



## **Complaints Policy and Procedure**

<i>Date of review: Summer 2025</i>	<i>Policy Holder: Headmaster</i>
<i>Review cycle: Three Years</i>	<i>Date of next review: Summer 2028</i>

*This policy also applies to the EYFS and after school and holiday clubs.*

### **Introduction**

*At Great Ballard, the happiness, health and welfare of every child is of paramount importance. We also aim to help each child to achieve their full potential both in and out of the classroom.*

*However, there will be occasions when parents may have a complaint, and they can expect it to be taken seriously and treated by the school in accordance with this procedure.*

*Copies of this Policy & Procedure are available to all parents and prospective parents for viewing and/or downloading on the school's website and a hard copy is available from the school office. In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulation 2014, Great Ballard will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of the Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.*

### **Pupil Complaints**

*The school values pupil voice and encourages students to raise any complaints at first with their tutor/class teacher, then their Head of Section (Pre-Prep, Prep, Senior) and finally with the appropriate Deputy (Academic, Pastoral, Senior). The Head teacher is also always available to listen and help.*

### **The difference between a concern and a complaint**

*A “concern” may be treated as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”.*

*A “complaint” may be generally recognised as an “expression or statement of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem, about actions taken or the lack of action”. Any action about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school is considered to be a complaint.*

*Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. There may also be other circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.*

*Staff take all concerns seriously and they are recorded and actioned at point of receipt and logged by senior staff (e.g. Senior Deputy, Pastoral Deputy, Head of Prep, Head of Pre Prep, Business Manager) who meet regularly to look for patterns. They make every effort to resolve them at the earliest possible stage. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated confidentially. A child will never be penalised for a complaint raised in good faith.*

*If a complaint concerns safeguarding or child protection issues, please also refer to the school's Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy. The scope of this policy does not include staff grievances or disciplinary procedures, or parents of prospective pupils.*

### **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

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

*If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's form teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away to the parents' satisfaction and within 48 hours. If the form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult their Head of Section (Pre-Prep, Prep, Senior) and finally the appropriate Deputy (Pastoral, Senior). The Headmaster is also always available to listen and help.*

*Complaints made directly to a member of the Senior Leadership Team will be discussed with the relevant form teacher but will be dealt with by the member of the Senior Leadership Team.*

*The form teacher 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 five working days, or in the event that the form teacher 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.*

*If the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to Mrs Sue Jay, Chair of the Board of Governance whose contact details are available from the School Office on request.*

### **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

*If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint formally in writing (email, letter or even a transcribed phone call) to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.*

*In most cases, the Headmaster will contact the parents concerned, normally within two working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter, or to arrange a meeting. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.*

*It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations; ideally, the complaint will be resolved within 14 working days of the written complaint initially being received by the school.*

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

*Once the Headmaster 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. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.*

If the complaint is against the Head, the complaint should be made to the Chair of the Board of Governance. The Chair of the Board of Governance will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the references to the Head (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of the Board of Governance to determine the complaint against the Head.

*If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure. At this point the school may offer, in advance of a Panel Hearing, an independent mediator to meet with the parents in order to try and resolve the complaint. The cost of which will be at the school's expense.*

### ***Stage 3 – Panel Hearing***

*If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should formally write to Mrs Sue Jay, Chair of the Board of Governance within 5 working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to reply on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal. Please pass this letter to the Headmaster's PA, marked Strictly Private and Confidential and for the attention of Mrs Sue Jay, Chair of the Board of Governance.*

*The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The panel will be convened by Mrs Sue Jay and made up of at least three members not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one or more of which will be independent of the school management. Mrs Jay will acknowledge receiving the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within ten working days.*

*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 not later than two days prior to the hearing.*

*The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The identity of the companion should be confirmed to the Panel as soon as possible and by no later than 2 working days before the hearing. The panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.*

A note-taker will attend the hearing to take a note. This will not be a verbatim note but an accurate reflection of what was discussed. Notes of the hearing will be shared with attendees as soon as practicable after the hearing. To the extent there is any disagreement about the content of those notes or further comments from the parties, these will be considered by and, where possible, resolved by the Chair. A copy of any comments on the notes will be appended to the notes.

The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.

*If possible, the panel will resolve the parents' 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 all facts, they consider relevant, the panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:*

- *Dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;*
- *Uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part;*
- *Make recommendations.*

*The panel will then write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it within 5 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the panel will be final. The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmaster, the Proprietor, the Stage 2 decision-taker and, where relevant, the person complained of.*

### ***Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints***

*All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.*

*It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible. The School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 20 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 working days.*

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay. The School expects parents to engage in the process in a reasonable, constructive and responsive manner to help ensure matters can be dealt with in a timely way and in line with the targets set out in this Procedure.

### ***Confidentiality and Recording***

*Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the Stage 1 informal stage, the formal stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a Panel hearing (Stage 3) and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).*

*The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice (found on website). When dealing with complaints, the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information which is likely to include the following:*

- *Date when issue was raised*
- *Name of parent*
- *Name of pupil*
- *Description of the issue*
- *Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)*
- *Witness statements (if appropriate)*
- *Name and contact details of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage*
- *Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including email and records of phone conversations)*
- *Notes/minutes of the hearing, and*
- *The Panel's written decision.*

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy.

*The school will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation.*

*A written record (kept for at least 3 years) will be kept of all complaints including:*

- *Whether they are resolved during an informal meeting or proceed to a panel hearing.*
- *Action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).*

*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 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools' Standards) Regulations 2003, where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector, there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (e.g., in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.*

Parents of EYFS pupils should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted.

Great Ballard will provide ISI/Ofsted, 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 such complaints will be kept in accordance with its Privacy Notice.

Parents may also contact Ofsted by telephone on 0300 123 4666 or email on [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) The Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI) may also be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or via their website at [www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net).

Parents of Early Years Foundation Stage pupils may also make a complaint to Ofsted and the Independent Schools' Inspectorate in respect of the School's EYFS provision. Details of how to do so are available from the office. A record of any complaint in respect of EYFS will be kept for three years. The school must provide Ofsted and 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 the complaint.

**Number of formal complaints reaching stage 3 of this policy**

2020/21	0
2021/22	0
2022/23	0
2023/24	0
2024/25	0

**GREAT  
BALLARD**

Eartham House, Eartham, Nr. Chichester, Sussex, PO18 0LR  
Telephone 01243 814236 Email [office@greatballard.co.uk](mailto:office@greatballard.co.uk)  
[www.greatballard.co.uk](http://www.greatballard.co.uk)