

**PREAMBLE**

Bournemouth School for Girls seeks to forge strong partnerships with parents in order to support in the best possible way the academic and social development of pupils at the school. As part of this commitment we welcome comments from parents about the provision for their daughters. It is only with such feedback that we can improve the way we do things or indeed know that things are going well. There will be occasions when parents have particular concerns or complaints. It is our aim to resolve such concerns as quickly as possible.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The primary purpose of these procedures is to provide a clear route for parents/carers to facilitate the resolution of concerns or complaints as quickly as possible. The same procedures can form the framework for handling complaints relating to community facilities or services provided by the school. The procedures are based on Bournemouth Borough Council's Model Procedure for handling Complaints in Schools.
- 1.2 The procedures are for use by parents of pupils at the school. It is recognised that while most concerns can be handled within informal stages of the procedure, formal stages may be required to handle unresolved concerns and complaints.
- 1.3 These procedures are designed to help resolve general complaints and are not appropriate for dealing with concerns raised about the conduct or competence of employees, for which there are separate school procedures. Nor are they appropriate for dealing with the following areas which have associated statutory procedures:
  - Admissions
  - Child protection issues
  - Exclusions
  - Religious Education and Collective Worship
  - Statutory assessments of special educational needs
  - National Curriculum
- 1.4 Where a pupil has been off the school roll for a period of 6 months or more these procedures will no longer apply. This does not preclude the consideration of a complaint outside this time period by the Headteacher or Chairman of Governors, whose decision as to whether to consider the complaint will be final. Under these circumstances appropriate external advice will be sought.

**2. RESPONSIBLE OFFICER**

- 2.1 The Responsible Officer will be the Clerk to the Governing Body or in their absence an employee nominated by the Headteacher or Chair of Governors. The Responsible Officer will receive, record and monitor complaints.

**3. ROLE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY**

- 3.1 Where the school is subject to a Formal Stage 2 or Formal Stage 3 complaint, the Local Authority will be informed. The Local Authority cannot investigate a complaint but has a duty to monitor progress and record the outcome.

#### **4. INFORMAL STAGE OF THE PROCEDURE**

- 4.1 Parents should in the first instance address any such concerns to the relevant Head of House or Head of Department either by phone or by letter.
- 4.2 Having carried out any necessary investigations the Head of House or Head of Department will respond to the parent within 2 school days, normally by telephone. It may be necessary to then invite the parent in to school to discuss the matter further including any other members of staff as necessary.
- 4.3 If the parent is unhappy with the outcome and wishes to take their complaint to the formal stage of the procedure they must notify the Responsible Person in writing within 20 school days. A copy of the Complaints Procedure (this document) should be sent to the parent.

#### **5. FORMAL STAGES – STAGE 1 – HEADTEACHER**

- 5.1 If having been through the informal stage of the procedure the parent is not satisfied with the outcome, there must be an opportunity to proceed to the formal stage of the procedure.
- 5.2 The first stage of the formal process is for the complaint to be investigated and responded to by the Headteacher or a nominated Deputy or Assistant Headteacher.
- 5.3 The parent should be asked to submit their complaint in writing.
- 5.4 If the complaint is about a decision taken by the Headteacher then the Formal Stage 2 procedures are carried out.
- 5.5 The Headteacher should acknowledge the complaint normally within 2 school days and if necessary set up a meeting with the parent to discuss the matter further.
- 5.6 It may be necessary at this stage to take statements from pupils involved and any witnesses. If it is felt necessary for statements to be taken from pupils they would normally be interviewed with a parent or carer present. If this is not possible, a member of staff who is not directly involved with the complaint could accompany the pupil.
- 5.7 The Headteacher must keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other relevant documentation.
- 5.8 Following investigation by the Headteacher a written response will be sent to the parent within 10 school days of the written formal complaint being received by the school, or within 4 weeks if any part of the 10 day period falls within a school holiday.
- 5.9 The Headteacher's response will advise that if the parent is still dissatisfied they can progress the complaint to Stage two of the procedure.

