
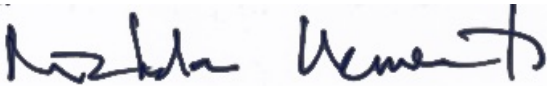


BRONTE SCHOOL



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (INCLUDING EYFS)

	Date	Signed
Date reviewed	Sept 2019	 (Mrs. Emma Wood, Headmistress)
Ratified by Proprietor	Sept 2019	 (Mr. Nicholas Clements, Proprietor)
Date of next review	SEPT 2021	

1. Introduction, Guiding Principles, Stages of Complaint

This policy sets out the procedures to be followed in cases where a matter of concern arises. For the purposes of this policy, a 'parent' shall include a guardian or any other person with parental responsibility for a child at the school. This policy applies to complaints from parents of current pupils and to parents of former pupils if the complaint was initially raised whilst the pupil was on the school roll.

These procedures can be made available in large print or other more accessible format, if required. If assistance is required with making a complaint, for example because of a disability, parents should contact Nicky Mason (Office Manager), who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements. These procedures are made available to parents on our website and upon request.

Separate procedures apply if the Headmistress expels or asks a pupil to leave and the parents seek a Review by the Advisory Board of that decision.

The school's guiding principles in complaint resolution are:

- to give careful and prompt consideration to all complaints
- to seek to achieve a just and fair outcome, taking due account of all relevant evidence
- to attempt to resolve complaints through dialogue and mutual understanding, and at as early a stage as possible

The policy outlines three stages of complaint.

- Informal Resolution
- Formal Resolution
- Panel Hearing

Where timescales are given in 'working days', this is defined as Monday - Friday during term time (the dates of which are available on our website). Complaints received during holiday periods will be dealt with as soon as is practicable but are likely to take longer to resolve due to the unavailability of relevant staff. Under such circumstances the complainant will be notified of any extension to the published time scales when the complaint is acknowledged.

If parents wish to know the number of formal complaints received in the preceeding year, this information is available on request from the Headmistress.

2. **Stage 1: Informal Resolution**

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns can be resolved quickly and informally. Parents with cause for concern or complaint should feel free to talk directly to a member of staff, to telephone, or write with the details of the issue that concerns them. In the first instance, it is usually best to address a concern to the class teacher or Head of Phase, as they are often best placed to resolve the matter quickly. The parent may also refer a matter to the Deputy Head or Headmistress, either directly or after an initial discussion with the class teacher.

We will acknowledge a written notification of a concern by telephone, email or by letter within two working days of receipt. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the appropriate member of staff will arrange to speak with the complainant or invite them to a meeting within five working days of acknowledgement. This meeting may prompt further investigation or wider consultation but, in this event, this stage of the complaints process should be completed within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.

Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days of acknowledgement or in the event that the parent and member of staff fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the parents will be advised to proceed with the complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

3. **Stage 2: Formal Resolution**

If a complaint has not been resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should make a formal complaint to the Headmistress. This must be done in writing, stating explicitly that they wish to invoke the formal complaints procedure.

Formal complaints will be acknowledged in writing by the Headmistress within five days of being received. In most cases, the Headmistress will meet or speak to the parents concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary, however, for the Headmistress to conduct an investigation. Once the Headmistress is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing, no later than 15 working days after the formal complaint was acknowledged. The Headmistress will give reasons for the decision reached.

Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept. The complainant will be informed if due to exceptional circumstances any additional time is necessary to complete the investigation.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure.

Alternative procedure for handling formal complaints about the Headmistress

Parents wishing to make a complaint about the Headmistress may do by writing to the Proprietor, Nicholas Clements, at 7 Pelham Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 0HN. The Proprietor will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within five working days, indicating what action is being taken and the likely time scale. The procedures and time scales that apply to any other formal complaint (see above) will be followed.

If the parent is dissatisfied with the response to the complaint, the parent can request that the complaint be referred to a Complaints Panel under Stage 3 of this procedure.

4. Stage 3: Panel Hearing

If a parent wishes to proceed to Stage 3 (following a failure to reach a resolution earlier in the complaints process) they should write to the Proprietor who is responsible for making the arrangements for convening a Panel Hearing. The letter should be addressed to Mr Nicholas Clements at the school address. In the written request for a Panel Hearing, the parent should state the grounds of the complaint and the outcome desired. They should also send a list of all the documents that they believe to be in the school's possession that they consider relevant in the matter and that they wish the Panel to see.

The Proprietor will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days and will schedule a meeting of the Panel within 10 working days thereafter. The Panel will consist of at least three people appointed by the Proprietor not directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The complainant may be accompanied by a friend or relative, but legal representation is not usually appropriate.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parent's complaint immediately 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 the matters discussed at the hearing, the Panel will reach a decision. The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations shall be confirmed in writing to the parent and, where relevant, to the person complained about within five working days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headmistress.

5. Record keeping and confidentiality

A written record will be kept by the Headmistress of all formal complaints, including any action(s) taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether it is upheld) and of whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or progressed to a panel hearing.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except as required by the school by paragraph 33 (k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014; namely, where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them, or where any other legal obligations prevail. In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

6. Complaints about the fulfilment of EYFS requirements

Additional regulatory requirements apply to written complaints regarding the fulfilment of EYFS requirements. Specifically, the complainant will be notified of the outcome of any investigation by the school into their complaint within 28 days. The school's record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

In the event of dissatisfaction with the above actions, the complainant may refer the matter to the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) or to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The contact details for these organisations are available on their websites, www.ofsted.gov.uk and www.isi.net. Current e-mail and contact number for Ofsted are enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk and 0300 123 4666, and for ISI concerns@isi.net and 0207 6000100.