

Policy: Complaints Procedure

Approval: Headteacher

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**CHELtenham
BOURNside
SCHOOL**

Policies

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1. Introduction

At Cheltenham Bournside School ('the school'), we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which students will be helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially. We recognise that sometimes things may go wrong and parents may wish to make a complaint or raise concerns they have with the School. For complaints to be considered the student concerned must be currently on roll at the school.

2. Record keeping

We keep a record of formal complaints (those which have proceeded to Stage 2 or 3). This record identifies the status of the complaint as Stage 2 or Stage 3 and records any actions taken by the school as a result. We see this as a helpful way of identifying areas where the school is achieving well and can guide us to improve upon these areas, even more.

3. Informal resolution

It is hoped that most complaints/issues can be resolved quickly and informally by discussion with the member of staff concerned. Alternatively, parents/carers can write to staff clearly outlining the issue and stating their preferred outcome.

4. Stage 1

Where the matter cannot be resolved informally, a formal written notice of the concern or complaint can be submitted in writing to the Headteacher. This written notice should outline any informal contact with the school and state the preferred outcome. This will normally be acknowledged within 5 school days and then responded to by a school leader other than the Headteacher within a further 10 school days. Where a meeting is requested by parents it should normally be arranged to take place within 10 school days of the request being made.

Any agreements reached in such a meeting will be recorded in writing by the school and a copy sent to the parent/carer. If the issue is complex, and the matter may need to be further investigated, this will be carried out in a timely manner. The school will endeavour to inform the parent/carer of the anticipated timescale for completion of the investigation. In the case of a complaint about the Headteacher, any written notice should be addressed to the Chair of Governors and the complaint will be dealt with as a Stage 2 complaint (omitting Stage 1).

5. Stage 2

Where the matter cannot be resolved at Stage 1, having carried out the steps in Stage 1, a formal written notice of the concern or complaint should be submitted in writing to the Headteacher. This written notice should outline any previous contact with the school and state the preferred outcome. This will normally be acknowledged within 5 school days and then responded to by the Headteacher within a further 10 school days. Where a meeting with the Headteacher is requested it should normally be arranged within 10 school days of the request being made.

Any agreements reached in such a meeting will be recorded in writing by the school and a copy sent to the parent/carer. If the issue is complex, and the matter may need to be further investigated, this will be carried out in a timely manner. The school will endeavour to inform the parent/carer of the anticipated timescale for completion of the investigation. If the complaint relates to the Headteacher, the written notice should be addressed to the Chair of Governors who will respond in line with the above timetable.

6. Stage 3

Having followed the steps in Stage 1 and 2, if the complaint is still not resolved to the parent or carer's satisfaction they may appeal to a Complaints Panel to consider the complaint. This written notice should outline any previous contact with the school and state the preferred outcome. The process for this appeal is that the parent or carer writes to the Chair of Governors outlining the grounds on which an appeal is being made. Upon receiving a Stage

3 complaint, the Chair of Governors will appoint a serving governor from the school as the Action Officer. The Action Officer will not have had any previous involvement in the handling of the complaint. The Action Officer will manage the complaint within a defined timescale, which will be shared with the parent/carer.

The Complaints Panel will consist of three members; the Action Officer (or another nominated governor), an additional governor from the school who has not had any previous involvement in the handling of the complaint and a member independent of the running and management of the school. Staff governors will not form part of 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.

The hearing will take place as soon as practicably possible. The Panel will decide the format for the Panel Hearing. The parent/carer may be accompanied by a friend or supporter at the Panel Hearing if they wish. All parties involved will be required to submit any written documentation in advance and at least six working days prior to the meeting in order that it may be considered. The hearing will consider documentation submitted, and also give the parent/carer an opportunity to address the Panel. The hearing will be minuted.

It is a matter for the Panel to decide whether all parties will be present at the same time or if they wish to hear individuals separately. The Panel will give a decision, in writing to the parent/carer, normally within fourteen school days after the hearing together with reasons for the decision. The Panel's findings will be sent in writing to the Head, governors and where relevant, any individual concerned in the complaint.

7. Persistent complaints

7.1 Unreasonably persistent complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure, beyond all reason
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the timeframes it sets out
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

Steps we will take

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address

- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#)
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

Stopping responding

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from our school site.

7.2 Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and that the local process is complete
- Direct them to the ESFA if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If there are new aspects, we will follow the complaints procedure set out in this document again.

7.3 Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

8. Confidentiality

The school will treat all correspondence, statements and records in strict confidence, only disclosing information to those who are directly involved in the matter. The school undertakes to investigate all complaints thoroughly and requires parents/carers to divulge necessary information to allow the school to investigate the complaint, whether informal or formal. All correspondence, statements and records relating to the complaint will remain confidential wherever possible.

9. Further appeal

If the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, they can refer to the Department for Education.

10. Additional notes

The school does not need to consider complaints made more than six months after the incident/situation. This policy does not cover appeals against permanent exclusion decisions. A separate policy is available in relation to exclusions.

11. General

It is a requirement that all parties involved in the complaints process act with respect and courtesy towards each other at all times.