

# COMPLAINTS POLICY



Blundell's

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FOUNDED 1604

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

Please note: All complaints should be recorded on file.

### **Pupils:**

For pupils this is clearly explained in the Personal Problems Procedure which is printed in the School Calendar. It is an obligation to follow up pupil complaints and to investigate specific allegations where they have been made. It is a necessity to keep a written record of questions asked and procedures followed when looking into a complaint. Any formal complaint relating to the running of the School should be addressed to the Head, either in writing or personally. Pupils will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith. Boarders should see the paragraph on 'Boarders and Welfare' towards the end of this document.

### **Staff:**

Academic staff have a direct line through their HoD, their Housemaster/Housemistress or the Second Master to the Head. These complaints may concern the specific behaviour of a pupil or pupils or could be related to unprofessional conduct by colleagues. Once again there is a duty for all matters to be fully investigated and recorded. Staff contracts include a grievance procedure and colleagues should remember that there is a staff governor representative. Where a member of staff feels aggrieved with a Senior Management decision, he/she is encouraged to talk to the staff governor representative or any of the other governors initially. Subsequently there is the full grievance procedure included within the contract, which can be followed.

### **Parents:**

See the Parental Complaints procedure that follows.

## **PARENTAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Blundell's 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. The aim of this policy is to ensure that a complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, it is fair to those concerned and it helps to promote parents' confidence in our ability to safeguard and promote welfare. We will try to resolve every concern in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing our systems and procedures in light of the circumstances. Timescales: We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. When we refer to Working Days, we mean Monday to Friday, when the School is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website.

For the purposes of this Policy, a complaint by a parent(s) will either be;

- (i) An issue raised by a parent which they explicitly state that they wish to be treated as a complaint, or;
- (ii) An issue raised by a parent which is escalated to a member of the Senior Executive team because it has not been able to be resolved by other members of staff. In these circumstances this will be recorded as a complaint, even if the parent has not explicitly requested it.

## Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

1. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
2. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Tutor or Housemaster/Housemistress. In many cases the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Tutor or Housemaster/Housemistress cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult a Head of Department, the Deputy Head (Academic), Deputy Head (Pastoral), Second Master or Head.
3. We will acknowledge a written notification by telephone, e-mail or letter within two working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable in the holidays. A matter raised orally will not necessarily be acknowledged in writing.
4. Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, the Deputy Head (Academic), Deputy Head (Pastoral), Second Master or Head will usually be referred to the relevant Tutor or Housemaster/Housemistress unless the Head of Department, the Deputy Head (Academic), Second Master or Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
5. The Tutor or Housemaster/Housemistress 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 three weeks or in the event that the Tutor or Housemaster/Housemistress 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

1. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
2. In most cases, the Head will meet the parents concerned, normally within four 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 Head to carry out further investigations.
4. The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
5. Once the Head 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 within 20 working days of the receipt of the complaint. The Head will also give reasons for their decision.
6. Please note that any complaint received within two weeks of the end of term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to the presence of school holidays and the unavailability of personnel required for the investigation to be properly undertaken however, an overall timeframe of three months for resolution will be enforced.
7. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

## Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

1. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the member of the Governing Body responsible for requesting the Clerk to the Governors to call a hearing of the Complaints Panel.
2. The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons. Two will usually be serving Governors, who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The third member of the panel shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within ten days.

3. The Panel will be supplied with all documents relevant to the complaint by the parties at least 4 working days before the commencement of the hearing. A record of any meeting or interview between the Head and the parents shall be circulated to the Panel and the parents as part of the documents relevant to the complaint.
4. If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further documents or information relating to the particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such information, as may be requested, shall be supplied to all parties not later than two working days prior to the hearing.
5. 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. Names of those attending the hearing shall be supplied to the Panel at least two working days prior to the hearing.
6. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
7. In any circumstance, and especially where further investigation or inquiry is required, the Panel will be empowered in the following ways: either (i) to adjourn the hearing; and/or (ii) to decide on how the investigation or enquiry should succeed; and/or (iii) to give directions as to how any further investigation or inquiry should be carried out.
8. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, at the hearing or any adjourned hearing, which it shall complete, within ten working days of the hearing/adjourned hearing or as soon as possible thereafter.
9. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel will, within two working days of the conclusion of the hearing or any adjourned hearing, write to the parents enclosing a copy of the Panel's decision and if it sees fit a brief summary of the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final.
10. The Panel's full reasons and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained about within ten working days of the hearing or adjourned hearing.
11. Private proceeding: A hearing before the Complaints Panel is a private proceeding. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in or arising from the proceeding shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media.
12. Record Keeping and Confidentiality: A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at Stage 1, Stage 2 or proceed to a panel hearing, including the action taken by the School as a result of the complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). 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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. In the case of a panel hearing, the findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and the Head.
13. Any complaints concerning the Head should be directed to the Chair of Governors.

## **BOARDERS AND WELFARE**

Boarders and their parents who have a complaint about their welfare which they feel has not been answered by the school's normal procedures can inform an Inspector when they visit the school or contact ISI as follows: Independent Schools Inspectorate, Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA; telephone 020 7600 0100.

You may also contact the Children's Commissioner about your concerns via their website [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

Boarders and parents can contact the National Care Quality Commission regarding any complaint concerning a boarder's welfare.

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) can also be contacted on 01392 384964.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Education Act, as amended, request access to them.

## **COMPLAINTS RECORD**

A written record is kept of formal complaints, their outcomes, and whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing. This record is for regular review by the Head or a senior member of staff.

Records of complaints are maintained for three years after the pupil has left the school.

Six formal complaints were made in the preceding school year (2022/2023)

## **UPDATES AND REVIEWS**

### **MARCH 2017**

#### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

A period of 2 working days added to bullet point 6.

Removed a line from bullet point 8 referring to the time after which records of hearings are disposed of.

The instructions from Judge Lowell Goddard indicates that such records should be kept indefinitely.

A new line referring to the availability of the panel findings and recommendations has been added to bullet point 8.

### **SEPTEMBER 2017**

Document reviewed – no changes

### **FEBRUARY 2018**

The member of the Governing Body appointed to request the Clerk to the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel updated to Mr Randall Thane following Mrs Vivienne Heeley's retirement.

### **NOVEMBER 2019**

Update to Complaints numbers for previous years

### **APRIL 2020**

Following Governors Review the following amendments were made to Stage 3 of the policy:

Addition of points 3 and 4.

Additional explanatory comments added to points 5, 7-10.

### **AUTUMN 2020**

Update of Children's Commissioner website address

Update to Complaints numbers for previous year

### **AUTUMN 2021**

Update to Complaints numbers for previous year

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**SUMMER 2022**

Removal of named governor from 1<sup>st</sup> bullet point in Stage 3

**AUTUMN 2022**

Update to Complaints numbers for previous year

Insertion of Para 2 - (i) and (ii) under Parental Complaints Procedure

Insertion of Deputy Head (Pastoral)

**SPRING 2023**

Rewording bullet point (ii) at the bottom of Page 2

Addition point 13 on page 4

**SUMMER 2023**

At request of Governors -addition of Deputy Head (Pastoral) to Stage 1, Point 4

**AUTUMN 2023**

Update to Complaints numbers for previous year

Author: Second Master  
Date: January 2014  
Reviewed: Autumn 2023  
Next Review Due: Autumn 2024

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