THE DOWNS
PREPARATORY SCHOOL
BRISTOL

Bertie's
NURSERY SCHOOL
Wraxall

9.1 PARENTS' COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction

The Downs Preparatory School is committed to providing an invigorating all-round education that is stimulating, challenging and exciting. Various strategies of monitoring and evaluation are regularly employed to improve the performance of the School. However, if parents do have a complaint, it will be dealt with by the School in accordance with this procedure. It is available on request to the parents of pupils. It also applies to past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was registered at the School.

This policy outlines the procedure of making a complaint, be it informal or formal.
This procedure may be used in the process of claiming against expulsion.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

- If parents have a complaint or a concern, they should contact their son/daughter's Form Teacher or Key Carer at Bertie's. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parent's satisfaction. If the Form Teacher or Key Worker cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Leadership Team:- Head of Bertie's, the Deputy Head Academic, Deputy Head Pastoral or the Bursar as appropriate.

- Complaints made directly to the Leadership Team will be referred to the relevant teacher unless the member of the Leadership Team concerned deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally. In this event the 'line manager' will attempt to resolve the matter in five working days or as soon as is practicable.

- The relevant teacher or member of staff will make a written record of all complaints and concerns alongside the date on which they were received. Should a matter not be resolved within five working days, or in the event that a satisfactory resolution is not achieved, then 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 will be asked to put their complaint **in writing** to the Headteacher, or the Head of Bertie's. They will then decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate action to take.

- In most cases, the Headteacher, or the Head of Bertie's, will speak to the parents concerned within two working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

- In most cases one of the Deputy Heads, or the Deputy at Bertie's, or a senior teacher trained in investigation methods, will carry out further investigation. On occasion it might be necessary for the Headteacher, Bursar, or the Head of Bertie's to do so. The investigations will be completed in a week or as soon as is practicable.

- The Headteacher or Head of Bertie's will be given and keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

- Once the Headteacher or Head of Bertie's is satisfied, so far as is practical, that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. Reasons will be given for the judgment.

- The written decision will be issued within fourteen days of the Headteacher or Head of Bertie's receiving the complaint. If for any reason this is not possible, the Headteacher or the Head of Bertie's will write to the parents within the fourteen day period referred to above. They will state the reason or reasons why they are unable to issue a decision and they will inform the parents when they will do so. This will be within twenty-eight days of receiving the complaint in any event.

- If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they may take the opportunity to proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3: Panel Hearing:

- Upon receipt of the written decision, if parents seek to invoke Stage 3 of this procedure, they are to write to the Headteacher or Head of Bertie's informing them of their decision to do so within 28 days, whereupon the matter will be referred to a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the Chair of Governors.

- The panel will consist of at least three persons who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One of these shall be independent of the management and running of the School.

  The DfE give the following guidance on the identity of the independent panel member:

  'Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinizing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retried business people, civil servants, heads of senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the police force might be considered.'

- The Clerk to the Governors will usually manage the procedure of the Panel Hearing.

- The complaint will be acknowledged on behalf of the panel and a hearing scheduled to take place as soon as practicable and normally within fourteen days.

- If the convenor of the panel and/or the panel members deem it necessary, they may require (in writing) that further particulars of the complaint or any other related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five days before the hearing. Any such further particulars received within five days before the hearing shall be disregarded and inadmissible to the panel because it may not be possible to provide copies to all parties within that timescale.

- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

- Where the parent is not satisfied with the School's response to their stage two complaint and indicates a wish to continue to stage three, for compliance purposes a panel hearing should take place unless the parent later indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further.

- If a parent does not exercise the right to attend a panel hearing, this does not remove the School's obligation to hold the hearing in conformity with its complaints policy. The School's arrangements for the panel hearing should be reasonable in order to facilitate the parents exercising the right of attendance.

- If possible, the panel will resolve the parent's complaint at the hearing without the need for further investigation. However should the panel decide at the hearing that further investigation is required, the panel shall decide how such investigations should be carried out and by when they should be concluded. The panel will reconvene and, after due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, will reach a decision and may make recommendations. This procedure will be completed within fourteen days of the first hearing wherever possible but within twenty-eight days in any event unless otherwise agreed with the parents. The panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision together with the reasons. The decision of the panel will be final.

- The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the Headteacher, the complainant, the Chairman of Governors and, where the complaint relates to an individual, to that individual.

- Provision will be made for a written record to be kept of all Formal Complaints and of whether they were resolved at the formal (preliminary) stage or proceeded to a panel hearing. The School will keep a record of both the complaint and any actions taken whether the complaint was upheld or not.

- Parents can be assured that all complaints and concerns will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School the Independent Schools Standards (England) Regulations except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection (under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008) requests access to them.

- From January 2015, the written record of complaints was limited to all those made in writing under the **formal** part of the procedure. In relation to these complaints only, schools are required to record whether they are then resolved at that stage or proceed to a panel hearing. **During the academic year 2024-25 1 formal complaint was taken to Stage 2 or 3.** At The Downs we also keep a record of informal complaints. These are used for management purposes to enable patterns of low-level concern to be monitored.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

- Written complaints about the fulfillment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated through using the process outlined in his policy. The complainant will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days.

- If parents wish to take the complaints further to Ofsted / ISI the contact details are www.ofsted.gov.net and info@isi.net

- Parents will be notified of an inspection once the School is aware. The results of an inspection will be sent to parents as soon as possible thereafter.

- On request, the record of complaints will be made available to parents, Ofsted and ISI.

- A record of any complaint in respect of EYFS will be kept for at least three years.

This policy was updated on	**Signed on behalf of the School/Nursery**	**Date for next review**
23.09.25	*D Isaachsen*	*01/09/26*