



**GREAT
BALLARD**

Complaints Policy and Procedures

Policy Information	
Date of last review	Summer 2026
Date of next review	Summer 2029
Review Cycle	3 Years
Policy Manager	Headmaster

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1. 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.

2. Aims

The aims of this policy and related procedures are to provide a framework for the resolution of complaints which:

- allows for their resolution informally and sets out the School's formal procedures where this is not achievable;
- is easily accessible and publicised, simple to understand and use and impartial and non-adversarial;
- enables a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respects people's desire for confidentiality;
- addresses all the points at issue and provides an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary, and;
- provides information to the School's senior leadership / management team so that services can be improved.

3. Scope and application

This policy applies to the whole school including the Early Years Foundation Stage (**EYFS**).

This policy applies to any expression of dissatisfaction however made about actions taken, or a lack of action, by the School where the parent seeks action by the School.

This policy does not apply to exclusions, which is covered within the School's behaviour and discipline policy. However, parents of pupils who have been excluded may wish to make a complaint as per this policy.

This policy applies to complaints from parents of current pupils, ie. those for whom education is being provided at the school. It does not apply to prospective pupils. In the case of former pupils, it does not cover complaints from parents of pupils who have left voluntarily or as a result of being excluded, except where the complaints process was started when the pupil was still being educated at the school.

Unless required under safeguarding legislation, regardless of whether or not the complaint is upheld, parents are not entitled to details of any related sanctions imposed on staff, pupils or parents.

4. Regulatory framework

This policy has been prepared to meet the School's responsibilities under:

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014;
- *Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* (DfE, December 2023);

- Education and Skills Act 2008;
- Childcare Act 2006;
- Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR);
- Equality Act 2010

This policy should be read alongside the parental contract, terms and conditions and other relevant documents.

5. Responsibility statement and allocation of tasks

The Proprietor has overall responsibility for all matters which are the subject of this policy.

To ensure the efficient discharge of its responsibilities under this policy, the Proprietor has allocated the following tasks:

Task	Allocated to	When / frequency of review
Keeping the policy up to date and compliant with the law and best practice	• Business Manager	As required, and at least termly
Monitoring the implementation of the policy, relevant risk assessments and any action taken in response and evaluating effectiveness	• Headmaster	As required, and at least termly
Maintaining up to date records of all information created in relation to the policy and its implementation as required by the GDPR	• Headmaster	As required, and at least termly
Formal review	• Headmaster and Business Manager	As required, and at least once every 2 years

6. Publication and availability

This policy is published on the School website, and a hard copy is available from the School office on request. The policy can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required.

Information regarding the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure of this policy (stage 2 and 3) during the preceding school year is available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate. This information is included at the end of this policy, which is updated annually.

7. Definitions and interpretation

References to **working days** mean Monday to Friday, when the School is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website. In the event that the application of this definition is likely to introduce excessive delays, due to intervening School holidays, a sensible approach by all parties should be to take reasonable steps so as to minimise any hardship or unfairness arising from such delays.

Timescales for each stage of the complaints procedure are set out below in the relevant paragraphs.

It is expected that the management of every complaint will progress in line with the timescales detailed in this policy.

The School aims to resolve all complaints efficiently and promptly and parents are encouraged to bring any matter causing concern to the School's attention as soon as possible.

Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay to the timescales for a stage of the complaints procedure, the School will notify the parents and inform them of the new timescales without delay.

8. 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.

9. Management of complaints

The School's policy allows for complaints to be considered at three stages:

Stage 1: Informal raising of a complaint. Further details of this procedure are set out in [Appendix 1. Stage 1 – Informal Resolution](#)

Stage 2: A formal complaint in writing. Further details of this procedure are set out in [Appendix 2. Stage 2 – Formal Resolution](#).

Stage 3: Reference to a complaints panel. Further details of this procedure are set out in [Appendix 3. Stage 3 – Panel Hearing](#)

Separate procedures apply if the Head permanently excludes or requires the removal of a pupil from the School and the parents seek a review of that decision. These policies can be found on the school website or are available on request.

10. Complaints to Ofsted and the Independent Schools Inspectorate

Parents of children in the School's Early Years Foundation Stage have the right to contact Ofsted and / or ISI if they believe the School is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

All complaints pertaining to EYFS will be dealt with within 28 days.

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 4666 or at enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

ISI can be contacted at concerns@isi.net or on 020 7600 0100.

11. Anonymous Complaints

The School will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Head or the Proprietor, as appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

12. 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.

