



Policy for Complaints procedure

Policy re written April 2024 – Review date April 2027

Our Mission and Vision

Our mission: To provide a holistic Christian education for all and to inspire discipleship.

Our vision: To be a Christian community in which everyone grows in character, faith, knowledge, understanding and wisdom.

"That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers." (Psalm 1:3)

"Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." (Luke 2:52)

This complaints procedure reflects our commitment to growing lives that bear fruit. We seek to resolve concerns in a way that upholds our values of honesty, respect, reconciliation, and partnership between home, school, and the wider community.

Our Christian Foundation

At Bradford Christian School, we hold to the biblical teaching in Matthew 18:15-17, which guides our approach to resolving concerns and complaints. Education Inspection Framework

"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church." – Matthew 18:15-17

This principle shapes our complaints procedure: we encourage direct, honest conversation as the first step, seeking reconciliation and restoration wherever possible. We aim to resolve concerns early, treat all parties with respect, and work in partnership between home and school.

1. Aims

We aim to:

- Resolve concerns informally wherever possible, following Matthew 18 principles
- Be impartial and non-adversarial in our approach
- Facilitate full and fair investigations by independent persons or panels where necessary
- Address all points at issue and provide effective, prompt responses
- Respect confidentiality (understanding this does not mean total anonymity)
- Treat all parties with respect and courtesy, reflecting our Christian values

- Make lawful, rational, reasonable, fair, and proportionate decisions
- Keep complainants informed of progress throughout the process
- Learn from complaints to improve our school

We will publicise this policy and make it available on our school website and on request from the school office (office@bxs.org.uk).

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 Education Inspection Framework, DfE Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures (2020), and the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework.

3. Scope

3.1 What This Policy Covers

This policy covers complaints about the school's actions or lack of action. Anyone can make a complaint.

3.2 What This Policy Does NOT Cover

The following are handled through separate statutory procedures:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters (including allegations against staff)
- Suspensions and permanent exclusions
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances and disciplinary matters

Also excluded:

- Complaints about the National Curriculum content (direct to DfE)
- Complaints about collective worship (direct to LA or SACRE)
- Complaints about other providers using school premises (they have their own procedures)

3.3 Time Limits

Complaints should be raised within 3 months of the incident (or last incident in a series). We will consider exceptions on a case-by-case basis where there were valid reasons for delay and the complaint can still be investigated fairly.

Complaints received during school holidays will be deemed received on the first school day after the holiday.

4. Making a Complaint Accessible

We are committed to making our complaints procedure accessible to everyone. We will make reasonable adjustments for complainants who:

- Have learning difficulties or disabilities
- Speak English as an additional language
- Need support to raise a complaint

Complainants can:

- Call the school office
- Email office@bxs.org.uk
- Arrange an appointment with the Headteacher or senior leader
- Raise the complaint through a third party acting on their behalf

Complaints Co-ordinator: Hannah Pickles (School Business Manager)

5. Stage 1: Informal Resolution

The Matthew 18 Approach

We believe that most concerns can be resolved through honest, respectful conversation. This reflects our commitment to Matthew 18 and our value of partnership between home and school.

We encourage complainants to raise concerns directly with the relevant member of staff as soon as possible.

Process:

1. Raise the concern with the relevant staff member, form teacher, or Headteacher (in person, by phone, email, or letter). Contact the school office if unsure who to approach.
2. Informal meeting between the complainant and staff member. The Headteacher or another SLT member may be involved if appropriate.
3. Acknowledgement within 48 hours (in term time).
4. Response within 14 school days.

If the concern cannot be resolved informally, it will be escalated to Stage 2.

6. Stage 2: Formal Investigation

6.1 How to Make a Formal Complaint

Formal complaints must be made in writing (unless reasonable adjustments are needed) using the form in Appendix 1, or by:

- Letter or email to the Headteacher
- Phone call to the school office
- In person at the school office

Include:

- Details of the complaint (dates, times, names of witnesses)
- Copies of relevant documents
- What action you feel would resolve the complaint
- Any previous steps taken to resolve the issue

6.2 Investigation Process

In line with our Christian values, we will treat all parties with respect and seek to understand all perspectives before reaching a conclusion.

1. Acknowledgement within 48 hours (in term time).
2. Meeting arranged with the Headteacher (or designated SLT member). Complainant may bring a companion (notify the school in advance of companion's identity).
3. Investigation conducted by the Headteacher or appointed investigator.
4. Written outcome sent within 10 school days. If more time is needed, complainant will be informed.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they should escalate to Stage 3.

