COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

PRO PATRIA POPULOQUE

Blundell's

FOUNDED 1604

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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POLICY AMENDMENTS

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April 2020	Stage 3 process updated to give more detail.
January 2021	Annual no of complaints updated
January 2022	Annual no of complaints updated and access to complaints log clarified.
November 2022	Annual no of complaints updated
January 2023	Deputy Head Pastoral added to Stage 1
14th June 2024	ISBA complaints policy template adopted, format Updated and amendments on EYFS timeframes recommended by Governing Body adopted.
1st September 2025	Annual no of complaints updated.
1st September 2026	Annual no of complaints updated.

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COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

1. Blundell's (the 'School') has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure.

AIM OF THIS POLICY

2. The aim of this policy is to ensure that complaints are managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, it is fair to those concerned, and it helps to promote parents' confidence in our ability to safeguard and promote welfare. We will try to resolve every concern in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing our systems and procedures in light of the circumstances.

WHO THIS POLICY APPLIES TO

3. The School makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School's website and in the School office during the school day. The School will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published and available to them. The Complaints Procedure will set out the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

4. Although this Procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils.

5. Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School.

6. The only exception to Paragraph 5 above is if the complaint is a review of a decision taken by the Head to exclude or require the removal of a pupil under Clause 7 of the School's Terms and Conditions (Parent Contract) in which case such a review must be requested by no later than five working days from the date of the decision to exclude or require the removal of a pupil.

DEFINITIONS

7. "Parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current or prospective pupil about whom the complaint relates.

8. "Working Days" refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. The dates of terms are published on the School's website. Please

see Paragraphs 17, 26 and 45 for provisions regarding School holiday periods and exceptional circumstances.

ACCOUNTABILITY

9. In accordance with paragraph 32 (1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Blundell's will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A COMPLAINT?

10. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

11. Correspondence, statements 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 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. There may also be other circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.

12. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that either you, or your child, raise in good faith.

THE THREE-STAGE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Stage 1 | Informal Resolution

13. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's Tutor or Houseparent. If the form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Head of Department, Deputy Head (Academic), Second Master or Head.

14. Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, Deputy Head (Academic), Second Master or Head will usually be referred to the relevant Tutor or Houseparent unless the Head of Department, Deputy Head (Academic), Second Master or Head deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.

15. We will acknowledge a written notification by telephone, e-mail or letter within two working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable in the holidays. A matter raised orally will not necessarily be acknowledged in writing.

16. The Tutor or Houseparent 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 5 working days, or in the event that the form teacher 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 Complaints Procedure.

17. If the complaint is against the Head, or it would be a conflict of interest for the Head to handle the complaint, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors whose contact details are available from the School Office on request.

Stage 2 | Formal Resolution

18. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head.

19. It is requested that a complaint at Stage 2 is submitted using the Blundell's Complaint Form. This can be found at Annex A or is available from the School Office on request.

20. The Head may in some circumstances deem it appropriate to nominate a staff member to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Head (or their nominee) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

21. In most cases, the Head (or their nominee) will meet or speak to the parents concerned within five working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

22. It may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out. The Head (or their nominee) will determine who should carry out any investigation and this may be someone external to the School.

23. Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

24. Once the Head (or their nominee) 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 (or their nominee) will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Head will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 10 working days of the complaint being put in writing and submitted to the Head.

25. Any complaint received within two weeks of the end of term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to the presence of school holidays and the unavailability of personnel required for the investigation to be properly undertaken however an overall timeframe of three months for resolution will be enforced.

26. I If the complaint is against the Head, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will nominate someone to determine the complaint. This nominee will follow the Stage 2 process outlined above.

27. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 | Panel Hearing

28. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3, having failed to reach an earlier resolution, they may write to the The Clerk to the Governors within 20 working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.

29. To the extent the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated due to extenuating circumstances which have impeded the parents from taking action, the parents should request an extension in writing. Such a request should be made to The Clerk to the Governors in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. This request will be duly considered.

30. In the event the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated (including to the extent applicable any extensions if agreed) the School reserves the right to conclude the complaint process and not progress the matter to Stage 3.

31. The Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration.

32. The 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.

33. The Clerk to the Governors will appoint one Panel member to act as Chair of the Panel. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and schedule a hearing to take place within 20 working days.

34. 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 or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.

35. The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate and the companion should not be a lawyer. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.

36. The Stage 2 decision-taker shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate and the companion should not be a lawyer.

37. The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.

38. If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

39. After due consideration of the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:

    a. dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;

    b. uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and

    c. make recommendations.

40. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 5 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Stage 2 decision-taker. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head.

41. Any complaint about a decision taken by the Head to exclude or require the removal of the pupil under Clause 7 of the Blundell's Parent Contract will be governed by this Stage 3 of the School's Complaints Procedure. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint and ask the Stage 2 decision-taker to reconsider their decision if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Head, that the Head's decision to exclude / require the removal of the pupil was not a reasonable decision for the Head to have taken.

TIMEFRAME FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

42. All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

43. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 20 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 working days.

44. Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, 'working days' refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means

that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.

PERSISTENT CORRESPONDENCE

45. Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this will be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

RECORDING COMPLAINTS AND USE OF PERSONAL DATA

46. Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints, whichever stage they are resolved at, and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld.

47. The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice.

48. When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

    a. Date when the issue was raised

    b. Name of parent

    c. Name of pupil

    d. Description of the issue

    e. Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)

    f. Witness statements (if appropriate)

    g. Name and contact details of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage

    h. Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)

    i. Notes/minutes of the hearing, and

    j. The Panel's written decision

49. This may include 'special category personal data' as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice and potentially includes - for instance - information relating to physical or mental health where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy.

50. The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy and Data Retention Policy. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential.

51. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector, there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation eg: in response to a subject access request, which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

52. For the academic year 2025 to 2026, the School received 2 formal complaints.

END

Senior School Stage Two Complaint Form | Annex A

Please read the School's Complaints Procedure before completing this form. It provides information on when and how this form should be completed.

This form is to be completed by those with **parental responsibility**[1] for a current pupil and returned to the Head at head@blundells.org or, if the complaint is against the Head, to the Chair of Governors at clerk@blundells.org.

PLEASE USE **BLOCK** CAPITALS

Your name(s)	
Name of pupil(s), year(s) and your relationship to them	
Contact address	
Contact telephone day	
Contact telephone mobile	
Contact email address	
Details of the Complaint:	

[1] Parental Responsibility is defined in the Children Act 1989 as "all rights, duties, powers and responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his or her property". It equates to legal responsibility for the child. If you have any doubts about whether you do or do not have parental responsibility for the child you may wish to seek legal advice.

Details of Complaint (Continued) :
Action taken to date (including staff member(s) who has/have dealt with it so far) and solutions offered:
The reason(s) that this was not a satisfactory resolution for you:

What action(s) would you like to be taken to resolve your complaint?
Signature(s):
Date:
For School Use
Stage in the complaints procedure (circle as appropriate): 1 2 3
Date acknowledgement sent:
By whom:
Complaint referred to:
Action taken:
Date:

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