

Parents' Complaints Policy and Procedure (including EYFS)

The required ISI regulation regarding recent complaints is referred to at the end of this policy

Introduction

Ballard School has long prided 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 in accordance with this Procedure.

Considerations to note regarding this policy and procedure

- Scope: this procedure is for parents of current Ballard pupils or parents of former pupils so long as the complaint was raised whilst their child was still on roll at Ballard
- Excluded from this policy:
 - Admissions' complaints: please refer to the admissions' policy
 - Financial matters such as fees: please refer to the Bursar and the parental contract
 - Pupil exclusions: please refer to the separate exclusions' policy
- Timescales: Reference to 'school days' throughout this policy should ordinarily be taken to mean Monday to Friday during school term times. However, with the agreement of all parties, and in the interest of a speedy but well considered conclusion, the same timescale might also apply in holiday times should an issue spill over beyond the end of a term. Thus, 'school days' might become 'working days' (Monday through to Friday) in holiday times. However, the school reserves the right to adhere to days within term time if it is too difficult to gather evidence and / or the relevant people during a holiday period.
- Record keeping: Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidentially except where the Secretary of State or body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. A written record will be kept of all complaints in a complaints' file. Moreover, where a complaint reaches Stage 2 of the procedure, a record will be kept of all complaints resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and, action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).
- Headmaster: Please note that if there is a formal complaint against the Headmaster then parents should still proceed to Stage 2 (and put the complaint in writing) assuming that this complaint cannot be resolved informally (Stage 1). In these circumstances please write to the Bursar (as Clerk to the Governors). The Clerk will then discuss with the Chair of Governors how best to proceed. The Chair may choose another Governor to officiate (in place of the Headmaster) according to the procedure at Stage 2.

Procedure to be followed:

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 their son/ daughter's Form Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter, it may be necessary for him/her to pass the complaint on to the relevant Head of Section (Head of Senior School, Head of Upper Prep, Head of Lower Prep, Head of Pre-Prep) or Head of Department. If the Head of Section

or Head of Department cannot resolve the matter, it may be necessary for him/her to pass the complaint on to the relevant Deputy Head.

- Complaints made directly to a Deputy Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor (or the relevant Head of Section or Head of department, depending on the nature and severity of the complaint) unless the Deputy Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form Tutor (or Head of Section or Deputy Head) 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 7 school days, or in the event that the Form Teacher (or Head of Section or Deputy Head) 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

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headmaster will speak to the parents concerned, normally within three school days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations.
- The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. The Headmaster's PA will normally act as the minute-taker for formal meetings.
- The Headmaster will determine the nature of the outcome once the he is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established. Parents will be informed of this outcome in writing, normally within 14 school days of Stage 2 beginning. The Headmaster will also give reasons for the outcome. In certain instances, the nature of the outcome is confidential and the complainant will be informed that the school has dealt with the matter fully and internally.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to an independent Convenor, who will be appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints' Panel. (Please note that the Chairman of Governors will usually take the lead in these appointments.)
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints' Panel for consideration. The Panel will comprise at least three persons not directly involved in the matter detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Governors. The Convenor, 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 school days.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any relevant matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than three 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.

- The Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within seven school days of the Hearing. The School will write to the parents on behalf of the convener informing them of the decision and the reasons for it. The Panel's findings and recommendations, if any, will be sent in writing to the parents, the appeals panel, the Headmaster, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained on. This outcome will be communicated by letter and electronic mail and will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and Headmaster. The panel's decision is final.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – Nursery, Kindergarten, Reception children

Please note that the Complaints' procedure for parents with children in this part of the school is broadly similar to the one above but has some distinctive aspects for this age range and refers to the role played by the Head of Pre-Prep. A copy of this policy is on the school website (as well as the one above). For EYFS please note:

- A record of complaints is kept for at least 3 years
 - Parents may contact Ofsted (and/or ISI – the Independent Schools Inspectorate) at any stage of the complaints' procedure if their complaint is about fulfilment of EYFS requirements. The Ofsted 'phone number is: 0300 123 1231 and the ISI 'phone number is 0207 600 0100
- Complainants will receive notification of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of receiving the complaint
- We shall provide Ofsted (and ISI), on request, a written record of all complaints made within a specified period and the action taken as a result of each complaint

Required statement for Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI): CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA. Tel: [0207 600 0100](tel:02076000100) email: info@isi.net

There were three Stage 2 complaints made during the academic year 2019-2020. One of these has been resolved and one is outstanding due to COVID-19 lockdown and school closure. One of the Stage 2 complaints escalated to a Stage 3 complaint (during the academic year 2019-2020) which was resolved prior to the end of Summer 2020 term.

Andrew McCleave (Headmaster) on behalf of the Governors

Reviewed and Revised August 2020