

# COMPLAINTS

## 1. Policy Statement

*Bournemouth Collegiate School (BCS) recognises that parents will, from time to time, have normal and legitimate concerns about the progress, achievement, behaviour or welfare of their son or daughter. Parents are encouraged to make those concerns known to staff so that they can be addressed in partnership with the school.*

*At BCS we aim to:*

- *Take all concerns and complaints seriously*
- *Make every effort to deal with complaints informally and at an early stage, in the spirit of partnership*
- *Resolve all complaints within 28 working days of the complaint being received and notify the complainant of the outcome*
- *Ensure that complaints are dealt with in line with the procedures set out in this document*
- *Ensure that complaints are resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils*
- *Ensure that, where appropriate, a full and fair investigation of the issue is undertaken*
- *Ensure that no-one, including pupils, are penalised for making a complaint in good faith*
- *Keep a written record, for at least three years, of all complaints, the action taken and at what stage they were resolved. (Note: This information is provided to Ofsted at their request)*
- *Review regularly at senior leadership level the written record of complaints and their outcomes*
- *Keep confidential all records relating to individual complaints except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them*

*A record of formal complaints and their outcomes are kept by the Principal / Head of Prep in their offices and are reviewed regularly by the Principal.*

*The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the last school year (2010-2011) was one.*

*Pupils are not penalised for raising a concern or making a complaint in good faith.*

Parents are also free to make a complaint to ISI (or, regarding boarding welfare or EYFS, to OFSTED) if they so wish. Relevant contact details are set out below.

**ISI:**

CAP House,  
9-12 Long Lane,  
London  
EC1A 9HA  
Phone: 020 7600 0100  
e-mail via the ISI website: [www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)

**OFSTED:**

Royal Exchange Buildings,  
St Ann's Square,  
Manchester  
M2 7LA  
Phone: 0300 123 4666  
e-mail [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

*This policy is applicable to all pupils in our school including our boarders and those in our EYFS setting and the school is fully committed to ensuring that the application of this policy is non-discriminatory in line with the UK Equality Act (2010). Further details are available in the school's Equal Opportunity Policy document.*

*Copies of this document are available to staff, pupils, parents and the parents of prospective pupils on the school's website and paper copies are available on request from the school office and should be read in conjunction with the following documents: UCST Whistleblowing Policy, written records of complaints.*

*This document is reviewed annually by the Vice Principal at the Senior School and the Head of Prep at the Prep School or as events or legislation change requires. The next scheduled date for review is January 2013.*

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### **3. Key Personnel**

The Complaints procedure in the Senior school is coordinated by the Vice Principal, Peter Harris

The Complaints procedure in the Prep school is coordinated by the Head of Prep, Kay Smith

The Complaints procedure in the EYFS is coordinated by the Head of Prep, Kay Smith

### **4. Procedures**

#### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

All staff have a responsibility to ensure that complaints are dealt with under the terms of this policy. To that end, staff should be aware of the procedures so that they know what to do if they receive a complaint.

As part of their role, the Complaints Coordinator and the Head of Prep are required to prepare an annual report for the LGB.

The Principal has overall responsibility for the management of complaints and, together with the LGB, responsibility for the publication and implementation of the formal complaints procedure.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION AND PROCEDURES**

##### **The complaints procedure:**

- Explains how a concern or a complaint can be made and to whom
- Sets out the importance of being able to deal with concerns at an early stage and using informal processes
- Sets out clearly the stages to be used in dealing with a complaint and the way the complaint will be investigated and recorded
- Sets out clear timetables for the management of the complaint

The formal complaints procedure has three stages:

Stage one: Complaint heard by staff member (though not the subject of the complaint);

Stage two: Complaint heard by Head/Principal;

Stage three: Complaint heard by LGB's Complaints Appeal Panel.

### **INFORMAL RESOLUTION**

It is recognised that parents will, from time to time, have normal and legitimate concerns about the progress, achievement, behaviour or welfare of their son or daughter. Parents are encouraged to make those concerns known to staff so that they can be addressed in partnership with Bournemouth Collegiate School. Almost invariably, the sooner such concerns are raised the easier it is for an appropriate resolution to be found.

A concern in the Senior School may be raised with any member of staff. This would normally be a pupil's Form Tutor, the AP Pastoral Care (Alison Davies) or the Complaints Coordinator, Vice Principal Peter Harris. In the Prep School, this would normally be the Form Tutor, the Key Person or the Head of Prep Kay Smith.

Most issues raised are informal and handled on this basis. These matters are often discussed informally with the Chair of the Local Governing Body (LGB) but they are not formally recorded and reported at this stage. If the concern cannot be resolved within 6 working days, or in the event that the parent is not satisfied, with the response made and wishes to escalate the concern to the level of a formal complaint, they should make this clear in writing, and the letter or email should be headed "Formal Complaint to Bournemouth Collegiate School". This will trigger the formal complaints process described below.

If the complaint concerns the Principal, the Complaints Coordinator would normally refer the complainant to the Chair of the Local Governing Body (LGB).