7. Stage 3: Independent Panel Review

7.1 Requesting a Panel Hearing

To request a panel hearing, contact the Chair of Governors in writing within 5 school days of receiving the Stage 2 outcome.

Include:

- Why you remain dissatisfied with the Stage 2 outcome
- What you feel would resolve the complaint

Receipt will be acknowledged within 5 school days.

7.2 The Panel

The panel will consist of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the complaint, have no prior knowledge of the complaint, and include at least 1 member who is independent of the school's management and running.

Independent member: Someone with no connection to the school (e.g., chair of governors from another school). If needed, we will source independent members through Christian Schools Trust or our local authority.

7.3 The Panel Hearing

Timing: The panel will aim to meet within 5 school days of the request. If the complainant rejects 3 proposed dates without good reason, the panel will set a date and proceed using written submissions.

Before the hearing:

- All written material will be circulated at least 2 school days before the meeting.
- The complainant will be notified of their right to attend and be accompanied.

At the hearing:

The panel will conduct the hearing in a spirit of fairness and impartiality, reflecting our commitment to justice and reconciliation.

- The hearing will be held in private.
- Electronic recordings are not normally permitted (unless required for disability/special needs, with prior written consent requested at least 48 hours before the hearing).
- Media are not permitted.
- Legal representation is not encouraged but will be considered case-by-case.
- The complainant and school representatives will each present their case.
- Witnesses may be called.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.

- Both parties will have the opportunity to sum up.
- Both parties will leave while the panel deliberates.

7.4 The Panel's Decision

The panel can:

- Uphold the complaint (in whole or in part)
- Dismiss the complaint (in whole or in part)

If upheld, the panel will decide appropriate action to resolve the complaint and recommend changes to prevent similar issues in future.

Within 5 school days of the hearing, the panel will provide:

- Written findings and recommendations to the complainant, the person(s) complained about, the proprietor, and the Headteacher
- A copy of the minutes of the hearing

These documents will be available for inspection on the school premises.

8. Complaints About the Headteacher or Governors

8.1 Stages 1 and 2: Informal and Formal Complaints

Complaints about the Headteacher or any individual governor should be directed to the Clerk to the Governing Board.

- A suitably skilled and impartial governor will carry out the informal (Stage 1) and formal (Stage 2) processes as set out in Sections 5 and 6.
- If the complaint is about the Chair and Vice-Chair, the entire governing board, or the majority of the board, an independent investigator will be appointed by the governing board to carry out the formal investigation.

8.2 Stage 3: Panel Review

If the complaint is about the Chair and Vice-Chair, the entire governing board, or the majority of the board:

- A committee of independent governors will hear the complaint.
- They will be sourced from Christian Schools Trust.
- They will carry out the panel hearing as set out in Section 7.

9. After the School's Procedure

9.1 Referring to the DfE

If the complainant remains unsatisfied after completing our procedure, they can refer their complaint to the Department for Education (DfE).

The DfE will NOT:

- Reinvestigate the complaint
- Overturn the school's decision

The DfE WILL check whether:

- The school has a compliant complaints procedure
- The school followed its procedure correctly
- The school's statutory policies comply with education legislation

The DfE may:

- Explain the legislative framework
- Recommend improvements to statutory policies
- Arrange an emergency inspection if serious failings are found

To refer a complaint: www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

10. Managing Difficult Situations

10.1 Unreasonably Persistent Complaints

We will take every reasonable step to address concerns. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before and it's already been resolved
- Makes obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory, or repetitive complaints
- Insists on pursuing unfounded or out-of-scope complaints beyond all reason
- Pursues a valid complaint in an unreasonable manner (e.g., refuses to cooperate)
- Makes complaints designed to cause disruption or excessive demands on school time
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes with no serious purpose or value

Steps we will take:

- Give a clear statement of our position and the complainant's options
- Put communication strategies in place (e.g., single point of contact, limited contact times)
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf
- Write to the complainant to explain why we consider their behaviour unreasonable and what steps we will take

When we may stop responding:

- When we believe we have taken all reasonable steps
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly with intent to cause disruption

We will inform the complainant in writing if we intend to stop responding, and explain we will still consider new complaints.

10.2 Aggressive or Threatening Behaviour

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, we have a duty to protect staff from violence, including verbal abuse and threats. Under the Education Act 1996 (Section 547), we have the power to remove anyone causing a nuisance or disturbance from school premises.

