



BARNARD CASTLE SCHOOL

Complaints Policy

This is a whole school policy and is published to prospective applicants for employment and volunteering.

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Action	Responsibility	Date
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Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 Barnard Castle School operates a complaints procedure to allow those who have concerns or complaints to raise them both informally and formally with those who have responsibility for the management and governance of the School. Whenever a complaint is made, the interests and welfare of the pupil are our primary concern and responsibility. Barnard Castle School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents, and takes seriously concerns or complaints that they may wish to raise. We aim to respond courteously and efficiently and to take action where appropriate to ensure that we work in partnership with parents to promote the best interests of the young people in our care. Complaints made by parents will never adversely affect School staff's care or concern for their children.

1.2 The policy complies with ISSR Part 7 (updated January 2015) and Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (revised April 2015). In addition, the policy includes the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception). The policy is reviewed annually and its effectiveness is considered by the School's Governors.

1.3 The policy is available on request from the School's General Office and a copy may be downloaded from the School's website. Parents of current pupils and pupils are informed of this in the Headmaster's routine emails. Similar advice to parents of new pupils is given both in the introductory letter to prospective parents and in 'A Handbook for New Pupils and Their Parents'.

1.4 In the academic year 2016-17 there was 1 formal complaint under this procedure.

1.5 The process of resolving complaints involves up to three stages: informal, formal and panel hearing.

2. Stage 1: Informal Resolution

2.1 Many concerns and complaints can be resolved quickly and informally by talking to those people within Barnard Castle School with particular knowledge or interest in the area of concern, or with the person responsible for a pupil's welfare and to this end the Housemaster/Housemistress should be the first point of contact with the aim of a timely and informal resolution. It is regarded as essential and consistent with the School's ethos to keep channels of communication open and deal with concerns as amicably and collegially as possible and at an early stage.

2.2 An informal complaint will be acknowledged within two days and, once the staff concerned have fully investigated the matter, they will either meet with or telephone the complainant within 10 days from the receipt of the complaint in an effort to resolve the matter.

3. Stage 2: Formal Resolution

3.1 Should a complainant's concerns not have been resolved satisfactorily by the informal process, they should be addressed to the Headmaster in writing.

3.2 The Headmaster will acknowledge the complaint within two days and, having investigated the matter, aim to meet with or otherwise respond to the complainant within 10 working days from the receipt of the complaint to explain his findings and subsequent recommendations.

4. Stage 3: Panel Hearing

4.1 Should the complainant remain dissatisfied, he or she may write to the Bursar at the School within seven working days of the date of the Headmaster's response. This letter should be sent or delivered to the General Office at the School and addressed to the Bursar, marked private and confidential. The Bursar will acknowledge receipt of the letter within three days and invite the complainant to a hearing with a Complaints Panel; this will be within ten working days of receipt of the complainant's letter by the Bursar and the date of the Panel Hearing will be mutually agreed.

4.2 The Panel will consist of at least two Governors or Senior Managers who have not been party to any of the foregoing process, and one other person of standing who is independent of the management and governance of the School.

4.3 The Panel will hear the complaint and the complainant will be given the opportunity to make appropriate representations. The complainant may be accompanied at the Panel

Hearing by a friend or supporter, but legal representation is inappropriate.

4.4 The complainant, and, where relevant, the person who had been complained about, will be informed in writing of the Panel's findings and recommendations. A copy of those findings and recommendations will also be made available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headmaster. Notification of this decision will take place within 28 working days of having received the complaint and will be a final one from the School's point of view.

5. Record of Complaints

5.1 Written records of informal and formal written complaints will be kept in School. These will contain all relevant correspondence, statements, findings, recommendations, noting whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing, and actions taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

5.2 Although these will be confidential, they will be available to the Secretary of State and School inspectors inspecting under sections 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act.

6. The procedure for dealing with complaints from Pupils

6.1 The School recognises the need for pupils to have a means of expressing problems and grievances. Whenever a problem or complaint is raised, it is the interests and welfare of the pupil which are the School's primary concern and responsibility.

6.2 All pupils attend an assembly outlining what they should do and whom they should contact if they have a problem or if there is something or somebody either inside or outside the School making them unhappy.

6.3 All members of staff have a duty to listen if approached by a pupil and to follow up complaints until they are satisfactorily resolved.

