

Complaints Policy

This policy applies to the Whole School.

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1. Responsibility for this policy

The Board of Governors has approved this policy.

2. Application, scope and purpose

- 2.1 This policy applies to the whole School, that is both the Junior and Senior Schools, of Bradford Grammar School (“the School”).
- 2.2 This policy sets out the procedures for the bringing of complaints (informal or formal) by parents of any child or young person at the School and the resolution of such complaints.
- 2.3 The word “parents” in paragraph 2.2 means either of the following:
- 2.3.1 One or both parents of a child or young person (or any other person who has parental responsibility for or care of the child or young person) currently registered at the School.
 - 2.3.2 One or both parents of a child or young person (or any other person who has

parental responsibility for or care of the child or young person) who was registered at the School at the time the complaint was initially made.

2.4 The School will not normally investigate anonymous complaints.

2.5 This policy does not apply to any request for financial recompense such as a claim for compensation, damages, refund of fees and the like.

2.6 Regardless of the nature of a complaint and whether or not it is upheld, for reasons of data protection and confidentiality, details of any sanctions imposed on staff, pupils or parents at any time will not be disclosed.

2.7 Should the circumstances of a particular complaint reasonably require any deviation from the usual procedures provided for in this policy, the complainant will be notified accordingly.

2.8 Any person other than a parent or parents (as defined in paragraph 2.3) who wishes to make any complaint about the School and/or its operations should do so in writing (a) to the Chairman of Governors if the complaint relates to the Headmaster; or (b) to the Headmaster in all other circumstances.

3 Time scales

The School aims to resolve all complaints efficiently and promptly and 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. However, the School will consider complaints made within 12 months if exceptional circumstances apply. Therefore, a complaint raised after three months should include details of the reasons for the delay.

3.1 Timescales for each stage of the School's complaints procedure are set out below. It is expected that the management of every complaint will progress in a timely manner. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay to the timescales for a stage of the complaints procedure (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.

3.2 Complaints which are raised in the school holidays will usually be deemed to have been received on the first working day after receipt.

3.3 If a Parent commences legal action against the School in relation to their complaint, the Headmaster or Chairman of Governors will decide whether or not to suspend the complaints procedure until those proceedings have been concluded.

4 Publication and availability

4.1 This policy is published on the School website.

4.2 This policy is available in hard copy on request.

4.3 A copy of the policy is available for inspection at the School office during a working day.

4.4 This policy can be made available in large print or other 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.

4.5 Information regarding the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure of this policy during the preceding school year is available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate. A summary can be found in section 5 'Number of Complaints'

5 Number of Formal Complaints

4 formal complaints were received during the preceding School year; none was upheld.

6 Definitions and interpretation

6.1 References to **clear working days** mean Monday to Friday, when the School is open during term time, excluding the day when notice is given or deemed to have been given. The dates of terms are published on the School's website. In the event that the application of this definition is likely to introduce excessive delays, due to intervening School holidays, the School's approach is to take sensible and reasonable steps so as to minimise any hardship or unfairness arising from such delays.

7 Management of complaints

7.1 The School's policy allows for complaints to be considered at three stages:

Stage 1: Informal raising of a complaint. Further details of this procedure are set out in Appendix 1.

Stage 2: A formal complaint in writing. Further details of this procedure are set out in Appendix 2.

Stage 3: Reference to a complaints panel. Further details of this procedure are set out in Appendix 3.

8 Expected standards of behaviour

8.1 While the School will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the School, attention is drawn to the information included in Appendix 4 which is drawn from:

8.1.1 the Department for Education's "Best practice advice for school complaints procedures 2020"; and

8.1.2 the Department for Education guidance "Controlling access to school premises

2018”.

9 Record keeping and confidentiality

- 9.1 All records created in accordance with this policy are managed in accordance with the School's policies that apply to the retention and destruction of records.
- 9.2 The School keeps a written record of all informal complaints when they are raised with Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or brought to the attention of SLT
- 9.3 The School keeps a written record of all formal complaints, including the following:
 - 9.3.1 whether they were resolved at Stage 2 or Stage 3;
 - 9.3.2 the action taken by the School as a result (whether or not they are upheld).
- 9.4 The records created in accordance with this policy may contain personal data. The School has a number of privacy notices which explain how it will use personal data about pupils and parents. The privacy notices are published on the School's website.
- 9.5 School staff will ensure that they follow the School's data protection policies and procedures when handling personal data created in connection with this policy. This includes the School's data protection policy.
- 9.6 In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances.
- 9.7 Complaints which do not have safeguarding implications will be retained for a minimum of seven years (a period determined by the six-year inspection cycle with allowance for unforeseen circumstances).
- 9.8 Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where access is requested by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required in the course of an inspection or under other legal authority or court order.

10 Complaints to the Independent Schools Inspectorate

- 10.1 ISI can be contacted at concerns@isi.net or on 020 7600 0100.

11 Training

- 11.1 The School ensures that regular guidance and training are arranged on induction and at regular intervals thereafter so that staff and volunteers understand what is expected of them by this policy and have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their roles.
- 11.2 The level and frequency of training depends on the role of the individual member of

staff.

11.3 The School maintains written records of all staff training.

Policy reviewed by:	Dr S Hinchliffe, Headmaster
Last policy review date:	Autumn 2023
Next review date:	Autumn 2024

Appendix 1 Stage 1: informal complaint

1 Informal resolution of a complaint

- 1.1 We hope and expect that most complaints can be resolved informally without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. For example, dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care or a billing error should be able to be resolved by the relevant member of staff.

2 Who to contact

- 2.1 Where appropriate, complaints should initially be raised as follows:
- 2.1.1 **educational issues:** if the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, please speak or write to the pupil's form tutor or Head of Year (Senior School) or class teacher (Junior School). Your complaint may be passed to a more senior member of staff if appropriate.
 - 2.1.2 **pastoral care:** for complaints relating to matters outside the classroom, please speak or write to the Head of Year (Senior School) or the Deputy Head of the Junior School;
 - 2.1.3 **disciplinary matters:** a problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised first of all with the member of staff who imposed it / the Head of Year (Senior School) or the Deputy Head of the Junior School;
 - 2.1.4 **Headmaster:** Parents may choose to raise complaints directly with the Headmaster or the Junior School Head if they feel that the matter is capable of resolution informally. The complaint may be raised orally or in writing. If in writing, the School will not automatically treat the complaint as a formal (Stage 2) complaint and the Headmaster or the Junior School Head will endeavour to resolve the complaint informally under Stage 1 by means of direct conversation or a meeting with the parents, to be held within 15 clear working days of the initial complaint. Alternatively, parents may choose to make their complaint about the Headmaster to the Chairman of Governors (via the Bursar who is Clerk to the Governors). In this case, the complaint will be treated as a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this procedure as set out in Appendix 2.
 - 2.1.5 **Junior School Head:** Complaints about the Junior School Head should be raised with the Headmaster.
 - 2.1.6 **Chairman of Governors:** Complaints about the Chairman of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governors via the School office or by email to bursar@bradfordgrammar.com. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
- 2.2 An informal complaint will be acknowledged by telephone, email or letter within 3

clear working days of receipt, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescales. Such action may include an investigation and / or a meeting with the parent.

- 2.3 Wherever appropriate, the School will ask the parent at the earliest stage how the issue may be resolved.
- 2.4 The parent will usually receive a response to the complaint no later than 15 clear working days from receipt of the complaint.
- 2.5 If the parent is dissatisfied with the response to the informal complaint or in the event that the complaint cannot be resolved by informal means, the parent may make a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this procedure as set out in Appendix 2.

Appendix 2 Stage 2: formal complaint

[The Bursar is Clerk to the Governors]

1 How to make a formal complaint

- 1.1 Complaints will usually only progress to Stage 2 after first being considered at the informal stage and only then if the parent indicates that they intend to escalate a matter to the formal stage.
- 1.2 The formal complaint should be in writing addressed to the Headmaster usually within 15 clear working days from receipt of the response to their complaint and should include:
 - 1.2.1 the complainant's name and full contact details;
 - 1.2.2 details of the complaint and who it has previously been raised with;
 - 1.2.3 a copy of any relevant documents;
 - 1.2.4 the outcome desired.
- 1.3 The complaint will be acknowledged within 3 clear working days, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescales.
- 1.4 The procedure for dealing with a formal complaint about the Headmaster is set out below:
 - 1.4.1 The complaint should be put in writing to the Chairman of Governors via the Clerk to the Governors. The complaint should include the same information referred to above.
 - 1.4.2 The Chairman of Governors via the Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the complaint within 3 clear working days of receipt and indicate the action that is being taken and the likely timescale. Such action may include an investigation and/or a meeting with the parent. The parent will usually receive a response to the complaint within 15 clear working days.
 - 1.4.3 If the parent is dissatisfied with the response to the complaint, the parent can request that the complaint be referred to a complaints panel under Stage 3, using the procedure set out in Appendix 3.

