

# St Bede's School

# Complaints Policy

## **1 Introductory Statements**

- 1.1 St Bede's School prides itself on the effective and caring pastoral and academic environment provided to its pupils. However, from time to time there may well be issues and genuine concerns which parents wish to raise with the School and they can expect them to be treated in accordance with this policy.
- 1.2 Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school is a 'complaint'. An informal complaint can be made in writing, for example via an email. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff.
- 1.3 A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly.
- 1.4 Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

## **2 Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints**

- 2.1 All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.
- 2.2 It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages (see below) of the procedure within 28 working days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.
- 2.3 If the procedure leads to Stage 3 (see below) the School will endeavour to complete protocol within a further 28 working days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

## **3 Recording Complaints**

- 3.1 Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of complaints; whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing; and any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether it was upheld. These are monitored by the Headmaster.
- 3.2 At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:
  - Date when the issue was raised
  - Name of parent
  - Name of pupil
  - Description of the issue
  - Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
  - Witness statements (if appropriate)
  - Name of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
  - Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of conversations)
- 3.3 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. The Early Years Foundation Stage must provide OFSTED with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint. A record of any such complaints is kept for a minimum of 3 years. Please see <https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/onlinecomplaints> for further details.

## **4 Procedural Stages**

### **4.1 Stage 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION**

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents of younger children have a complaint they should normally contact the Form Teacher. Parents of older pupils should normally contact the appropriate subject teacher or member of the Senior Management Team. In most cases, the matter will be resolved promptly by this means.
- If staff cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Headmaster. Complaints made directly to the Headmaster may be referred to the relevant staff unless he deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally. If the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint to the Proprietors/Directors.
- Members of staff may make a written record of all concerns and complaints if appropriate, including the date on which they were received and the outcome. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 working days, or that a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, parents may be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

### **4.2 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 meet or speak to the parents concerned, within 5 working 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. Once the 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.
- The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision. This will be given within 14 working days of the receipt of the complaint being submitted to the Headmaster in writing.
- If the complaint relates to EYFS provision, the complainant will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 working days of receipt of the complaint.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster the Proprietors/Directors will call for a full report from the Headmaster including all the relevant documents, may also call for a briefing from members of staff and will, in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Parents will be informed of any decision in writing.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure. Parents will be advised in writing that the end of Stage 2 has been reached if no resolution is possible and no later than one month after notification of the Stage 2 complaint.

### **4.3 Stage 3 – COMPLAINTS PANEL HEARING**

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will ask the Proprietors/Directors to call for a Complaints Panel Hearing. The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration.
- The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Panel will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 14 working days.
- Copies of the written complaint and the decision given at the end of Stage 2 shall be supplied to the Panel. 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, and/or it may invite all

those involved in the complaint to supply copies of other documents on which they intend to rely. Copies of such particulars and documents shall be supplied to all parties not later than 7 working days prior to the hearing.

- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 7 working days of the Hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Proprietors/Directors and SMT.

## **5 Contacting ISI and the DfE**

- 5.1 Whilst we hope that all parents and pupils will feel able to raise concerns directly with us and that we will be able to resolve them satisfactorily at an early stage, we would like parents and pupils to be aware of other bodies that they might wish to contact if they are unhappy with the response that they have received from the school. Pupils should know that they will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith.
- 5.2 If a pupil, parent or member of staff has a complaint which relates to the school's general educational or boarding provision they can raise these concerns by writing to the Independent Schools Inspectorate at: ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA, by email to [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net) or by telephone 020 7710 9900.
- 5.3 Parents can also contact the Department for Education online at [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus) or by telephone 0370 000 2288. If concerns relate to the provision of the EYFS requirements, parents may also contact Ofsted by telephone 0300 123 4666. The address for the Independent Education and Boarding Team at the Department for Education is: IEBT, DfE, Mowden Hall, Staindrop Rd, Darlington, DL3 9BG or by telephone 0370 0002288.

Headmaster  
February 2016

Director of Studies  
February 2016