6.4 Most complaints which occur may be relatively minor, but they will appear important at the time. Members of staff need to distinguish complaints being made about the quality of educational experience from those which involve child protection matters. In the case of suspicion or evidence that a child protection matter is current, members of staff should refer directly to the Safeguarding Policy.

6.5 In the case of complaints being made about the quality of educational experience, the matter can usually be resolved by taking it up informally with the appropriate member of staff, e.g. a complaint over food would be referred to the Catering Manager, or a complaint over defective furniture would be referred to the Maintenance Department. Most complaints will be of an informal nature and can be satisfactorily resolved within the normal pastoral structure of the School, usually through the Housemaster or Housemistress. Complaints about bullying may also be resolved through these channels - see the Counter Bullying Policy document.

6.6 If this fails and a pupil wishes to make a formal complaint, he or she has the right to do so in writing to either the Headmaster or Second Master, who will acknowledge the complaint within two days, conduct an investigation and reach their findings. They will keep the pupil informed of the outcome of the investigation and of any subsequent action.

6.7 If the pupil is still unhappy about the outcome and doesn't feel able to enlist the help of parents, he or she may contact one of the following:

- School's Independent Listener, Mrs Margaret Forsyth (07817 484818)
- School's Medical Officer, Dr Carter (phone 690707)
- Childline (0800 1111)
- Durham Social Services Department (08458 505010 or 690999)
- Ofsted (08456 404045), or any other outside agencies may also be contacted.

6.8 At the very least, all pupils receive an assembly, "***I have a problem***", which runs as follows:

"We can all have worries, problems and difficulties from time to time, which may be major or minor. If you feel you need some help to sort things out, there are a number of people to whom you might turn.

Most young people would talk first to their parents or another relative, but sometimes this is not possible.

If you have a medical problem, it would be sensible to make an appointment to go and see your doctor. For boarders, Sister, Matron and the School Doctor are also there to help you. Mrs Seddon (School Independent Listener) and Mrs Thirling (School Counsellor) are also available.

At school, your tutor will always be ready to listen and to discuss things with you. Alternatively, you may feel you would rather talk to your Housemaster or Housemistress. The Chaplain, the Second Master and the Headmaster and their spouses are also available to see you on any occasion if you feel it is appropriate.

It is important to remember that you may choose the people with whom you would like to speak, and that you are welcome to approach any member of staff with whom you feel comfortable. You do not have to tell anyone else what you are doing.

There is also a complaint procedure which you can follow by completing a form which is obtainable from the General Office. Details are publicised on the general notice boards.

If you have tried one of these approaches and are not happy that the problem has been dealt with satisfactorily, or if you feel the need to talk to someone who is not involved in the running of the school, you may contact Dr Carter, the School Doctor, by phoning 690707. Alternatively you may choose to get in touch with Childline (tel: 0800 1111), the Durham Social Services Department (tel: 08458 505010 or 690999), or Ofsted (08456 404045), or in writing to Ofsted, Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7LA or ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA.

Some problems are best dealt with by individual contact with one person, but others may need to be tackled by several people. In any event, the important thing is to ensure that your problem is dealt with and that you are satisfied with the action that has been taken.

We are here to help you if you need us. So if you have a problem which is making you unhappy come and talk."

7. Boarders' Complaints

7.1 In compliance with Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, this policy is available to parents, staff and boarders. Within Boarding Houses, a copy of the policy is kept in a public place and Boarding staff brief boarders on it and ask them to familiarise themselves with its content. House handbooks for parents and boarders also refer to the Policy and indicate how to obtain a copy of it.

7.2 Boarders or their parents may follow the procedures outlined in this policy to achieve resolution of a complaint. Should parents or boarders continue to feel dissatisfied with the outcome of the procedure regarding a matter of boarding welfare and the appeal process referred to above has not resolved the matter, they may contact Ofsted by telephone on 08456 404045, or in writing to Ofsted, Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square, Manchester, M2 7LA or ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA.

7.3 A written record is kept of serious complaints and their outcomes for regular review by the Headmaster and senior staff. The Headmaster briefs the Governing Body termly on the number and nature of complaints and their resolution.

7.4 In all circumstances, the School will strive to resolve complaints either to the complainant's satisfaction or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of boarders, without unreasonable delay.