If a meeting must be stopped due to aggressive behaviour:

- We will record the incident
- Check on the wellbeing of staff/governors involved
- Write to the complainant confirming why the meeting was stopped
- Seek advice from our LA or legal representatives on how to proceed safely

Options for proceeding safely:

- Reconvene the meeting with clear boundaries and safeguards in place
- Hold a virtual meeting with clear ground rules
- Use written submissions only

We will distinguish between the complaint and the complainant—measures are a response to unacceptable behaviour, not a dismissal of concerns.

10.3 Duplicate and Group Complaints

Duplicate complaints: If we receive a duplicate complaint from a partner, family member, or other individual about an issue we've already resolved, we will assess whether there are new aspects to consider. If not, we will direct them to the DfE.

Group complaints: We may respond to large volumes of complaints about the same topic by publishing a single response on our website or sending a template response. Normal procedures will apply if complainants wish to pursue matters further.

11. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

11.1 What We Record

We will record:

- The progress of all complaints
- Actions taken at all stages
- The stage at which the complaint was resolved
- The final outcome
- Copies of letters, emails, and notes from meetings and phone calls

11.2 How We Store Records

Records will be treated as confidential and stored securely. They will only be viewed by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel. Records will be kept for 6 years from the date of resolution, in line with data protection law, our privacy notices, and record retention schedule.

11.3 Access to Records

Records will be kept confidential except where legally required to share information. Records may be shared if requested by:

- The Secretary of State
- Ofsted (during a section 109 inspection)
- The complainant (through a Freedom of Information or Subject Access Request)

11.4 Protecting Panel Independence

Details of complaints, including names of individuals, will not be shared with the whole governing board in case a review panel needs to be organised later. Where the governing board is aware of the complaint before the panel stage, we will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel.

12. Learning and Improvement

The Chair of Governors will review underlying issues raised by complaints with the Headteacher. Where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, they will determine whether improvements can be made to school procedures or practice to prevent similar events in future.

13. Monitoring

The Chair of Governors will check half termly with the Headteacher, who will report on the number and nature of complaints as part of the headteachers report to governors.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body.

The number of compliments received during the year June 2025 to June 2026 was 21.

The number of complaints received and resolved at stage 1 was 3. One stage 1 complaint was resolved at stage 2.

14. Restorative Practice

We recognise that after a complaint there may need to be restoration of relationships. In line with our Christian values of forgiveness and reconciliation, we will work hard to encourage this. However, we understand this doesn't always happen, and we cannot insist on it.

15. Links with Other Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour and Discipline Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Staff Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Privacy Notices

16. Version Control

Date of Adoption	24 June 2026
Date of Last Review	April 2026
Date of Next Review	April 2027
Policy Owner (SLT)	Jane Prothero
Policy Owner (Governors)	Zeilah Chadwick

Appendix 1: Formal Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Hannah Pickles (Complaints Co-ordinator) who will acknowledge receipt within 48 hours in term time.

Your name:

Pupil's name (if applicable):

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Daytime telephone:

Evening telephone:

Email:

Please give details of your complaint (include relevant dates, times, names of witnesses):

What action have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (Who did you speak to and what was the response?):

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?:

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

For Official Use Only

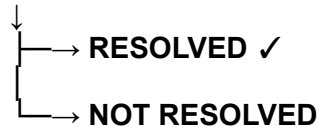
Date acknowledgement sent: _____ By whom: _____ Complaint referred to: _____
Date: _____

Appendix 2: Complaints Flowchart

CONCERN RAISED

(Matthew 18 Principle)

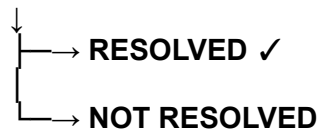
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Discuss with relevant member of staff



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STAGE 1: INFORMAL

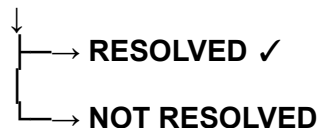
- Acknowledge within 48 hours
- Meeting with staff/Headteacher
- Response within 14 school days



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STAGE 2: FORMAL INVESTIGATION

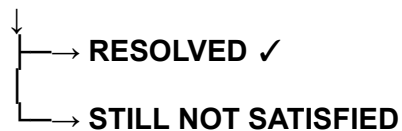
- Complete formal complaint form
- Acknowledge within 48 hours
- Investigation by Headteacher/SLT
- Written outcome within 10 school days



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STAGE 3: INDEPENDENT PANEL

- Request panel within 5 school days
- Panel of 3 (including 1 independent member)
- Hearing held
- Written decision within 5 school days



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REFER TO DfE

(www.gov.uk/complain-about-school)