COMPLAINTS POLICY

Produced by: Mr J. C. Fletcher

Approved by Leadership Team on: 3rd March 2016

Approved by Personnel Committee on: 18th May 2016

Approved by Full Governing Body:

Chair: 
Signature: ____________________________
Date: 29th June 2016

Next Review Date: September 2019

ALL POLICIES CAN BE VIEWED ON ONE DRIVE OR A COPY CAN BE REQUESTED BY EMAILING office@beaconsfield.school.
1.0 Introduction

1.2 This document sets out the school’s procedure for addressing complaints. It should be used only when informal attempts to resolve problems have been unsuccessful. If you have any concerns about the school or the education provided, please discuss the matter with your child’s subject teacher, mentor or year leader at the earliest opportunity. The school considers any concerns very seriously and most problems can be resolved at this stage.

1.2 Teaching staff may be contacted either by telephone or by email. A list of telephone numbers and a list of email addresses are published on the school website. Alternatively you may telephone the main school number 01494 673450 or email office@beaconsfield.school

1.3 Please note that this procedure does not apply to issues concerning the curriculum, collective worship, admissions, exclusion appeals, decisions about your child’s special educational needs or grievances by school staff. These are the subject of separate complaints procedures. Copies of these procedures can be obtained from the school.

1.4 All other complaints are handled by the school according to the arrangements set out below. If you have a concern, we would like to know as soon as possible. Most concerns can be sorted out quickly and informally.

2.0 Aims and Objectives

2.1 The school will give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them fairly and honestly. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and aim to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

3.0 Framework of Principles

- be easily accessible and publicised.
- be simple to use and understand.
- be impartial.
- be non-adversarial.
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress.
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary.
- respect people’s desire for confidentiality, wherever possible (some information sharing may be necessary to carry out a thorough investigation).
- address all points of issue, providing an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary.
- provide information to the school’s senior management team so that services can be improved.

4.0 Formal Complaints Procedure

4.1 Stage 1

4.1.1 If you feel that a concern has not been addressed through informal discussion with the subject teacher or pastoral system and you wish to have the matter formally investigated by an appropriate person from the school, please complete a complaint form (Annex 1). If you would like help completing the form, the school will be happy to provide the assistance of someone unconnected with the complaint.

4.1.2 If the matter is about:
- the day-to-day running of the school
- the interpretation of school policies
- the actions or inactions of staff at the school
it will be investigated by the headteacher or one of his deputies nominated by them
4.1.3 If the matter is about:
- school policies as determined by the governing body
- the actions or inactions of the governing body
- the headteacher

it will be investigated by the chair of the governing body or a governor nominated by him / her. You may contact the chair of governor’s through the headteacher’s PA, either by email to office@beaconsfield.school or by telephone 01494 687953 or by writing to the school addressing the letter to the headteacher’s PA marked private and confidential.

4.1.4 The person carrying out the investigation will review the way in which the complaint has been handled by the school and ensure that the issues have been dealt with properly and fairly. He/she will normally write to you with the outcome of this process within 15 working days of receiving the complaint.

4.1.5 If it becomes apparent that the complaint is a disciplinary or capability issue, then the matter will be dealt with by following the appropriate HR procedure rather than the complaints procedure. You will be notified if this is the case with your complaint, but you are not entitled to know which procedure or the final outcome.

4.1.6 When dealing with the complaint it will be considered whether it could potentially be classed as a safeguarding or Health & Safety issue; if potentially safeguarding this will also be reported to the Schools Safeguarding officer who will report this to LADO. If Health and Safety then advice will be gained from our Health and Safety Advisors, currently Bucks County Council.

4.2 Stage 2

4.2.1 If you are not satisfied with the result from Stage 1, you may choose to refer your complaint to Stage 2 of the procedure. This must be done in writing to the school within 15 working days of the completion of Stage 1.

4.2.2 At this stage, the complaint will be considered by either the chair of governors or nominated governor, or a panel of three governors depending on who carried out the investigation in Stage 1:

4.2.3 If Stage 1 was investigated by the headteacher or a senior member of staff nominated by the headteacher, the chair of governors or nominated governor will consider the manner in which the complaint was addressed and decide whether it has been properly dealt with. The general principle is that the school should be able to produce documentary evidence to show that the complaint has received fair and proper consideration within the school’s procedure. If they have any concerns, they may ask the headteacher to re-open the investigation. The complainant will be kept informed of any delay.

4.2.4 If the complainant is not satisfied after the chair of governors or nominated governor has completed their review, a panel of two governors and an independent person will meet to consider the complaint and make a final decision about it on behalf of the governing body.

4.2.5 When Stage 1 has been investigated by the chair of governors or nominated governor, Stage 2 will be carried out by a panel of two governors and an independent person will meet to consider the complaint and make a final decision about it on behalf of the governing body.

4.2.6 In either A or B, the panel will consist of governors and an independent person who have no detailed prior knowledge of the complaint, or connection with the complainant. The meeting will normally take place within 15 working days of your request.
4.2.7 You will have the opportunity to submit written evidence on the complaint prior to the meeting of the panel and also to attend, accompanied by a friend/partner if you wish to put your case. The headteacher will be given the same opportunities. The panel will write to you with its conclusion within five working days of the meeting.

