



BROCKHURST & MARLSTON HOUSE SCHOOLS

Including all of the Pre-Prep Department and Early Years Foundation Stage

PARENTS' COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE POLICY

Brockhurst & Marlston House Schools (the School) is committed to providing the best possible care and education to its pupils, and to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. This policy is written with that commitment in mind, and in accordance with KCSIE September 2024.

Reviewed: September 2024

Next Review: September 2026

The School's Parents' Complaints Procedure Policy is drafted in accordance with Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulatory Requirements February 2016. This policy applies equally to boarding and day pupils. The school prides itself on its high quality teaching and pastoral care. However, if parents do have a complaint it will be treated seriously. The DFE does not distinguish between "concerns" and "complaints". Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school is now a complaint, and in the scope of the procedure, whatever the school labels it as. The school has the following procedure, which is for parents of all pupils, including all those in the Early Years Foundation Stage and also those who are boarding at the school.

The complaints process is available to "parents of pupils," meaning current registered pupils. The procedure does not apply to parents of prospective pupils. The complaints procedure does apply to past pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered, and it does not cover exclusions unless the school has indicated otherwise. This Procedure applies to complaints from parents of current pupils and to parents of former pupils if the complaint was raised when the pupil was registered at the School.

What you should do if you have a complaint.

Brockhurst and Marlston House Schools pride themselves on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to their pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the schools in accordance with this Procedure. We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner.

Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. When we refer to **working days**, we mean Monday to Friday, when School is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website.



Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a complaint they should contact their son/daughter's Form teacher. In many cases the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a senior member of staff.

Complaints made directly to the Head of the School/Deputy Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form teacher unless the head concerned deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

The relevant teacher will make a written record of all informal complaints and the date on which they were received, unless the complaint has been received in writing. Should a matter not be resolved within **2 weeks**, or in the event that the relevant teacher and the parents 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, then the parents will be asked to put their complaints **in writing** to the Head who will decide after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within two working days of receiving the complaint, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescale. **Parents should understand that if a complaint is received outside the school term, then their complaint may take longer to respond.**

In most cases the Head 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.

Although all formal complaints must be made in writing, this does not mean that the formal stage is automatically triggered whenever a concern is expressed in writing, for example by email. Complaints will usually only progress to the formal stage after first being considered at the preliminary stage and only then if it is expressly clear that the complainant wishes to escalate the matter to the formal stage. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

It may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out. The Head will ask a senior member of staff to act as investigator. The Investigator may request additional information from the parents and may wish to speak to the parents personally and to others who have knowledge of the circumstances. These investigations will ordinarily be completed in seven working days of receipt of the complaint.

Written records will be kept 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 the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.

The written decision will be issued within ten working days of receiving the complaint. If there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay, the parents will be notified of this and informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.

Early Years Foundation Stage: Parents of pupils in the EYFS setting will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of the complaint being received.



If parents are dissatisfied with the Head's decision, they should 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, (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they are to write to the head informing him/her of their decision to do so, whereupon the matter will be referred to the Board of Directors, who will then take responsibility for the organisation of a complaints panel hearing. The request for a panel hearing will be acknowledged within five working days.

The Panel

A complaints panel hearing is a review of the decisions taken at Stage 2 by the Head.

The role of the panel is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering:

- The documents provided by both parties and
 - Any representations made by the parents and the Head
- and to reach a decision, on the balance of probabilities, as to whether to uphold each complaint.

It is not within the powers of the panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents. The panel may make recommendations to the School on these matters or any other issues as appropriate.

The panel will consist of at least three persons who were not directly involved in the matter detailed in the complaint, one of which is independent of the management and the running of the School.

Each of the panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Directors. The panel will appoint one of themselves to be the chair of the panel throughout the proceedings.

Planning the hearing

The named director, on behalf of the panel, will schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within fourteen working days of receipt of the request.

If the named director and/or the members of the panel deem it necessary, they may require (in writing) that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of any documents the parents wish the panel to see should be sent to the named director to be received at least seven working days prior to the hearing. Copies of the bundle of documents to be considered by the panel shall be supplied to all parties not later than five days before the hearing.

The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or friend. The hearing is not legal proceedings so legal representation will not normally be necessary. If the parents do wish to be accompanied by someone who is legally qualified, the named director must be informed of this at least five working days prior to the hearing. The parents should note that the panel will wish to speak to the parents directly and this person will not be permitted to act as an advocate or to address the hearing unless invited to do so by the panel.



The Hearing

The hearing will be conducted in an informal manner.

A clerk appointed by the complaints panel will take a handwritten minute of the proceedings.

All those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the chair. If terminated, the original decision will stand. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the Hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and his / her comment will be minuted.

If possible, the panel will resolve the parents' 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 which date they should be concluded. Where an adjournment is required, the panel will reconvene as agreed with the parents.

When the chair of the panel considers that all the issues have been sufficiently discussed, he / she will conclude the hearing. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations. The panel will write to the parents within ten working days of the hearing informing them of their decision together with their reasons and any recommendations.

The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will also be sent in writing to the head, directors and, where the complaint relates to an individual, to that individual and will be available for inspection on the school premises by the head and the directors.

The completion of stage 3 represents the conclusion of the School's complaints procedure.

Record Keeping and confidentiality

A written record will be kept of all formal complaints, and of whether they were resolved at Stage 2 or proceeded to a Complaints Panel Hearing, including the action taken by the School as a result of the complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). The number of formal complaints registered during the preceding school year will be supplied to parents on request. Within the log, details of any complaint must make reference to **boarding** or **use of reasonable force**, if applicable.

Correspondence and records relating to individual complaints are to be 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.

Parents can be assured that all 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 33(k) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014; where access is requested by The Secretary of State; or where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

The written record of complaints is limited to all those made in writing under the formal part of the procedure. In relation to these complaints, schools are required to record whether they are then resolved at that stage or proceed to a panel hearing. It is up to schools to determine whether or how they also wish to keep a record of informal complaints. Many proprietors will want to ensure records are kept, even of informal complaints, for management purposes to enable patterns of concern to be monitored.



EYFS

APPENDIX

Additional requirements apply for the EYFS setting beyond those which apply to the main school. Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days. The record of complaints must be available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

Contact details for:

OFSTED:

By email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 1231 these helplines are available from 08.00 to 20.00, Monday to Friday.

To write:

Ofsted,
Piccadilly Gate,
Store St,
Manchester,
M1 2WD

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

By email: concerns@isi.net

Telephone: 020 7600 0100

Fax: 020 7776 8849

To write:

CAP House
9 - 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA

It is expected that complaints made under this policy will go through the School's Complaints Procedure before Ofsted or ISI is contacted.