#### **6. FORMAL STAGES – STAGE 2 – CHAIR OF GOVERNORS**

- 6.1 If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 then they may submit their complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors.
- 6.2 The Chair will acknowledge receipt of the complaint normally within 5 school days.
- 6.3 Again it may be necessary for the Chair of Governors to carry out an investigation into the complaint. This again may include reviewing the notes of any interviews of pupils and witnesses.
- 6.4 The Chair of Governors will respond directly to the parent within 10 school days of the complaint being received by the school, or within 4 weeks if any part of the 10 day period falls within a school holiday.
- 6.5 The Chair of Governors' response will advise that if the parent is still dissatisfied they can progress the complaint to the Formal Stage 3 of the procedure by writing to the Responsible Officer, copied to the Chair of Governors.

## **7. FORMAL STAGES – STAGE 3 – PANEL OF GOVERNORS**

- 7.1 The final stage of the complaints procedure is for the parent to submit their complaint in writing to a Panel of Governors.
- 7.2 The Responsible Officer will acknowledge the complaint within 5 school days and arrange for a Panel of three Governors to meet. The Panel must be made up of governors who have no prior knowledge of the complaint or if this is not possible, governors who have not discussed the complaint. The Panel will elect a Chair.
- 7.3 The meeting of the Panel of Governors will be arranged within 20 school days of the complaint being submitted. Where this period falls within school holidays the meeting should be arranged as soon as possible and the parent notified of the reason for any delay.
- 7.4 All relevant documentation regarding the complaint should be made available to the Panel members and parent in advance of the meeting. This should include notes of interviews with pupils and witnesses taken during earlier stages of the process.
- 7.5 The Responsible Officer will write and inform all concerned of the date, time and place of the meeting. The notification to the parent should also inform them of the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend. The notification will include a checklist as to how a Panel Hearing is conducted.
- 7.6 The Chair of the Panel will invite the parent to state their complaint.
- 7.7 The Chair of the Panel may call the Chair of Governors, who carried out the Stage 2 investigation to make a statement. The Chair of Governors may be questioned by the parent and by Panel members.
- 7.8 The Responsible Officer or other suitable person should attend the Panel meeting to record the proceedings and the Panel's decision.
- 7.9 After the meeting, the Panel will consider the evidence and a written decision will be sent to the parent within 10 school days of the meeting or within 4 weeks if any part of the 10 day period falls within a school holiday.
- 7.10 The decision of the Panel of Governors is final and the decision cannot be appealed within school procedures. Details of those bodies to which the parent, if still dissatisfied, may make representations will be enclosed with the decision.
- 7.11 A copy of the decision will be made available to the Headteacher, the Responsible Person, the Chair of Governors, the Local Authority and any others as the Panel may think appropriate.

## **8. BODIES BEYOND THE SCHOOL TO WHICH THE PARENT MAY MAKE REPRESENTATIONS**

### Local Government Ombudsman

- 8.1 The Local Government Ombudsman may investigate complaints about maladministration, i.e. cases where the published complaints procedure has not been properly followed.
- 8.2 The Ombudsman cannot investigate complaints about internal school matters and is not empowered to overturn the decision of the Governing Body's Complaints Panel.
- 8.3 The contact details for the Ombudsman are:

Local Government Ombudsman  
Beverley House  
17 Shipton Road  
York  
YO30 5FZ

### Secretary of State for Education

- 8.4 The Secretary of State for Education will investigate complaints where a Governing Body has acted 'unreasonably' or illegally in coming to their decision.
- 8.5 The contact details for the Secretary of State for Education are:

Department of Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT

### OFSTED

- 8.6 Ofsted has powers to investigate complaints from parents about schools. Ofsted will not usually consider a complaint if a parent has not first followed a school's complaints procedure and will not normally investigate cases to do with individual pupils.
- 8.7 The contact details for Ofsted are:

Enquiries – National Business Unit  
Ofsted  
Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

## **9. SHARING OF INFORMATION AND DESTRUCTION OF FILES**

- 9.1 Throughout the process of investigating complaints it may be necessary for information relating to a parent's complaint to be shared within the school environment with teachers, Headteachers and governors.
- 9.2 The school will be mindful of confidentiality issues and the Data Protection Act 1988 when handling complaints and discussing issues relating to complaints.
- 9.3 The school is required to keep any personal information relating to a complaint in a secure manner for a period of 6 years, after which it will be confidentially destroyed.