

Complaints Procedure

BETHANY SCHOOL
CURTISDEN GREEN
GOUDHURST
KENT

Pupils' views on why a complaints procedure is needed by the School.

This is to make sure that when complaints are made they are not lost in the system

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1. Introduction

The school will make available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils the details of the policy as outlined below in the policies section of the school website.

To access this procedure, parents must formally contact the school stating that they wish their complaint to be addressed using the formal complaints procedure as detailed below. This initial contact must be made in writing.

The attention of parents of all pupils including boarders is also drawn to Appendix 1 which is at the end of this document

2. Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

1. It is hoped that most Complaints will be resolved quickly and **informally**.
2. If parents have a complaint they contact their son/daughter's tutor or Teacher or Head of Department or Housemaster/Housemistress who will be the person best placed to resolve the issue. The receipt of this will be acknowledged within 2 working school days. If the Tutor, Teacher or House Staff cannot resolve the matter alone, it will be necessary for them to consult the Head of Department or Deputy Headmaster.
3. Complaints made directly to the Deputy Headmaster or Headmaster will be referred to the relevant Housemaster/Housemistress, Tutor, Teacher or Head of Department unless the Headmaster/Deputy Headmaster deem it appropriate for him to deal with the matter personally.
4. The Tutor, Teacher, Head of Department or Housemaster/Housemistress will keep a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within two weeks, or in the event that the Tutor, Teacher, Head of Department or Housemaster/Housemistress and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents are advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

3. Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

1. If the complaint is not suitable for or cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster. The receipt of this will be acknowledged within two working school days. The Headmaster or the Deputy Headmaster in his absence will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

2. The Headmaster will speak to the parents concerned, or else delegate it to the Deputy Headmaster, within three working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
3. It may be necessary for the Headmaster/Deputy Headmaster to carry out further investigations. He will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
4. Once the Headmaster/Deputy Headmaster 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 (although a verbal account may precede the arrival of a letter). The Headmaster/Deputy Headmaster will give reasons for his decision. This will be done within two working weeks of receiving the complaint at the formal stage.
5. If parents feel the matter should be taken further, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.
6. Should the complaint relate to a member of the Senior Management Team (i.e. the Deputy Headmaster, Assistant Head Academic, Pastoral Deputy Head, Bursar or Headmaster), it must be made in writing to the Chairman of Governors, with a copy to the Headmaster. The receipt of this will be acknowledged within two working school days.
7. The Chairman will then initiate such investigations if necessary with the help of a sub-committee of Governors and after due deliberation report the conclusions to the parents. A hearing will not be held, but the Governors may take oral evidence from parents or others involved. The Chairman will communicate the findings to all involved within two working school weeks. Should these conclusions not be found satisfactory, the Parents may then proceed to Stage 3.
8. Should the complaint relate to a member of the Governing Body, the parent may refer it in writing to the Chairman of Governors or to the Headmaster, with a copy to the External Referee (see Appendix 2). The receipt of this will be acknowledged within 4 working school days.

4. Stage 3 – External Decision

1. If parents wish to invoke Stage 3, the parents must write to request a panel hearing to the Headmaster. The receipt of this will be acknowledged within 2 working school days. The Papers relating to the complaint, together with any further information which the parents or the school wish to supply, will be passed to the School's External Referee (see Appendix 2) who will be either a lawyer or Senior Manager independent of the management or running of the School. The referee may proceed from the written evidence, call for more information, and will call a Hearing. The referee's decision or recommendation will be final and will be made within three school weeks.

Written Complaints Procedure



2. When a hearing is called, a complaints panel will be convened which will consist of the External referee mentioned above and at least two other persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.
3. 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 particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 3 days prior to the hearing.
4. The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This will be a teacher, friend or relative. Legal representation will not be appropriate.
5. Within 14 days of the final gathering of evidence, or any Hearing, the External Referee will send the findings of the panel and (if any) recommendations in writing, or by electronic mail to the parents, the Headmaster, the Chairman of Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of. The decision of the panel will be final.
6. The above procedure can also be followed if a pupil is seeking an appeal against a permanent exclusion. This Complaints Policy can then followed.

A written record will be kept of all complaints that are made in according with this procedure and

- (i) Whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
- (ii) Action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

The 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 108 and 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

The findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chairman of Governors and the Headmaster.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The 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 108 and 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

In the last school year there were three **formal** complaints and none were related to boarding provision.

Appendix 1. Additional Information For Parents of all Pupils including Boarders.

Parents of boarders are entitled to contact the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) regarding any complaint concerning the welfare of their son or daughter. Within our records of complaints we will clearly state if the complaint is relating to boarding provision. Bethany School, like all boarding schools, is inspected by ISI under the framework of the National Boarding Standards, the most recent Inspection having taken place in 2016. For non boarding concerns please also contact ISI. Contact details for ISI are as follows:- Independent Schools Inspectorate, Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA; telephone number 020 7600 0100.

Appendix 2. External Referee

There are currently two External Referees: Mr Andrew Pengelly and Ms Angela Culley. If there is need for access to the External Referee a letter should be addressed to 'The External Referee, c/o Chairman of Governors, Bethany School, Goudhurst, Kent, TN17 1LB' and marked STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.