13. Time Limit for Bringing a Complaint

All Complainants should notify a complaint as soon as practicable. Complaints submitted 3 months after the issue the subject of the complaint (or where there is a series of associated issues the last of

these issues) will not be considered unless there are exceptional circumstances. These may include (but are not limited to) subsequent information about the complaint coming to light and a valid explanation of why it was not possible to give notification of the complaint sooner, where the complaint is of an especially serious matter or where there is reasonable justification for why the Complainant has been unable to raise the complaint before this time. In such cases, the person dealing with the complaint in accordance with the procedure set out below shall determine whether the complaint should be considered.

14. Managing Serial and Persistent Complaints or Complaint Campaigns

The School will do its utmost to be helpful to people who make contact with a complaint, concern or request for information. However, there may be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints' procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant attempts to re-open the same issue, the School will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed. If the complainant contacts the School again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the School may choose not to respond. However, this will not occur until the complainant has completed the three stages of the complaints' procedure.

The application of a 'serial or persistent' designation for a complaint will be against the subject of the complaint rather than the complainant themselves.

In the event of a "complaint campaign" (that is, a complaint from three or more separate individuals (whether or not connected with the School) which all relate to the same or substantially the same issue and are all (or the initial three complaints are) received within a four week period, the School may deviate from the procedure set out in this policy and instead send a template response to all complainants.

15. 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.

16. 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

17. Appendix 1. 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).

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.

17.1. Informal complaints about the Headmaster

If the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to Mr Mike Piercy, Chair of the Board of Directors whose contact details are available from the School Office on request.

18. Appendix 2. 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.

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.

18.1 Formal Complaints about the Headmaster

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.

19. Appendix 3. Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should formally write to Mr Mike Piercy, Chair of the Board of Directors 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 rely 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 Mr Mike Piercy, Chair of the Board of Directors.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The panel will be convened by Mr Mike Piercy 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. Mr Mike Piercy 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 Board of Directors 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.

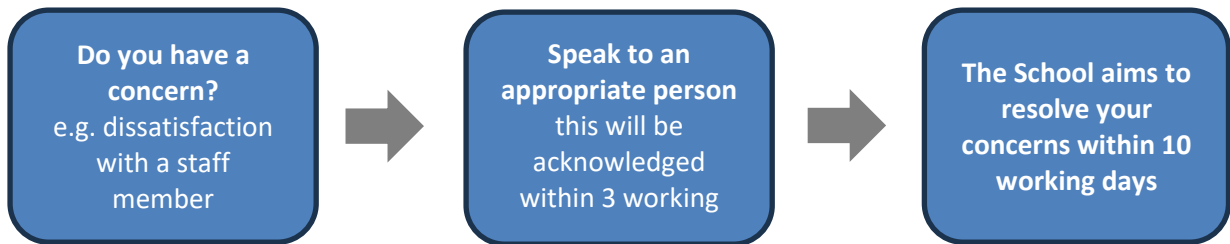
After due consideration of all facts, they consider relevant, the panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:

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

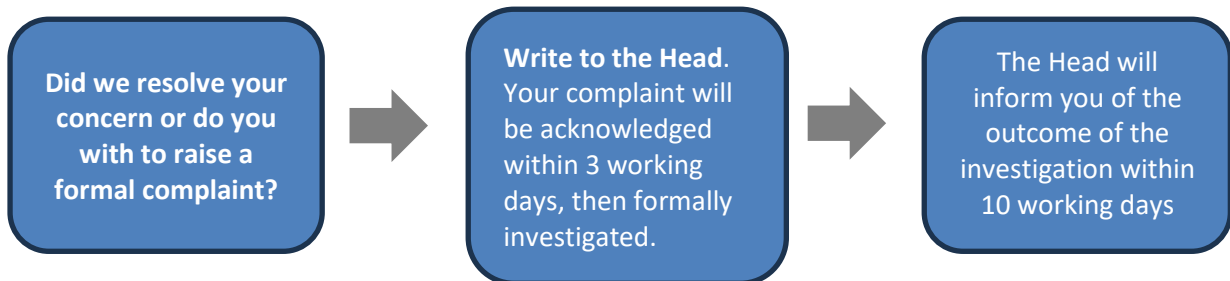
The panel will then write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it within 5 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the panel will be final. The panel's 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.

20. Appendix 4. Flowchart for how to raise a concern or complaint

Stage 1



Stage 2



Stage 3



If your complaint is about the Headmaster, please write to the Chair of the Board of Directors.