



ST BERNARD'S PREPARATORY SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Pentecost 2018

St. Bernard's Preparatory School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. It is our aim that all pupils fulfil their potential.

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Complaints Procedure

Mission Statement

With God as our shelter and Christ as our guide, the mission of St Bernard's Preparatory School is to educate towards love and service to God, each other and the wider community. Through our broad balanced curriculum we will develop an understanding of each faith and the values we share. We will treat each person with respect, knowing we are special and unique.

The Bernardine Cistercians, believing that Christ is the answer to all human needs and the foundation of all truth, cooperate in the apostolic mission of the Church by their whole monastic life, with its educational work. Their schools endeavour to proclaim Christ through monastic values of prayer, work, community living and unselfish service.

Introduction

This procedure is made available to parents, staff and pupils on the School website and in the School Prospectus. It is also made available to parents of pupils on request to the school office, during the school day, or by e-mail. The existence of the policy is clearly identified in the information provided for prospective pupils and parents. St. Bernard's Prep School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a concern or complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. The School's aims are concerned with meeting the needs of the pupils, parents and other stakeholders. Constant communication and feedback are crucial in monitoring standards and improving provision. Those who have concerns or complaints should feel these can be voiced and that they will be taken seriously.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction that requires a response from the school – either to explain its position or to put right what may be wrong. A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional well-being and security at stake, or when the school's stated aims or values are being ignored. A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint. Investigations will be thorough, fair and completed in a reasonable time-frame. The complainant may not be entitled to all information regarding the investigation, but will be kept informed of the process and of the decisions reached.

We use the term "complainant" to refer to the individual or individuals making the complaint. These may be one or a combination of any of the following: a parent or guardian of a pupil at the school, parents or guardians of a pupil at the school, several parents or guardians of pupils at the school, or a member of staff. This procedure encompasses the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Parents have a right to make a complaint to the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). Details of how this may be done are given at the end of this procedure. The School also has a 'whistle blowing policy' that is detailed in the staff handbook.

Pupils are never penalised for making a complaint in good faith. Complaints will be resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils. We actively encourage strong home-school links and ensure that all staff have opportunities to discuss and understand the school's response to concerns and complaints made by parents or guardians. We also ensure that any person complained against has equal rights with the person making the complaint. Where the person

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being complained about is named as the person who would be handling the complaint in these procedures, their role will be passed upwards to their Line Manager e.g. teacher to Assistant Headteacher, or Assistant Headteacher to Headmaster, Headmaster to the chair of governors. Complaints should never be made in the wider public domain, eg social media, which may prejudice or adversely impact outcomes and resolutions.

The timescales indicated in the procedures below should allow for swift resolution of complaint. There will be some circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that delay resolution; namely school holidays and other factors. It is intended that all issues will be resolved within twenty-eight (28) working days of the first complaint being made.

The Complaints Process

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

(References to number of working days refer to term-time only)

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact the most appropriate member of staff, such as the child's teacher. If the member of staff contacted cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for the member of staff to consult the Assistant Headteacher.
- The member of staff who is dealing with the matter 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 (5) working days or in the event that the member of staff 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. A note should be kept of the date a resolution was reached and the agreed nature of this.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution: Contacting the Headmaster

(References to number of working days refer to term-time only)

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headmaster will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within five (5) working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations.
- 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 Complainant(s) will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmaster will also give reasons for this decision. A written record will also be kept of when a final outcome was reached.
- Should a parent or guardian have a complaint about the Headmaster, an approach should first be made to the Chair of Governors whose contact details are: Chair of Governors, Mr Stephen Patterson, St. Bernard's Preparatory School, Hawtrey Close, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 1TB email: chair.stbernardsprep@gmail.com. This should include the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. The Governors, who are obliged to investigate the matter, will do everything possible to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school.
- If the parent or guardian is not satisfied with the outcome, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

(References to number of working days refer to term-time only)

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), or due to the nature or severity of the complaint, that they do not wish to follow stages 1 or 2 of this procedure, they should make a written formal complaint to the Chair of Governors. The matter will then be referred to the Convenor, who will be appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of 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 Governing

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Body. The Panel Convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within ten (10) 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 five (5) working days prior to the hearing.
- The complainant, who could be parents or guardians, may be accompanied to the panel hearing.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the 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 reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete, normally within five (5) working days of the Hearing. A copy of the Panel's findings, and/or any recommendation and the reasons for them are:
 - sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant, the Headmaster, the Chair of Governors and, where relevant, the person complained about;
 - available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster.
- The number of formal complaints, received in an academic year is made available to parents.

