



PARENTS' COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE (INCLUDING EYFS)	
Reviewed by:	Stuart Turner – Headmaster
Review Date:	September 2026
Next Review due:	September 2027

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 gives high priority to the quality of educational care that is provided for its pupils. The school recognises its moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children, is alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and acts in accordance with its policies and procedures to ensure that pupils receive effective support, protection and justice. The school endeavours to provide a safe and welcoming environment where people are respected and valued and to always consider the best interests of the child.

This policy applies to any expression of dissatisfaction about actions taken, or a lack of action, by the school where a parent seeks action by the school. A complaint may arise if a parent¹ believes that the school as a whole or a specific department or an individual member of staff has done something wrong, failed to do something that should have been done or has acted unfairly.

A distinction is drawn between a complaint and a concern. A concern may be defined as an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought. Parents can be assured that their child will not be penalised as a result of a concern or a complaint.

The aims of this policy and procedures are to provide a framework for the resolution of concerns and complaints which:

- allows for their resolution by informal means, if at all possible, and sets out the school's formal procedures where this not achievable;
- is easily accessible and publicised, simple to understand and use and impartial and non adversarial;
- respects people's desire for confidentiality;
- ensures a thorough, full and fair investigation of all matters giving rise to the complaint, where appropriate, ■ addresses all the points at issue and provides an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary,
- provides information to the school's senior leadership / management team so that services can be improved and any systemic issues can be identified and addressed; and
- helps to create a culture of safety, equality and protection.

PUBLICATION AND AVAILABILITY

This policy can be accessed by parents of existing and prospective pupils on the school website or can be requested, in hard copy, from the school office. In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Ballard School will also make available, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of this Complaints Policy and Procedure and information regarding the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding year. This policy can be made available in large print or other

¹ 1 References to "parent(s)" include all biological parents, or any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person or has care of a child or young person.

accessible format if required and the school will make other reasonable adjustments required to enable complainants to access and complete this procedure, such as holding meetings in accessible locations.

CONSIDERATIONS TO NOTE REGARDING THIS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Scope

This procedure is only for parents of current Ballard pupils or parents of former pupils so long as the complaint was initially raised whilst their child was still on roll at Ballard. The school has separate grievance and whistleblowing policies to cover concerns that a member of staff may have. The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. Complaints must reflect the genuine views and experiences of the complainant. Where a complaint has evidently been generated by artificial intelligence (AI) and does not represent the complainant's own account, the school may require it to be resubmitted before it is considered, or it will be summarily dismissed.

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

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as swiftly as possible. The school will handle all complaints seriously and sensitively and aims to resolve them efficiently and promptly. Parents are encouraged to bring any matter causing concern to the school's attention as soon as possible.

Whenever possible, a complaint should be raised within three months of the incident, or where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. The school will however consider complaints made within up to 12 months if exceptional circumstances apply, but parents should be aware that most complaints will require the school to conduct an investigation and the ability to carry out a full and fair investigation, particularly where pupils may need to be interviewed, becomes increasingly difficult as time elapses. A complaint raised after three months should therefore include details of the issues which led to the delay. It is expected that the management of every complaint will progress in a timely manner. Any deviation from the normal timescales for resolving a complaint will only occur on an exceptional basis. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay (such as other bodies investigating aspects of the complaint), the school will notify the parent and inform them of the new timescales as soon as possible.

References to school days refer to weekdays (Monday to Friday), when the school is open during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. Complaints which are raised in the school holidays will usually be deemed to have been received on the first school day after the complaint has been received. In the event that the application of this definition is likely to introduce excessive delays, due to intervening school holidays, parents shall be informed of the likely timescale of the investigation by the headmaster.

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 for 7 years 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).

Expected Standards of Behaviour

The school aims to handle all concerns and complaints fairly and to work constructively with parents to achieve a resolution. As all concerns and complaints are dealt with confidentially, they should not be discussed publicly, including on social media. Complainants are also asked not to approach or discuss the matter with individual members of staff while an investigation is ongoing, so as not to compromise or interrupt the process.

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 Co-Chairs of Governors how best to proceed. A Co-Chair may choose another Governor to officiate (in place of the Headmaster) according to the procedure at Stage 2.

THREE STAGE COMPLAINTS 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 Tutor (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 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 within 10 school days of receiving the decision.

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 a Co-Chair 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. The EYFS 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 telephone number is: 0300 123 1231 and the ISI telephone 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.

Persistent Correspondence and Unreasonable Complaints

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. The school will not normally limit the contact complainants have with us. However, the school does not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening. Where repeated

attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this may be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy. Unreasonable complaints are taken seriously by the school as they put a strain on valuable resources and hinder the progress of proper investigations.

We adopt the Department for Education's definition of unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the School, such as if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the School's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with;
- uses threats to intimidate;
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence;
- knowingly provides falsified information;
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums. A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if it is manifestly unjustified, inappropriate, or an improper use of formal procedure.

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

The number of complaints is available on request from the Headmaster's PA.

Stuart Turner
Headmaster, on behalf of the Governors
September 2026

Policy Log:

August 2021 updated
August 2022 updated
August 2023 updated
August 2024 updated
August 2025 updated
August 2026 updated

Appendix 1. Complaint Form

Complaint Form

To be completed by parents of a current pupil.
Please read the Complaints Policy and Procedures in full before completing this form.

Your name(s)

Name of pupil(s):

Year group(s):

Your relationship to them:

Your address

Contact telephone (day)

Mobile number

Email address

Details of the complaint and your reasons for it (including details of those aspects about which you remain dissatisfied and why):

List of relevant documents that you would like us to consider (please enclose copies when submitting this form):

Action taken to date (including the name and role of any staff member who has dealt with or been involved with the complaint so far, including the relevant dates):

Your desired outcome:

The information included in this complaint form is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I agree to cooperate fully with the Complaints Policy and Procedures and acknowledge my ongoing obligation to treat the school and its staff in a reasonable manner at all times.

Signature:

Date: