



Birchfield Independent Girls' School

POLICY FOR SCHOOL COMPLAINTS AND PROCEDURE

This document sets out the policy for dealing with comments, grievances and complaints. This policy must be read in conjunction with the School's Complaints procedure.

Aims of the school

The school's policy is to ensure that the highest possible standards are practiced. The school aims to achieve this by:

- Continually seeking to raise standards of achievement
- Having high expectations
- Promoting effective teaching and learning
- Promoting effective communication between the school with parents and the wider community

The policy will:

- Strengthen the partnership between pupils, parents, staff and Governors
- Identify opportunities to improve on standards and to meet expectations
- Provide redress where a complaint is found to have substance

Purpose

- The school's values are concerned with meeting the needs of pupils, parents and other stakeholders. The governing body believes that feedback is an important ingredient in self-evaluation and raising standards. All stakeholders must feel that their concerns or complaints can be voiced and will be considered seriously.
- The school takes informal concerns seriously and aims to resolve them at the earliest stage in order to reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.
- The underlying principle is that concerns will be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure will not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally.
- Staff will endeavour to resolve issues on the spot.
- Formal procedures will be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.
- Improve communications by listening to the views of pupils, parents, staff, and the local and wider community

This policy is used for:

- Complaints relating to the schooling of your child
- Complaints about the education and care provided to pupils at the school
- Complaints about the school's operational arrangements

This policy is limited to matters which can reasonably be investigated and therefore complaints must relate to matters which have occurred within the last 12 months.

This policy is not to be used for:

- Complaints by staff relating to grievances about their employment
- Complaints about the actions of a governor
- Complaints about the actions of another parent
- Allegations of abuse
- Issues between the school and community groups/PTA

These matters will be dealt with by:

- Complaints by staff relating to grievances about their employment (There is a separate staff grievance procedure)
- Complaints about the actions of a governor (This must be reported to the Head of the Governing Body in the first instance)
- Complaints about the actions of another parent (This must be reported to the headteacher who will investigate whether action should be taken by the school)
- Allegations of abuse (Any allegations of abuse must be discussed with the headteacher or a senior staff member in the first instance. For a definition of abuse, refer to the school's Child Protection / Safeguarding policy)
- Issues between the school and community groups (These will be resolved informally by discussion)

Guidelines

Complaints can be made in the following ways:

Complaints may be made in person, or in writing. A person with a complaint must normally seek to contact the member of staff responsible for the relevant issue. However, all staff will endeavour to seek to help, even when the issue is not the individual's area of responsibility. Care will be taken to:

- Clarify the nature of the complaint
- Clarify the outcomes sought
- Check whether the person making a complaint requires support of any kind, for example with language difficulties
- Explain the complaints procedure

The school does not wish to receive anonymous complaints and will not undertake to act on any information received in this way.

Applicability

The policy shall apply to all employees and governors of the school. It is the shared responsibility of the headteacher and the chairman of the Governing Body to ensure that these groups are made aware of the policy and procedure. The Complaints Procedure will encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible and:

- Be easily accessible and publicised
- Be simple to understand and use
- Be impartial
- Be non-adversarial
- Allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent panel where necessary
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- Provide information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved

Roles and Responsibilities

See: School Complaints Procedure, which explains the process in more detail.

In brief the procedure is as follows:

Stage One:

Complaint/concern heard by staff member (informal).

Stage Two:

- Complaint heard by headteacher (formal) or
- Complaint is heard by the Chair of Governing Body (if complaint is about the headteacher) (formal)
- An independent person will be present in the panel hearing of complaints

Stage Three:

- Complaint heard by Governing Body's Complaints Panel (review), including an independent person will be present in the panel hearing of complaints.

A dissatisfied complainant can always take a complaint to the next stage. The Complaints Policy and Procedure are publicised to all stakeholders through:

- The information given to new parents when their children join the school
- The home-school agreement
- The home school bulletins or newsletters

