents remain dissatisfied with the school's response to the informal process as above, parents must put their complaint in writing to the Principal within 10 working days of the Stage 1 response. A formal letter will be required at this stage. The Principal will contact the parents within 5 working days. Parents should be as clear as possible as to the problem to be investigated and the accuracy of the details.
- 2.2 The Principal will investigate the issue, talking with those involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, we will talk to the pupil concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question, taking written statements.
- 2.3 As part of our consideration of the complaint, the Principal may invite parents to a meeting to discuss the complaint and fill in any details required.
- 2.4 Written/typed, signed and dated records of all meetings and telephone conversations, and other related documentation will be kept.
- 2.5 A letter or report giving the outcome of the investigation and the school's response to the complaint will be sent to the parent within 10 working days of the formal letter being received. This will give a full explanation of the Principal's decision and the reasons for it. If follow-up action is needed we will indicate what we are proposing to do. We may invite parents to a meeting to discuss the outcome as part of our commitment to building and maintaining good relations.
- 2.6 If the complaint is about the Principal, the formal letter must be sent to the Chair of Governors at clerk@bedfordgreenacre.co.uk within 10 working days of the Stage 1 response. The Chair will carry out the investigation as above in 2.1 to 2.5.
- 2.7 A complaint must always go to stage 3 panel hearing if a parent wishes. A parent has 10 days from receipt of the Principal's decision letter to appeal the decision.

Stage 3: Consideration by a review panel

- 3.1 Once stage 2 has been worked through, and the parent is still not happy with the outcome, we will set up a review panel, appointed by or on behalf of the Chair of Governors, to consider the complaint. This is a formal process, and the ultimate recourse at school level.
- 3.2 The purpose of this arrangement is to give the complaint a hearing in front of a panel which will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school, and who has had no prior knowledge of the details of the complaint and who can therefore, consider it without prejudice. One of the panel members will act as chair of the panel. If the complaint is about the Principal, the Chair of Governors will not participate in the panel hearing, as they have already been involved in the process at Stage 2.
- 3.3 The aim of a complaints review panel is to resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the parent. We recognise, however, that it may sometimes only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations that will reassure the parent that we have taken the complaint seriously.



The complaints review panel operates according to the following formal procedures:

- 3.4 The clerk to the governing body will aim to arrange for the panel meeting to take place within 20 working days.
- 3.5 The clerk will ask whether the parent wishes to provide any further written documentation in support of the complaint. They can include witness statements, or ask witnesses to give evidence in person, if they wish.
- 3.6 The Principal will be asked to prepare a written report for the panel. Other members of staff directly involved in matters raised in the complaint will also be asked to prepare reports or statements.
- 3.7 The clerk will inform the parent, the Principal, any relevant witnesses and members of the panel by letter, at least 10 working days in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting. We hope that parents will feel comfortable with the meeting taking place in the school, but we will do what we can to make alternative arrangements if mitigating circumstances require it.
- 3.8 With the letter, the clerk will send the parents all relevant correspondence, reports and documentation about the complaint and ask whether they wish to submit further written evidence to the panel, which must be received at least 5 working days before the hearing.
- 3.9 The letter will explain what will happen at the panel meeting and the clerk will also inform the parent that they are entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. The choice of person to accompany a parent is their own, but it is usually best to involve someone in whom they have confidence but who is not directly connected with the school. They are there to give support and to witness the proceedings. Whilst it is for the parent to decide who is to accompany them, this does not confer the right on parents to be accompanied by a legal representative to make representations on their behalf at the hearing, and the school has a right of refusal.
- 3.10 With the agreement of the Chair of the panel, the Principal may invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by the parents to attend the meeting,
- 3.11 As a general rule, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants. If either party wishes to do so, the meeting will be adjourned so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence.
- 3.12 The chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted. Please understand that any decision to share the minutes with parents, as the complainant, is a matter for the panel's discretion and parents do not have the automatic right to see or receive a copy. Since such minutes usually name individuals, they are understandably of a sensitive and therefore confidential nature.
- 3.13 During the meeting, parents can expect there to be opportunities for:
 - parents to explain the complaint;
 - parents to hear the school's response from the Principal;
 - parents to question the Principal about the complaint;
 - parents to be questioned by the Principal about the complaint;



- the panel members to be able to question parents and the Principal;
 - any party to have the right to call witnesses and all parties to have the right to question all witnesses, subject to the information above;
 - parents and the Principal to make a final statement.
- 3.14 In closing the meeting, the Chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to the Principal and the parent within 5 working days. All participants other than the panel and the clerk will then leave.
- 3.15 The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:
- reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint;
 - decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
 - recommend, where appropriate, to the governing body changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again.
- 3.16 The clerk will send the parent, Principal and any person complained about a written statement outlining the decision of the panel and any findings/recommendations within 5 working days. The decision of the panel is final.
- 3.17 We will keep a copy of all correspondence and notes on file in the school's records but separate from pupils' personal records.
- 3.18 The records of complaint must be available on the school premises for inspection by the Principal and the Chair of Governors.

Financial Matters

Should a parent/guardian have any concern, no matter how small, regarding payment of fees etc the Business Manager should be contacted in the first instance. Should the matter not be resolved then it should be brought to the attention of the Principal. In the event of it being unresolved at these two levels then concerns should be expressed in writing to the Board of Governors. Complaints will be dealt with at the next scheduled Finance Committee meeting following the receipt of the written complaint. The committee will respond to the complainant within 5 school days of their decision.

EYFS – for complaints regarding the non-fulfilment of the EYFS requirements

- If parents have any queries or concerns regarding our Early Years provision they should speak to their child's Key Person/Class Teacher or the Head of Nursery/Head of Juniors, and thereafter follow the procedures above.
- The School is required to notify complainants of the outcome of an investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.
- The School is required to provide Ofsted and the ISI, 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.



- Parents may contact the Independent Schools Inspectorate at ISI, CAP House, 9–12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA, or email at concerns@isi.net or telephone 02076000100.
- In addition, parents can contact Ofsted at Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD, or email at enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or telephone 0300 123 4666.
- You can also contact the Department for Education online or on 0370 000 228

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 this policy.

Anonymous complaints

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Principal or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the anonymous complaint warrants an investigation. Where a complaint relates to a whistle-blowing matter, it will be investigated in line with the Whistle-blowing Policy.