2 Investigation

- 2.1 The subject matter of the complaint will be investigated in the most appropriate manner, which may include some or all of the following steps:
 - 2.1.1 delegation of the investigation to a senior member of staff or third party;

- 2.1.2 involvement of one or more Governors (for example if the complaint is about the Headmaster);
 - 2.1.3 request for additional information from the parent, including what they think might resolve the issue (if not already requested under Stage 1); and
 - 2.1.4 request for a conversation and / or a meeting with the parent personally and / or others with relevant knowledge of the circumstances to define the scope of the complaint and or assist in the investigation.
- 2.2 Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Where the investigation is conducted by another appointed person, they will prepare a report on the investigation which will usually then be considered by the Headmaster. Personal data may be redacted and names anonymised or cyphered in line with data protection principles.

3 Decision

- 3.1 The parent will be notified by email and letter of the Stage 2 decision and the reasons for it, usually within 15 clear working days from receipt of the formal complaint.
- 3.2 If the parent is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response to the complaint, the parent can request that the complaint be referred to a complaints panel under Stage 3, using the procedure set out in Appendix 3.

Appendix 3 Stage 3: complaints panel

[The Bursar is Clerk to the Governors]

1 Complaints panel hearing

- 1.1 If a parent is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response to the complaint, they can request a complaints panel hearing.
- 1.2 The purpose of a complaints panel hearing is to review and consider afresh those parts of the decision made at stage 2 about which the parent remains dissatisfied. The panel may but is not obliged to consider any new complaints not previously raised at Stage 2.

2 How to request a Hearing

- 2.1 A request for a hearing must be put in writing to the Clerk to the Governors and will usually only be considered if the procedure at Stage 2 has been completed.
- 2.2 The written request should usually be made within 15 clear working days from receipt of the stage 2 decision and should include:
 - 2.2.1 the complainant's name and full contact details;
 - 2.2.2 details of those aspects of the complaint about which the parent remains dissatisfied;
 - 2.2.3 copies of any relevant documents which the parent would like the panel to consider; and
 - 2.2.4 the outcome desired;
 - 2.2.5 whether the parent wishes to attend the hearing and if so, whether they propose to be accompanied.
- 2.3 If assistance with the request is required, for example because of a disability, the Clerk to the Governors should be informed so that appropriate arrangements can be made.
- 2.4 The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the request for a hearing in writing within 3 clear working days of receipt.
- 2.5 Every effort will be made to enable the hearing to take place within 20 clear working days of receipt of the request.

3 Planning the Hearing

- 3.1 The Clerk to the Governors will send written notification to each party of the date, time and place of the hearing at least 10 clear working days before the date of the hearing.

- 3.2 Copies of any documents (additional to those specified in 2.2.1 and 2.2.3) that the parent wishes the complaints panel to consider should be sent to the Clerk to the Governors to be received at least 7 clear working days prior to the hearing.
- 3.3 The Clerk to the Governors will circulate a copy of all the documents to be considered by the complaints panel to all parties at least 3 clear working days prior to the hearing.
- 3.4 The parent may be accompanied at the hearing, for example by a relative or friend. The hearing is an internal proceeding; it is not a legal proceeding thus legal representation is not permitted.
- 3.5 The complaints panel may wish to speak to a parent or parents attending the hearing. If they are accompanied by a legally qualified person, that person will not be permitted to act as an advocate or to address the hearing unless invited to do so by the Chairman of the complaints panel.
- 3.6 A person will be appointed to take a minute of the hearing.