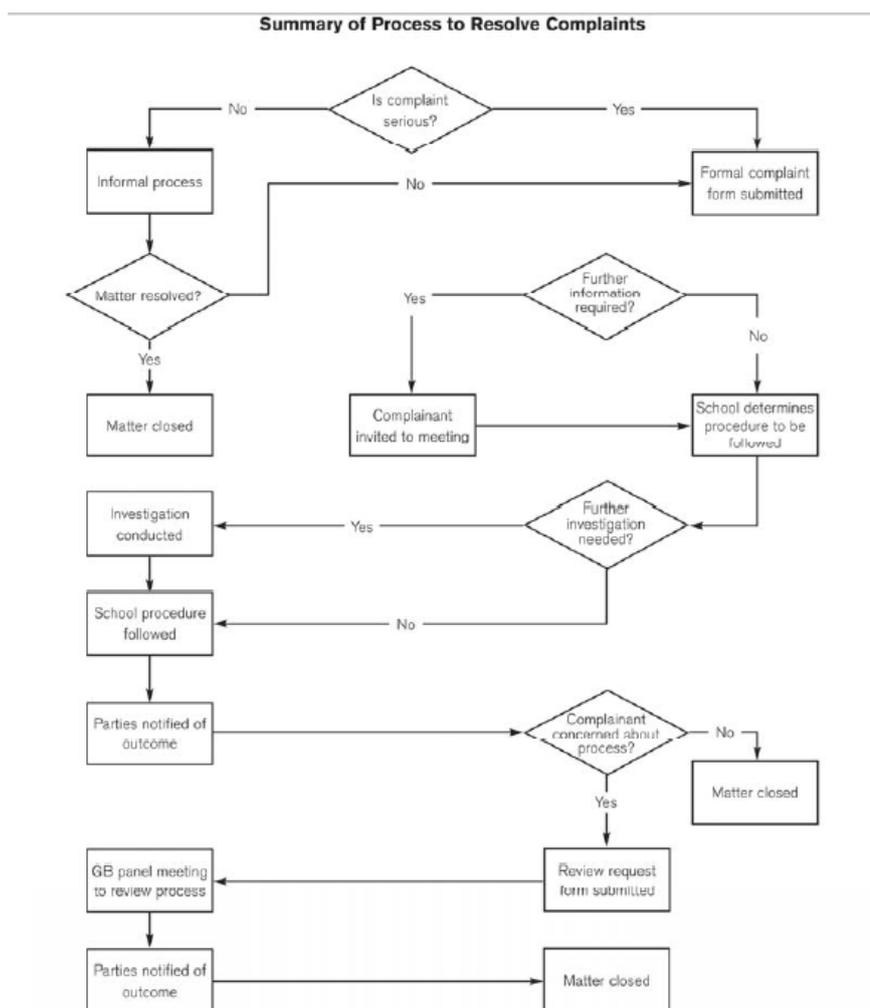
- A specific complaints leaflet which includes a form on which a complaint can be made
- The school website

If, at any stage of the process, the complainant starts legal action in relation to the matters under considerations, the complaints process will automatically cease, and all further correspondence will be with the schools’ legal representatives.

Record Keeping

- All complaints will be responded to in writing.
- At Stage 1 – even though this is an informal stage, the complainant will receive a reply in writing and a copy must be retained for reference.
- At Stages 2a, 2b and 3 – there will be clear communication in writing throughout the handling of the complaint. A copy of all written communication will be retained for reference.

Only complaints relating to the schooling of a specific child will be kept within the child's files. Other issues will be filed separately in a secure location and will be retained for a period of seven years.



Section 2: School Complaints Procedure

Code of conduct

There is an expectation that all school staff dealing with a person making a complaint will act in a courteous and respectful manner. All complaints will be taken as a matter for serious concern. The school also expects that the person making a complaint will also conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful manner. Should any parent/guardian behave in an unacceptable manner or make derogatory comments, the individual will be asked to leave the premises immediately and actions may be taken by the school depending on the individual situation.

Informal Complaint Procedure

An informal complaint is usually an approach by an individual to the school expressing dissatisfaction. Informal complaints may be resolved quickly and simply and often do not involve detailed or lengthy investigation.

A person with an informal complaint will normally seek to contact the member of staff responsible for the relevant issue via the school office. If the complaint is not resolved at this stage, then the person making the complaint will be referred to the head teacher. It is anticipated that all stages a written record will be kept and remain confidential to those involved.

If these informal discussions do not resolve the situation then a meeting may be called by the head teacher. This meeting will aim to resolve the issue and involve all parties involved in the complaint. When the complaints cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint must be made.

Formal Complaint Procedure

A complaint becomes formal when it is made in writing to the Head teacher. Written acknowledgement will be sent within seven working days.

The Head teacher will investigate the circumstances thoroughly and impartially. A written response, or progress report, will be issued within the 10 working days of the complaint being received.

If the person making the complaint is not satisfied with either the outcome or the progress being made, then an appeal may be made within five working days, in writing, to the Chair of Governors, who can be contacted via the school.

The Chair of Governors will act impartially to ensure that all parties involved in the complaint have the opportunity to present their case to the governing body who is independent of the school. Parents are allowed to attend the panel hearing, and be accompanied if they so wish. The panel hearing will be held within the 10 working days of appeal being received.

All complaints and related correspondences will be kept locked in a secure area, and all correspondence and records will be kept confidential.

The Remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel

The panel will:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the school's system or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

A decision of the panel will be given in writing to the person making the complaint and where relevant to the person complained about. It will include findings and any recommendations.

The decision will also be received in writing by the proprietor, the head teacher and where relevant those persons involved. All complaints and related correspondences of the appeal panel will be kept locked in a secure area, and all correspondence and records will be kept confidential.

Records of Complaints

The Governing Body will monitor and review annually the nature of informal formal complaints, and the school's response to them, to ensure that the school is effectively meeting the expectations of parents and the local community. All records will be kept confidential.

All complaints received whether they are were resolved at the preliminary, or whether they proceeded to panel stage records will be kept. The records will be available to inspectors conducting inspection under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, or to the Secretary of State, should they ask for access to such records.

Monitoring and Evaluating the Policy

All documentation regarding complaints (including notes of any related meetings and telephone calls), the action taken and the final outcome will be recorded and a summary included in the Headteacher's next report to governors.

The governing body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. Complaints information shared with the whole governing body will not name individuals.

The monitoring and review of complaints by the school and the governing body is a useful tool in evaluating the school's performance, and will contribute to school improvement. Any underlying issues identified will be addressed.

This document was produced September 2020 and is due to be reviewed September 2022.

Signed (Chair)..... Date.....

Print Name..... Date of next review.....

Head Teacher.....