

# Beech Lodge

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### Introduction

Beech Lodge School is passionately committed to providing the best teaching and pastoral care it can for its children. However, if parents do have a concern or complaint, they can expect that it will be dealt with sensitively, fairly and in a timely manner as detailed below.

### Definition of Complaint

“A complaint is any matter about which a parent expresses dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem and seeks action by the school”

This policy applies to all parents of current registered pupils. It also applies to the parents of past pupils if the complaint was originally raised when the child was a registered pupil. The complaints procedure does not apply to prospective parents.

The School’s aim is to resolve every concern or complaint informally, where possible. If a matter cannot be resolved informally, the matter may proceed as a formal complaint.

### Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

If parents have a concern or complaint, this should be addressed initially to the Class teacher, or the Phase Leader most closely connected with the issue. It is hoped that the matter will be resolved informally at this stage. Staff may need to consult with others in order that they can resolve matters effectively and to the satisfaction of the parents. If this is the case, they will get back to the parents within 5 working days.

Complaints made directly to the Head will usually be referred to the Class teacher/relevant Staff member unless the Head deems it appropriate for the matter to be dealt with by the Head personally.

If the complaint is against the Head, parents should address their complaint to the Proprietor and proceed through the three stage Complaints Procedure, as necessary. (This formerly said jumping straight to Stage 3)

A written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received will be kept by the School.

Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days or as soon as reasonably practicable during school holidays, or where parents are not satisfied with the response to the complaint raised informally, parents may proceed with a formal complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

## **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

If a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents may put their complaint in writing to the Head, making sure they include the term 'Formal Complaint' in their letter or email. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Head will either meet with or speak to the parents concerned, normally within 5 working days (not 10) of receiving the complaint or as soon as reasonably practicable during school holidays, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

A senior member of staff delegated by the Head may investigate all written complaints.

Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. The parents will be informed of this decision in writing together with reasons for the decision as soon as reasonably practicable (and normally within 5, not 20, working days of receipt of the written complaint, where possible).

Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept by the School. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the Regulatory Requirements of the Independent School Standards, where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection, or where any other legal obligation prevails.

If the parents are not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with the formal procedure, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

## **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3, they must write to the Proprietor setting out in full the details of the complaint normally within 10 working days of receiving the Head's decision, or immediately if the complaint is against the Head.

Parents' letters should give full details of the complaint and enclose all relevant supporting documents. A request for a hearing will normally only be considered if parents have invoked Stage 1 and 2, however if the complaint is against the Head, parents reserve the right to invoke Stage 3 immediately.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Proprietor. The Proprietor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 working days of receiving the complaint or as soon as reasonably practicable during school holidays.

Parents may be accompanied to the hearing if they wish by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

The Panel will review the Head's decision. The Panel will not consider any new complaints that have not been raised as part of the initial complaint. After due consideration of all facts the Panel considers relevant, the Panel will reach a decision on the balance of probabilities as to whether or not the complaint is made out. If the complaint is not made out, the Panel will dismiss the complaint. If the complaint is made out, the Panel will uphold the complaint and may make recommendations.

The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it normally within 10 working days of the panel hearing.

If the Panel deems it necessary, the Proprietor will arrange for the complaint to be further investigated. The Proprietor will inform the parents on the day after the panel hearing and a revised response date will be set.

If for any reason the Panel is unavoidably adjourned and reconvened, the Proprietor will inform the parents that day or no later than the day after the scheduled panel hearing, giving reasons for the adjournment and a new date for the panel hearing will be set.

The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise confirmed in writing to the parents, the Head, the Proprietor and, where relevant, the person complained of. The Panel's decisions, findings and any recommendations will also be made available for inspection on the School premises.

In the unfortunate event that parents are not satisfied with the Panel's decision, they will be advised that their final recourse should be with:

The Secretary of State for Education,  
Department for Education,  
Piccadilly Gate,  
Store Street,  
Manchester,  
M1 2WD

### **Recording Complaints**

A written record (which will be kept for at least three years) will be kept of all complaints in a Complaints File and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage (stage 2) or proceeded to a panel hearing (stage 3). The proprietor will review this record of formal complaints at least annually.

In addition, a separate log of all informal complaints will be kept on site. This will be reviewed periodically by the Head and SLT to identify patterns and trends.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 25(k) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2010 where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection, or where any other legal obligation prevails.

The School will provide ISI, upon request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period and the action taken and conclusion reached.

*March 2017*

*Reviewed by Board of Advisors March 2019*

*Review Date: July 2024*