4 Composition of the complaints panel

- 4.1 The complaints panel will comprise at least three individuals who have no detailed prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint, including at least one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the School.
- 4.2 The parent may ask the Clerk to the Governors to inform them who has been appointed to sit on the complaints panel ahead of the hearing. Fair consideration will be given to any reasonable objection to a particular member of the panel.
- 4.3 The Chairman of the Governors will usually appoint one of the panel members to be the Chairman of the panel throughout the proceedings.

5 Role of the complaints panel

- 5.1 The role of the complaints panel is to establish the facts surrounding the complaint or complaints that remain in issue by considering:
 - 5.1.1 the documents provided by both parties; and
 - 5.1.2 any representations made by the parties.
- 5.2 Where facts relevant to the events complained of remain in issue and may be material to the merits of the complaint, the panel will make findings of fact and to this end may request that:
 - 5.2.1 statements or further statements and/or documents are provided in advance of the hearing by any person or persons:

- 5.2.2 any person or persons attend the hearing to give evidence to the panel and/or to produce any relevant document.
- 5.3 The panel will make such findings of fact on a balance of probabilities.
- 5.4 If appropriate the panel will review the process by which the complaint was dealt with by the School and may make findings about it including its fairness or otherwise.

6 The Hearing

- 6.1 Unless prior to the commencement of the hearing, a parent confirms that they are satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, the hearing will proceed in the usual way notwithstanding that the parent may choose not to attend.
- 6.2 The panel will usually hear representations from the Stage 2 decision-maker and the Parent(s).
- 6.3 The hearing is not a legal proceeding and the complaints panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses about the issues complained of, but may do so and / or may take written statements into account.
- 6.4 All statements made at the hearing will be unsworn. The parties will be entitled to write their own notes for reference purposes. All those present should show courtesy, restraint and good manners. Persistent failure to do so may result in the hearing being adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chairman. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the hearing is conducted should say so in order for such dissatisfaction to be minuted.
- 6.5 The Chairman may, at his / her discretion, otherwise than for the reasons set out in 6.4 above adjourn the hearing if he / she considers it appropriate to do so. This may include, for example, an adjournment for welfare reasons, to enable additional information to be obtained and/or considered or for the parties to take legal advice on a specific issue arising.
- 6.6 When the Chairman of the panel is satisfied that sufficient consideration has been given to the documentation provided and any representations made by the parties, he / she will conclude the hearing.
- 6.7 A hearing before the complaints panel is a private proceeding. No notes or other records or oral statements relating to the complaint or any matter discussed in or arising from the proceeding shall be published or otherwise made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media.

7 Decision

- 7.1 The panel will consider the full merits of the complaint.
- 7.2 In doing so the panel will take into account, as may be relevant, the following:

- 7.2.1 the facts which are not in issue;
 - 7.2.2 the facts found by the panel;
 - 7.2.3 the matters referred to in 5.4 above;
 - 7.2.4 any decision made by the School in connection with the complaint;
 - 7.2.5 any further matters which it considers to be relevant.
- 7.3 The panel will decide whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld
- 7.4 The panel may make recommendations as it considers to be appropriate.
- 7.5 It is not within the powers of the complaints panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents, although the complaints panel may make recommendations about these issues.
- 7.6 The complaints panel's findings and any recommendations will usually be provided in writing to the parents and, where relevant, the person complained about, within 15 clear working days of the hearing.

8 Next steps

- 8.1 The decision of the panel is final. There will be no further opportunity within the School for consideration of the complaint. The completion of Stage 3 represents the conclusion of the School's complaints procedure.
- 8.2 The School will ensure that the panel decision is recorded appropriately and that any recommendations made in the course of a complaint are properly considered and actioned as appropriate.
- 8.3 The complaints panel's findings and any recommendations including any actions taken to implement them will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chairman of Governors and the Headmaster.

Appendix 4 Unreasonable complaints and unacceptable conduct

- 1 The School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a proper response to those who complain. The School will not normally limit the contact complainants have with members of staff. However, the School will protect members of staff from behaviour which is abusive, insulting, offensive, harassing or threatening.

- 2 Where a parent seeks to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this will be regarded as vexatious and/or unreasonable and, therefore, beyond the scope of the policy.

- 3 The School adopts the Department for Education's definition of unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders its consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the School.

- 4 It is open to a complainant to request that a complaints panel be convened to determine the single issue of whether the School's dismissal of the complainant's original complaint(s) was justified.