BRIDGEWATER SCHOOL

WORSLEY, MANCHESTER

M28 2WQ

WHOLE SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This procedure has been created to meet the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSR) and as subsequently amended in 2015 to include specific reference to schools with an Early Years Foundation Stage and with reference to the ISI Regulatory Framework September 2020.

Bridgewater School prides itself on the quality of its teaching and the level of pastoral care provided to its pupils. If parents do have a complaint, however, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure. This procedure applies to all sections of the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, the Preparatory Department and the Senior Department. The school regards any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action as a complaint. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential, except in so far as is required by paragraph 6(2)(k) of the Education (Independent Schools) Regulations 2003, where disclosure is required in the course of an ISI school inspection, or where any other legal obligation prevails. The school will provide ISI, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint.

The school's Complaints Procedure for Parents is drafted in accordance with Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and applies to complaints from current pupils and to the parents of former pupils if the complaint was raised when the pupil was registered at the school.

This policy will be made available to parents and prospective parents on the school's website and a copy is available for inspection at school during the school day. The number of complaints in the previous year will also be made available to parents.

The school will keep a record of all complaints received during each academic year and this record will be retained for at least seven years. These records will include details of whether the complaint has been resolved at the formal stage or has proceeded to a Stage 3 Panel hearing. The records will also include information on whether the complaint has been upheld or not and whether any actions have been taken.

However, where there is a safeguarding angle to the complaint records must be preserved for the term of the independent enquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer. The record of complaints must be made available to ISI on request.

This policy does not apply to suspensions & exclusions. See Suspension & Exclusion policy.

Timescales:

It is in everyone's interest to resolve concerns and complaints quickly. Complaints are more difficult to resolve with the passage of time, so complaints should normally be raised within three months of the incident. In exceptional circumstances, complaints will be considered outside this timeframe, but the school and complainants should recognise that the task facing investigators then becomes more difficult.

1. Informal Resolution

It is anticipated that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. In the first instance, we advise parents to raise their concerns with the appropriate person either by telephone or by arranging a meeting. This is because a dialogue enables each person to hear the others opinion and often helps people to understand the context of a situation.

In the Senior Department:
- Academic matters: Subject Teacher or Head of Department
- Pastoral matters: Form Teacher or Pastoral Co-ordinator

In the Prep Department:
- Regarding academic and pastoral matters, parents are advised to make contact with the class teacher.
- If any other member of staff is approached by a parent, the member of staff will refer the matter to the class teacher as a matter of protocol.

In some matters, parents may wish to direct their complaint to the Head of the Prep Department, one of the Deputy Heads, or the Head Teacher.

Any member of staff receiving a complaint will make a written record of the complaint, recording the date on which it was received.

Should the matter not be resolved within 10 school days, or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents may proceed with their complaint in accordance with formal resolution procedure below.

In matters which they consider to be serious enough, parents may choose to omit the informal stage and proceed directly to the formal resolution procedure.

2. Formal Resolution

When the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, parents should put their complaint **in writing** to the Head Teacher. (Note: although all formal complaints will 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).

If the written complaint is received during term-time, the Head Teacher will meet or speak to the parents concerned to discuss the matter, within 5 school days of receiving the complaint.

If the written complaint is received in the school holidays, a revised time-scale may apply. Wherever possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Head Teacher to carry out further investigations. The Head Teacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Once the Head Teacher is satisfied that, so far as is reasonably practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, she will make a decision and parents will be informed of this decision, in writing, within 20 school days of having received the complaint.

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements must be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 school days.

If parents are still not satisfied with this decision, they may proceed to request a panel hearing. Parents may also wish to contact the Independent Schools' Inspectorate, www.isi.net, or in the case of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Ofsted, www.ofsted.gov.uk, about their concerns.

3. Panel Hearing

Following a failure to reach an earlier resolution, or in the event of a complaint directed against the conduct of the Head Teacher, parents may request a panel hearing.

They should write to the Chair of Governors c/o Bridgewater School, Drywood Hall, Worsley Road, Worsley, Manchester, M28 2WQ, giving details of their complaint and any related action taken by the School. The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of such a request within 10 school days. The matter will then be referred to a Complaints Panel for consideration.

The Panel will consist of at least two serving School Governors and, in addition, a suitable person who is independent of the management running or governance of the School. The Panel members, who should not have had any direct involvement with matters detailed in the complaint, will be appointed by the Chair of Governors. The panel hearing will take place within 20 school days, although different time scales may apply in school holidays.

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. Copies of such particulars will be supplied to relevant parties not later than 3 days prior to the hearing.

The parents may be accompanied at the hearing by one other person who may be a relative, teacher or friend. However, legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint at the time of the hearing, without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the panel will decide how it should be carried out.

After due consideration of all facts they consider to be relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations. The Panel will write to the parents, informing them of their decision and the reasons for it, within 28 school days of the hearing.

The Panel's findings and any recommendations will also be sent in writing to the Head Teacher and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint had been made and to the Board of Governors.

The decision of the Panel will be final.

Reviewed by the Head Teacher and Senior Management Team – October 2026

STATEMENT OF COMPLAINTS

The regulatory requirements for schools require a statement, published to parents, of the number of formal complaints handled by the school each year that have reached the formal stage (Stage 2):

In 2025 – 2026, there were 6 complaints at Stage 2 and 0 at Stage 3

Independent Schools Inspectorate
CAP House
9 – 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA

Telephone: 020 7600 0100 or

Ofsted
26 – 32 Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone: 0843 504 0627

Policy approved by:

J.A.T. Nairn .

JAT Nairn
Head Teacher & Designated Safeguarding Lead

K Mort

K Mort
Chair of Governors & Safeguarding Governor

Appendix A: Persistent correspondence, vexatious, serial and unreasonable complaints

Bridgewater School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which impedes our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.