



BERKHAMPSTEAD SCHOOL

Dealing with Parental Complaints

Complaints Procedure

Introduction

Berkhampstead prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. A copy of the procedure (which is published in the latest edition of the Parents' Handbook – issued to all new parents) can be found in the School Office and is on the website.

Stage I - Informal Resolution

- We hope that most complaints will be resolved quickly and **informally**. Early communication of concerns is often the key to successful and painless resolution for all parties.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's tutor in Years 3 to 6, class teacher in Pre-Prep and key worker in Kindergarten. In many cases, the matter will be resolved immediately by this means, to the parents' satisfaction.

If the member of staff concerned cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a member of the SMT Mr Cross, the Headmaster, would be the next contact point.

- Staff will report all formal parental complaints to their line manager who will in turn inform the Headmaster making a file note of the date of the complaint, nature of the complaint and what action was taken. A written record will be kept on School Manager.
- Complaints made informally or directly to members of the SMT or the Head will usually be referred to the relevant tutor, teacher, or key worker unless they deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

- A complaint about the Headmaster should be made to the Chairman of Governors, Mrs J Kent, (via the School Office) in the first instance who will attempt to resolve it directly with the parent.
- On receipt of a complaint, the teacher concerned 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 3 working days or in the event that the teacher concerned or the member of SMT and the parent **fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2** of this procedure.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- 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 2 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. During school holidays, contact from the Headmaster within two days may not be possible but your complaint will be addressed within a maximum of 28 days.
- It may be necessary for the Headmaster to investigate the matter further.
- The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, whether resolved at the preliminary stage or a Panel Hearing. These will be kept on file for at least three years.
- Once the Head 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 Head will also give reasons for his decision.
- If parents remain dissatisfied, they should proceed to Stage 3 (below).

Under 5's Education – EYFS in the School and Day Nursery

Complaints regarding Kindergarten Education and the Early Years Foundation Stage (any age up to Year 1) not resolved by stages one and two above may be made to OFSTED and/or ISI – the Independent Schools' Inspectorate.

Contact details:

OFSTED : 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday. Phone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Or you can fill in an online complaints form at <http://live.ofsted.gov.uk/onlinecomplaints>.

- Ofsted regulations require that complainants will be notified of the outcome of an investigation within 28 days of the school having received the complaint. We will try to resolve issues more quickly in accordance with the policy outlined above.

The School will provide Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint.

ISI: Independent Schools Inspectorate

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

Telephone 020 7600 0100 Fax 020 7776 8849

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

- Parents may contact the Chairman of the Governors, Mrs J Kent (via the School Office), who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The Panel will consider the complaint. The Panel will consist of at least **3 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 Governors. The Chairman of Governors, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally **within 5 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 working 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 is unlikely to be necessary but may be used.
- 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. They will consider the facts, reach a decision and may make recommendations, within three days of the Hearing.

- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it; the decision may be emailed if requested. 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 Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of. They will also be available for Inspection on the school premises for the Governors and Headmaster.
- The school will keep a written record of all Formal Complaints
 - (i) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
 - (ii) 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. The correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

- In the previous school year, there were no formal complaints were received.