### **STAGE ONE: COMPLAINT HEARD BY STAFF MEMBER**

A formal complaint should be in writing and sent to the Complaints Coordinator/Head of Prep. If a parent has difficulty in putting the complaint in writing, they are invited to make an appointment with the Complaints Coordinator/Head of Prep who will help.

The Complaints Coordinator will make a written record of the complaint, the date on which it was received, the date on which the matter was dealt with and the outcome of the procedure. The

Complaints Coordinator/Head of Prep will normally investigate the complaint. However, if they are directly involved in the complaint, parents may take their complaint to the Principal.

**If an investigation is needed, the investigating member of staff will:**

- Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- Meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or if further information is necessary)
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or against whom the complaint has been made, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- Conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Keep notes of any interviews
- Present relevant information and recommendation for resolution to the Complaints coordinator/Head of Prep School.

If the matter cannot be resolved within 3 working days following receipt of the written complaint or in the event that a parent is not satisfied with the outcome, they are advised to take the complaint to the second stage of this procedure.

**STAGE TWO: COMPLAINT HEARD BY PRINCIPAL**

If the parents wish to take their complaint to this stage they should put their complaint in writing to the Principal. The Principal will invite the parent in to further discuss the nature of the complaint.

The decision in respect of this complaint will normally be made within 6 working days of the Principal receiving the complaint. If the Principal feels that it is necessary, within reason, to ask for additional time, the parent will be informed.

If parents are not satisfied with the outcome of this stage or if they are dissatisfied with the way in which their complaint has been handled by the Principal they may take their complaint to the third stage of this procedure.

**STAGE THREE: APPEAL**

The third stage of the formal complaints procedure is the LGB's Appeals Panel.

The appeals procedure is involved when a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the second stage of the procedure or with the handling of a complaint by the Principal. The complainant is required to put their complaint in writing to the Chair of the LGB (Mrs Nina Dunne). It is important that the complainant should set the matter out in sufficient detail.

On receiving a written complaint under the appeals procedure, a hearing by an Appeals Panel will be arranged within 10 working days. The complainant may attend the hearing in person and may be accompanied if they so wish; in which case they are required to notify the clerk, Joanne Dawes, of the name and occupation of such a person: [joanne.dawes@bournemouthcollegiateschool.co.uk](mailto:joanne.dawes@bournemouthcollegiateschool.co.uk)

## **THE COMPOSITION OF THE APPEALS PANEL**

Care will be taken not to involve the whole LGB as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

The panel will consist of at least three people, who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, at least one of whom will be independent of the management and running of BCS and UCST in any way. The panel may choose their own chair.

The appeal hearing will be as independent and impartial as possible. No LGB member will sit on the panel if they have had prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the composition of the panel, the LGB will try to ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation. Parents are allowed to attend and be accompanied at an appeal panel hearing if they wish.

## **THE PROCESS OF THE APPEALS PANEL HEARING**

The clerk will serve as the contact point between the complainant and the LGB members of the appeal panel. The aim of the hearing, which will be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts, set out the findings and make recommendations that will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.

The panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. Care will be taken to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.

The panel may:

- 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 Bournemouth Collegiate School's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur

A copy of any findings and recommendations are sent by email or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about.

A copy of any findings and recommendations are made available for inspection at the school by the UCST board and the Principal / Head of Prep.

A written record is kept of all complaints and whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing. The record of all written complaints and their outcomes is reviewed regularly by the Principal / Head of Prep so that patterns can be identified and appropriate interventions made.

All records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE PANEL**

The clerk, Joanne Dawes, will be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:

- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient or acceptable to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- invite both the complainant and the Principal / Head of Prep to put their position in writing for the panel to consider
- collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing
- record the proceedings
- notify all parties of the panel's decision

The Chair of the panel has a key role, ensuring that:

- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption
- written material is seen by all parties
- key findings of fact are made and each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy
- the panel is open minded and acting independently

## **NOTIFICATION OF THE PANEL'S FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Chair of the panel will ensure that the LGB, the Principal /Head of Prep the complainant, and where relevant, the person complained about are notified of the panel's findings and recommendations, in writing, with the panel's response within 3 working days of the hearing. A

copy of the findings and recommendations are made available for inspection at the school by the UCST board.

The decision of the Appeals Panel is final.

## **COMPLAINTS DIRECTED AGAINST THE PRINCIPAL**

This procedure specifies how a complaint will be dealt with if it concerns the conduct of the Principal or a member of the LGB, or where these have been involved in the issue previously. For each complaint being dealt with under the formal complaints procedure, UCST Central Office will carry out the investigation in line with UCST policy.

## **DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

The process of listening to and resolving complaints will contribute to the improvement of BCS. When individual complaints are heard, BCS may identify underlying issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the Senior Leadership Team and LGB will be seen as a useful tool in evaluating BCS's performance. The record of all written complaints and their outcomes is reviewed regularly by the Senior Leadership Team to identify whether review or change in practice is needed and so that patterns can be identified and appropriate interventions made.

