



## COMPLAINTS/CONCERNS PROCEDURE (PARENTS)

Reviewed by (Administration Manager): .....

Date: .....

Approved by the Board of Trustees on:.....

Review Date: .....

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## COMPLAINTS/CONCERNS PROCEDURE (Parents)

### Introduction

Bristol Steiner School aims to provide quality teaching and pastoral care to its pupils. However, if parents do have a concern or complaint about any aspect or area of the school, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with the following procedure. If a formal complaint is raised, a formal response will be given.

**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.**

### Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

We will endeavor to resolve concerns and complaints quickly and informally.

If parents have a concern or complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Play Group or Kindergarten teacher, Class teacher or Guardian. In most cases the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means. If the Class teacher or Guardian cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult another colleague who teaches the class or alternatively the Kindergarten/Lower/Upper School Chairperson.

If the complaint is about the child's own teacher then parents are advised to discuss this with the Education Coordinator, who will act as intermediary, as appropriate.

If the complaint concerns a teacher other than the Class teacher or Guardian, it is advisable to first speak to the child's class teacher or to arrange to meet the teacher about whom you have the concern and the child's Class teacher/Guardian together, which in most cases will resolve the situation. If it concerns a member of the admin or support staff, speak to the Administrator.

In many cases the school will call an informal meeting between the parents and the teachers/staff concerned, perhaps with the another colleague present to act as an objective listening ear and to take simple notes of the concern and proposals for resolution as well as the conclusion of the discussion. Both the parents and the school should keep a copy.

Should the complaint be of a pastoral nature, the KG/Class teacher/Guardian may seek advice from an appropriate colleague or the Child Protection Officer. This person may be the second person in a meeting relating to the concern.

In the event that the parties concerned fail to reach a satisfactory resolution by informal means, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with the formal complaints procedure.

### Stage 2 – Formal Resolution - Procedure

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis (or is of a serious nature and an informal resolution is not possible or appropriate) then the complainant/parents(s) should put their complaint in writing to:

#### **The Complaints Group C/O the Education Coordinator**

**The Complaints Group is mandated by The College of Teachers and is made up of the Education Coordinator plus two College Members**

If the complaint is directly related to the Education Coordinator then the letter should still be addressed to the Complaints Group but C/O The Chair of College.

The Complaints Group [CG] will oversee the complaint and ensure that the procedure is followed, that complaints are dealt with in a timely manner, that all paperwork is correct and confidentiality is maintained. The CG will identify the appropriate body to report the complaint to.

### **Making a Formal Complaint:**

Complaints should be in writing and should include:

## **Policy & Procedures COMPLAINTS/CONCERNS PROCEDURE (Parents)**

- Who or what the complaint is about. This should include specific details if possible.
- Dates, times if appropriate.
- What previous steps have been taken to resolve the issue.

The CG on reporting to College or Executive, will only give the fact that a complaint has been raised and that it requires investigation. No details, names, information will be given and confidentiality for all parties involved will be maintained.

- The complaints group will formally acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 working days.
- The CG will inform the appropriate body:
  - If the complaint relates to a class, an individual teacher, or any other aspects of the education then it will be reported to College.
  - Any other complaints will be reported to the Executive Group (e.g. admin staff, H&S, practical issues).
- The appropriate body, College or the Executive Group will mandate 2 people (which may include a member of the CG) to investigate the complaint.
- The CG will identify one member of staff to support individuals who may be named in any complaint.
- A meeting with the parents(s) concerned will be arranged within 10 working days days of receiving the complaint (in term time, it can be longer in school holidays), to identify the specific concerns.
- The complainant may bring a second person for support if this person is a member of the school community. If a complainant wishes to bring in an outsider agreement for this must be sought and reached with the CG.
- If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- If there is not a resolution then it will be necessary to carry out further investigations
- Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept. Such records will be viewed by all parties and seen/signed to be accurate, a copy will be given to the complainant.
- Any further meetings at this stage must be agreed by both parties and should take place within a week of the previous one if that is practicable (except in school holidays).

### **Investigation:**

- The investigation team will hear all concerns that the complainant may have.
- If the complaint is directed at an individual, then this person should have an opportunity to give a response to the complaints.
- Once the investigating team is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, they will report to the CG and a decision will be made.
- The investigation will need to establish whether the substance of the complaint has been proven or not, and what action should be taken if any, including any recommendations, action plan, or disciplinary consequences.
- The investigation team will also report to the appropriate body who will be responsible for ensuring any follow up action is taken.
- The complainants will be informed of the decision in writing. The CG will also give reasons for the team's decision.
- The decision will be communicated to the complainant within 10 working days of the last meeting held, this can be verbally or by a letter. If communicated verbally it will always be followed by a letter.
- Staff members who may have been involved in the complaint will also be informed of the decision of the CG. The disciplinary procedure may be required and colleagues will be fully informed of this.
- If the complainant(s) are still not satisfied with the decision/situation, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

### **Stage 3 – Panel to review the decision**

You have the right to call for a review hearing by writing to the Chair of Trustees. The Trustees will appoint the review panel. Normally two members of the Panel would be Trustees who have not been involved in handling the complaint. The third member of the panel would be a suitably qualified person independent of the schools' management or governance. The appointment of the panel is the responsibility of the schools' Trustee. Once appointed, the Panel Chair will contact you within 48 hours to inform you of the procedure & composition of the Panel, this will include:

- The date & time of the hearing - normally within 14 days
- The process & aim
- Members of the panel will review the complaint confidentially, with objectivity & without fear or favour, the Panel will hear your concerns & may call for the staff members against whom the complaint has been made.