Confidentiality

- Parents and Guardians can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Such 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 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to them; or
- where any other legal obligation prevails.

Written Records and Retention

- A written record of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing is kept by the Headmaster, for a minimum of three years. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint. A written record will be also be kept when a final outcome is reached. The Trustees examine this written record on an annual basis. Ofsted will be informed of any formal complaints. Also, the number of formal complaints received in an academic year is made available to parents. The school will provide, on request to Ofsted, a written record of all complaints made during a specified period and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

Child Protection

For any complaint that involves a potential child protection issue, this must be reported immediately to the Headmaster. (See our Child Protection Policy for details of the procedure).

Complaints from External Bodies

Complaints from the public about the behaviour of a group of pupils will be dealt with on a general basis, with reminders to all about the school's expectations.

In addition to the Complaints Procedure detailed above, parents may also make a complaint to either the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) or, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), to Ofsted. The relevant contact details are:

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

Telephone: 02077768

E-mail: concerns@isi.net

Web: www.isi.net

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD.

Telephone: 03001231231

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Web: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Policy for Dealing with Complaints from Staff

St Bernard's Preparatory School aims to be a listening and responsive school. We encourage staff to inform us of their concerns while they are still minor ones, which can more easily be resolved. It is hoped that most concerns and complaints, will be resolved quickly and informally.

- All staff that have any complaint or cause for concern should bring the matter to the attention of one of the Leadership Team.
- A written record will be kept of all significant concerns and major complaints; the date on which they were received and the details of the subsequent investigation.
- All complaints will be investigated within fourteen days and a formal letter will always be written as 'closure', indicating how the issue has been dealt with and what the outcome is.
- When a member of staff is dissatisfied with the outcome and has discussed this with the Head of the Preparatory School the matter should be referred to the Clerk to the Governing Body. In the case of a contractual employment grievance, the procedures outlined in staff contracts of employment should be followed.

Legal Status:

- This policy incorporates the manner in which complaints are to be handled according to the Regulatory Requirements, Parts 6 and 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) regulations.

Applies to:

- The whole school along with the out of school care including extra curricula activities and all other activities provided by the school, inclusive of those outside of the normal school hours.
- All staff (teaching and support staff), the governors, students on placement and volunteers working in the school.

Timescale

- The process of dealing with a complaint in writing from the moment that it is received by the school to resolution will take no more than twenty eight (28) working days, except in circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that delay resolution; namely school holidays and other factors.
- The record of complaints is kept for a minimum of three years.

Availability

- The Complaints Procedure is provided in the information for prospective pupils, parents and guardians, when a parent makes an enquiry for admission to the school.
- This procedure is made available to parents, staff and pupils on the St Bernard's Preparatory School website: www.stbernardsprep.org, and in the School Prospectus. It is also made available to parents or guardians of pupils on request to the school office, during the school day, or by e-mail: info@stbernardsprep.org

Other relevant documents for Employees:

- Staff Conduct, Discipline, Grievance Policy, Whist blowing Policy, Confidentiality Policy

Monitoring and Review:

The Headmaster logs all complaints received by the school and records at which stage and how they were resolved. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint.

- The Trustees, through the Governing Body, monitor the complaints procedure, to ensure that all complaints are handled properly, taking into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and making any modifications necessary to this policy. They also make public the number of complaints,

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registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year and carry out a formal annual review of the Complaints Procedure for the purposes of monitoring.

- This is reviewed regularly by the Headmaster, along with a formal review by the Governors for the purpose of monitoring.

Signed by _____

Headmaster _____

Date _____

Chair of Governors _____

Date _____

Review date: Pentecost 2019