4.2.8 The decision of the panel is final. If you are still not satisfied, you may wish to put your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education.

5.0 Monitoring and Review
5.1 The governing body monitors the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The headteacher logs all formal complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure.

6.0 Availability
6.1 A copy of this procedure is available to all parents on request and is also published on the school’s website.
Summary of Complaints Procedure for Areas of Headteacher’s Responsibility

**Informal**
Complaint at school level – complainant should try and resolve the problem with the school (See Appendix One).

**Resolved?**
Yes. No further action

**No.** Complainant is given copy of the complaint form and offer of support in completing it

**Formal – Stage 1**
Form received by school

Is complaint about areas of headteacher’s responsibility or governing body’s responsibility?

**Headteacher’s responsibility – headteacher deals with matter or designates senior member of staff**

**Resolved?**
Yes. No further action

**No.** Complainant wishes to move to Stage 2 of the procedure and notifies the school in writing within 15 working days

**Formal – Stage 2**
Complaint form passes to the Chairman or nominated complaints governor to review whether the complaint has been properly dealt with

**Resolved?**
Yes. No further action
No. A governor complaints panel is set up to consider the complaint within 15 working days of the complaint being passed to the governing body (See Appendix Two). It consists of 3 governors, with no prior knowledge of the complaint, who will consider written and verbal submissions from the complainant and the headteacher.

The panel meets to consider the complaint and make a final decision on behalf of the governing body (See Appendix Three and Four).

Panel writes to complainant with its conclusion within 5 working days of the meeting.

Resolved?

Yes. No further action.

No. The complainant may decide to write to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, if they feel the school has acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedures.
Summary of Complaints Procedure for Areas of Governing Body Responsibility

Informal
Complaint at school level – complainant should try and resolve the problem with the school

Resolved?
Yes. No further action

No. Complainant is given copy of the complaint form and offer of support in completing it (See Appendix One)

Formal – Stage 1
Form received by school

Is complaint about areas of headteacher’s responsibility or governing body’s responsibility?

Governing body’s responsibility - Chairman deals with matter or designates a governor

Resolved?
Yes. No further action

No. Complainant wishes to move to Stage 2 of the procedure and notifies the school in writing within with 15 working days

Formal – Stage 2
Complaint form passes to the governing body

A governor complaints panel is set up to consider the complaint within 15 working days of the complaint being passed to the governing body. (See Appendix Two). It consists of 3 governors, with no prior knowledge of the complaint, who will consider written and verbal submissions from the complainant and Chairman of Governors (or designated governor)
The panel meets to consider the complaint and make a final decision on behalf of the governing body (See Appendix Three and Four)

Panel writes to complainant with its conclusion within 5 working days of the meeting

Resolved?

Yes. No further action

No. The complainant may decide to write to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, if they feel the school has acted unreasonably or not followed the correct procedures
Appendix 1 - Example of a complaint form

COMPLAINTS FORM
Please complete and return to office@beaconsfield.school (for the attention of the Headteacher’s PA) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name: ____________________________ Student’s name: _______________________

Your relationship to the student: _____________________________________________

Address: __________________________ Day time Telephone: _______________

________________________________ Evening Telephone: _______________

Postcode: __________________________

Please give details of your complaint:

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?</th>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you attached any paperwork? Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If attaching paperwork, please give details of paperwork:</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature: _____________________________________</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date: ____________________________</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official Use:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date Acknowledgement Sent:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By whom:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaint Referred To:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2 – Establishing a Complaints Panel

The governing body should agree the composition of the complaint panel at the first meeting of the governing body each year. It is recommended that the names of 4 or 5 governors are agreed from whom a panel of three may be drawn.

There are several points which any governor sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember:

- It is important that the hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make-up of the panel, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.

- The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.

- An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.

- Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

- The governors sitting on the panel need to be aware of the complaints procedure.
Appendix 3 – Remit of the Complaints Panel

The panel needs to consider whether the complaint:

- relates to a decision taken by the headteacher, member of staff or the governing body
- is about the way a complaint or concern was handled

If the complaint was in relation to a decision taken by the headteacher or member of staff, the panel will need to consider whether:

**A.** it was a decision within the headteacher’s responsibility or

**B.** an area where the governing body have responsibility, or share responsibility but have delegated this to the headteacher.

If the complaint relates to **A**, the panel can:

- consider the manner in which the complaint was addressed but not consider an alternative outcome
- recommend changes to the school’s systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

If the complaint relates to **B**, the panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school’s systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.
Appendix 4 - Checklist for a Panel Hearing

IF FOR ANY REASON THIS PROCEDURE CANNOT BE FOLLOWED:

The governing body, in consultation with the LA will put in place an alternative fair process.

The panel needs to take the following points into account, whilst ensuring that the hearing is conducted in as an informal manner as possible:

- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The headteacher is then invited to explain the school’s actions and be followed by the school’s witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The headteacher is then invited to sum up the school’s actions and response to the complaint.
- The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within five working days.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
Appendix 5 – The Role of the Chair of the Panel

The Chair of the Panel has a key role, ensuring that:

- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are made;
- parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- the panel is open minded and acting independently;
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
- Written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises all parties must be given the opportunity to consider and comment on it.