



Complaints Procedure

INTRODUCTION

Bancroft's School has always been proud of the quality of its teaching and the pastoral care provided to its pupils. Should parents have cause for complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure.

This Procedure applies to any expression of dissatisfaction however made about actions taken, or a lack of action, by the School where a parent seeks action by the School. A parent, in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

This Procedure applies to the whole school. This Procedure applies only to complaints by parents of current pupils and the parents of former pupils if the complaint was initially raised whilst the pupil was registered at the School.

The Procedure does not apply to exclusions, to which the School's Sanctions Policy refers. The School has separate grievance and whistleblowing policies to cover concerns that a member of staff may have.

The School is a busy place and during the academic year a tremendous number of both educational and extra-curricular activities take place and many pupils are involved. A great deal is achieved with cheerful cooperation from all sides but we do recognise that conflicts of interest, misunderstandings and disagreements will occasionally occur between pupils, parents and teachers – although such occasions are rare. Under these circumstances we undertake to deal with issues promptly and fairly. They can generally be resolved informally in the first instance, however if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. Parents can expect for the complaint to be considered sensitively and with no adverse effect on their child.

Separate procedures apply in the event that a Child Protection issue arises (see Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy). Any concern about the safety of a child should be notified immediately to the person believed to be best placed to take urgent action and should be confirmed in writing to the Head.

All complaints, whether stage 1 (detailed below) or above are logged by the recipient member of staff, Housemaster or member of SLT dealing with the matter in a central email (seniorccc@bancrofts.org) monitored by the Senior Deputy Head and Deputy

Head Pastoral (or in the Prep School at ccc@bancrofts.org, which is monitored by the Head of the Prep School).

There may be occasions when it is necessary or reasonable to deviate from this complaints procedure if this is reasonable and justified. Parents will be notified of the changes.

STAGE 1 - INFORMAL RESOLUTION

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. These are not a 'complaint' in any meaningful sense but are part of the everyday dialogue of school life.

If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's Housemaster or Housemistress (Junior or Senior), or the relevant Head of Department for a concern about the quality of teaching. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Housemaster or Housemistress or Head of Department cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for parents to consult the Head. Again the aim will be to resolve the issue amicably and informally.

Complaints made directly to the Head will usually be referred to the relevant teacher unless the Head deems it appropriate for him to deal with the matter personally.

We aim to acknowledge an informal complaint by telephone, email or letter within 3 working days of receipt, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescales. Such action may include an investigation and / or a meeting with the parent.

The Housemaster or Housemistress or Head of Department will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. These will be kept by the respective Housemaster/ Housemistress/Head of Department. Should the matter not be resolved within 14 working days or in the event that the Housemaster or Junior Housemistress or Head of Department and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, 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 with the relevant member of staff, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone, email or letter within 3 working days, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescales.

In most cases the Head, or a senior member of staff designated by the Head to investigate the complaint, will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within 14 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations.

The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

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 the decision.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 (The Panel Hearing) of this procedure.

STAGE 3 - PANEL HEARING

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Chairman of Governors (or in his absence, a member of the Governing Body acting as his nominated representative), who will convene a complaints panel within 7 working days.

Every effort will be made to enable the Hearing to take place within 15 working days of receipt of the request.

A complaints panel hearing (**Hearing**) is a Hearing to consider those elements of the Stage 2 response to a parent's complaint with which the parent remains dissatisfied. The complaints panel (**Complaints Panel**) is not obliged to consider any new complaints which have not been previously raised.

A request for a Hearing must be put in writing to the Chairman of Governors who can be contacted on: chairman@bancrofts.org and will usually only be considered if the procedure at Stage 2 has been completed. The request should include:

- a copy of any relevant documents and full contact details;
- details of all the grounds of the complaint and the outcome desired;
- a list of documents which the parent(s) believes to be in the School's possession and wish the Complaints Panel to consider; and
- whether the parent(s) propose to be accompanied to the Hearing.

The Chairman of Governors will acknowledge the request for a Hearing in writing within 3 working days of receipt.

If assistance with the request is required, for example because of a disability, please inform the Chairman of Governors who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Complaints Panel will consist of three 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: he or she will also not be an employee of the School. Each of the Complaints Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors. The Complaints Panel members will appoint one of themselves to be the Chair of the Panel throughout the proceedings.

The Chairman of Governors will send written notification to each party of the date, time and place of the Hearing at least 10 working days before the date of the Hearing.

If the Complaints 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 2 working days prior to the Hearing.

- The parent(s) 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.
- The Chair of the Panel may, at his / her discretion, adjourn the Hearing if he / she considers it appropriate to do so. This may include an adjournment for the parties to take legal advice on a specific issue arising.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Complaints Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations. The Complaints Panel will write to the parent(s) within 7 working days of the Hearing informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Complaints Panel will be final.
- The Complaints Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations, will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of. A copy of the Complaints Panel's findings will be held at the School and made available for Inspection by the Governing Body and Head.

For compliance purposes the Stage 3 Panel Hearing should go ahead unless the parent later indicates, in writing, that he or she is now satisfied and does not wish to proceed further. A Panel Hearing should, therefore, proceed notwithstanding that a parent may decide not to attend subsequent to the Panel Hearing being convened but prior to it being held, unless the parent(s) has withdrawn their complaint in writing. If necessary, the Complaints Panel should consider the parent's complaint in absentia and issue findings on the substance of the complaint, thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion.

A written record of all complaints, whether Stage 1 or above are recorded using the email addresses above, whether they have been resolved following an informal, formal

or panel hearing. This will record the action taken by the School as a result of the complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances.¹

Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School by part 7 paragraph 33 (K) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014; where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection, under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Education and Skills Act or where any other legal obligation prevails.

The School makes available a list of the number of complaints registered under Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure during the preceding school year in the Policy section of the website for parents/carers of current and prospective pupils.

The records created in accordance with this Procedure may contain personal data. The School has a number of privacy notices which explain how the School will use personal data about pupils and parents. The privacy notices are published on the School's website. In addition, staff must ensure that they follow the School's data protection policies and procedures when handling personal data created in connection with this Procedure. This includes the School's data protection policy and information security policy.

*In the case of the Prep School, please read "Housemaster or Housemistress" as Class Teacher

¹ In accordance with the terms of reference of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse all schools are required to retain information which relates to allegations (substantiated or not) of organisations and individuals who may have been involved in, or have knowledge of child sexual abuse or child sexual exploitation; allegations (substantiated or not) of individuals having engaged in sexual activity with, or having a sexual interest in, children; institutional failures to protect children from sexual abuse or other exploitation. Details of any complaints made about such matters will be retained.