## ***Policy & Procedures COMPLAINTS/CONCERNS PROCEDURE (Parents)***

The role of the panel is to verify whether the school has acted appropriately & to judge whether there is a need to change any of its procedures in the light of this complaint

You have the right to be accompanied to a panel hearing by one other person, who may be a relative, friend or supportive acquaintance (legal representation will not normally be accepted)

If you want to supply any further information you should do so within one week of the date of the panel hearing. All further information will be made available to all those involved. Any new information supplied at the time of a Panel Hearing may result in a delay of a final decision or the need to reconvene the meeting at a later date.

The decision of the Panel will be final. The school offers no further appeal to the decision of a Review Panel. The panel will make themselves familiar with the procedure & information relevant to the complaint & convene a Panel Hearing as soon as possible

Following the hearing, the Panel Chair will inform you & the subject of the complaint of their decision in writing, normally within 10 working days

The same basic procedure applies where the complaint is of a more general nature, e.g. about some aspect of the operation of the school

### **Complaints Records (Book):**

The School will keep a record book or file where

- Each complaint will be listed with the date it was first brought to the school,
- The nature of the complaint,
- Dates of meetings and names of participants and
- Whether resolved, for each stage
- Comments of/on the final outcome are also important.

This Complaints Record Book will be kept confidentially and securely (locked)

All records, (letters, notes/minutes of meetings or telephone calls, etc) will be kept together in a secure and confidential manner in a separate file held with the complaints record book. If appropriate, a note mentioning the existence of such a file can be placed in the pupil file. Appropriate paperwork will also be placed in staff files.

The school will publish the number of complaints dealt with each year (in accordance with the law) on the school website at the end or beginning of each year relative to the previous 12 months.

*Policy to be in Staff Handbook*

*Policy to be available on request to all staff, parents and prospective parents.*

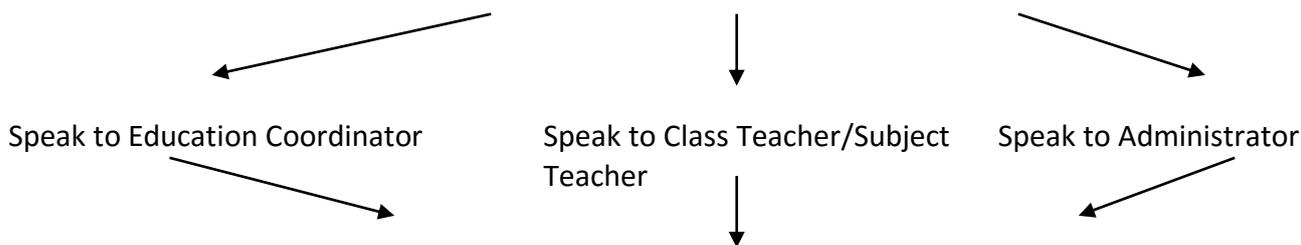
*Other relevant policies:*

- *Child Protection Policy*
- *Whistle Blowing Policy*
- *Discipline Policy*

**Complaints can also be directed to Ofsted at**  
**Independent and Boarding Team**  
**Department for Children, Schools and Families**  
**Mowden Hall**  
**Staindrop Road**  
**Darlington**  
**DL3 9BG**

**Or the Schools Inspection Service at**  
**The School Inspection Service**  
**Bruton**  
**Somerset**  
**BA10 0DG**

### Informal Concerns/Complaints



**Arrange a meeting to discuss main areas of concern with teacher/staff member concerned – Colleague can act as mediator**

**Minutes to be taken and a copy for school and parent**

**Either concern is resolved or parent advised to make formal complaint.**

### Formal Complaint

**In writing, concern form can be used: to Complaints Group C/O Education Coordinator**

- A letter of receipt will be issued immediately,
- History and/or previous steps taken to resolve concern clarified.
- Meeting arranged with investigation team within 7-14 school days of receipt of the complaint.
- Complainant may bring one support person.

Minute taker should be identified for the meeting.



Actions from meeting will be noted and any further investigations carried out. Records of all meetings and interviews will be kept. Copies for all parties and securely filed.



Any further meetings will take place within 7-14 days (if practicable) of the first meeting.



Decision will be made within 7-14 days of final meeting and reasons for the decision. Complainant will be informed in writing or verbally (backed by a letter)



**If complainant is not satisfied with the decision they can go to an appeal/review panel.**

Panel will consist of 3 members – 2 trustees plus one independent person.

Complainant may attend and be accompanied.

Trustees attending should have no previous details of the complaint.