Complaints Policy and Procedure

Introduction

At Bootham School we regard parents as essential and valued members of our community, and aim for open and easy communication between home and school. Bootham enjoys a good reputation for the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its students. If for any reason parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. This Procedure applies to all parts of Bootham School, including Bootham Junior School and the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Although this procedure is made available to parents of prospective students, it is not available for use by them: it may only be used by parents of current students. Complaints by parents of former students will be dealt with under this policy only if the complaint was first raised whilst the student was still registered. All complaints will be dealt with in confidence.

The School will make available to parents of students and of prospective students and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints policy and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

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, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the school is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done, or has acted unfairly.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most concerns and complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

If parents have a concern or a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's tutor, subject teacher or houseparent. In the Junior School, including EYFS, parents should contact the class teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the tutor, subject teacher or houseparent cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a head of year or head of department or the Assistant Head (Boarding). In the Junior School, the class teacher may wish to consult the Deputy Head.

Complaints made directly to a head of department, a Deputy Head or the Head (including the Head of Bootham Junior School) will usually be referred to the relevant tutor, class teacher, subject teacher or houseparent unless the head of department, Deputy Head or the Head

(including the head of the Junior School) deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

The tutor, class teacher, subject teacher, houseparent or head of the Junior School 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 two working weeks or in the event that the member of staff 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. For written complaints relating to EYFS the complaint must be investigated and the outcome notified to complainants within twenty-eight days of having received the complaint.

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 Head of Bootham School within four calendar weeks of the end of any process instituted at Stage 1. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Head will speak to or correspond with the parents concerned, normally within five working days[1] of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. Further conversations and correspondence may ensue, as appropriate. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations and this will be carried out as soon as possible.

The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, normally within four working weeks, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.

If the complaint is against the Head, the Clerk of the Governors' Meeting (i.e. Chair of Governors) will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Clerk may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or correspond with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Clerk is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Clerk will give reasons for his/her decision.

In the absence of a formal response for the parents to the Head's or Clerk's letter within four calendar weeks, the matter will be assumed to have been resolved.

[1] 'Working Day' refers to days when the school timetable is in operation (including Saturdays and Leave Weekends at the senior school); it does not therefore include school holidays.

If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they should give notice that they wish to proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure within four working weeks.

Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Bursar, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will be appointed by Governors, and will consist of three persons who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and who have not taken part in the prior investigation. One member of the Panel shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Bursar, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within four working weeks. Parents should note that the Complaints Panel will not normally sit during school holidays.

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. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties normally not later than three days prior to the hearing.

The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation is not appropriate in a hearing of this nature.

If parents do not exercise their right to attend a panel hearing the hearing will still go ahead as arranged and consider the complaint.

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 reach a decision and may make recommendations.

The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 14 working days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final.

In the absence of a formal response from the parents to the decision of the panel within four calendar weeks, the matter will be assumed to have been resolved.

Persistent correspondence

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy.

Record of Complaints

A written record will be kept of all complaints that reach stage 2 or 3 of the procedure regardless of whether they are upheld. The record will include details of the action taken by

the school and whether the complaints are resolved at Stage 2 or proceed to a Panel hearing. A copy of those findings and recommendations will be:

(i) provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about

(ii) available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher.

Notes

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records 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. With regard to the Early Years Foundation Stage, Bootham School will provide Ofsted and/or ISI, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any complaints will be kept for at least three years.

OFSTED can be contacted at the following address:

Ofsted,
Piccadilly Gate,
Store Street,
Manchester
M1 2WD
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Tel: 0300 123 1231

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) can be contacted at the following address:

Independent Schools Inspectorate,
Ground Floor, CAP House,
9-12 Long Lane,
London
EC1A 9HA
info@isi.net
Tel: 020 7600 0100

This policy will be checked and updated on an annual basis for matters of fact and process.