Procedure for Handling Parental Complaints

Burton Hathow Preparatory School Including EYFS

Introduction

This procedure has been developed in accordance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Schedule 1, Part 7, paragraph 33, and the Department for Education's Independent School Standards Guidance (April 2026). For children within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the School also has regard to the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, effective from 1 September 2026.

Burton Hathow Preparatory School aims to educate and care for its pupils in a way that fully meets the expectations of their parents. But difficulties and misunderstandings may occur from time to time with the result that parental expectations are not met. Burton Hathow Preparatory School has established this procedure with the intention of meeting the concerns of parents (the term parent covers parent or legal guardian) before they develop into complaints and of resolving complaints that do arise as effectively as possible. A 'concern' may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. A complaint may be generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'

Background and summary of process

Burton Hathow Preparatory School is responsible with parents for the welfare of its pupils and for enabling them to develop in a happy environment and reach their full potential. The communities of teachers and of parents of pupils at Burton Hathow Preparatory School comprise individuals who inevitably have differing views of how best to discharge this responsibility, based on different experiences. These differences of view are to be expected both within the teaching community and within the parental community and between parents and teachers, despite the shared interest in the welfare and development of pupils. Given that there will be such differences, it may not always be obvious when a parent should express a concern or make a complaint.

Burton Hathow Preparatory School would prefer the parents of its pupils to raise any concerns they may have about the education and development of their children, or about any aspect of the running of the School, or any part of it, at the earliest possible time. Addressing a concern before it becomes a complaint is in the best interests of pupils, parents and the School, but it can only happen if the School is aware of the concern.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about an action taken, a failure to act, or a service provided by the School. A complaint may be made orally or in writing at the informal stage. Where a

complaint progresses to Stage 2, it must be submitted in writing in accordance with this procedure.

Most parents will have concerns of some sort about their children's education at some stage. To ensure that such concerns do not become complaints Burton Hathow Preparatory School wants parents to make use of this procedure to resolve concerns as well as complaints.

The procedure is in three stages. The first stage is an informal stage in which parents should raise their concerns orally with a teacher or with the Head. The second stage is a more formal stage, in which parents may raise their concern or complaint in writing with the Head. The third stage is intended for matters that cannot be resolved through the first two stages and is a referral to a Complaints Panel. These stages are described in more detail below. Complaints not lodged within the standard period will not be refused. This procedure applies to complaints made by parents or legal guardians of pupils currently attending Burton Hathow Preparatory School. Where a complaint has been initiated while a pupil is on roll, the procedure will continue to its conclusion even if the pupil subsequently leaves the School. Complaints from other individuals may be considered by the School as appropriate but do not fall within the statutory parental complaints procedure.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Burton Hathow Preparatory School hopes that most concerns and complaints can and will be resolved quickly and informally.

Parents with a concern or complaint should normally raise it with their child's class or Form Teacher. If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone he or she may refer it to the Head. A parent may raise the matter directly with the Head if this seems appropriate (for example if the matter concerns the conduct of the Form Teacher).

Where a matter is referred to the Head they may ask a member of the SLT or another member of the teaching staff to handle it.

The person handling the complaint on behalf of Burton Hathow Preparatory School will make a written note of the concern or complaint, using the format at Appendix 1, and record the date on which it was raised. The School will aim to resolve concerns and complaints raised informally within seven working days of receipt. Where this is not possible, the parent will be informed of the reason for the delay and the anticipated date of resolution. If the parent remains dissatisfied, or the concern cannot be resolved informally, they may proceed to Stage 2.

Stage 2 – Formal Reference to Head

If a concern or complaint cannot be resolved informally **within the time frame set out above** or if the way in which the concern or complaint is addressed is not satisfactory to the parents who raised it, then the parents may put their concern or complaint in writing to the Head, ideally using the template at Appendix 1.

The Head will decide, after considering the concern or complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. In most cases the Head will speak to the parents. It is likely that the Head will need to investigate the matter or to arrange for a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or other member of staff to conduct an investigation on their behalf. The nature of the concern or complaint and of the investigation that is required will determine when the Head will speak to the parents and whether it is necessary to discuss the matter with them on more than one occasion.

Formal complaints will be acknowledged in writing within three working days of receipt. The Head will investigate the complaint, or arrange for an appropriate person to undertake the investigation, and will aim to provide a written response within fourteen working days of receipt. In exceptional circumstances, where further investigation is required, the School will inform the parent of the reasons for the delay and provide a revised response date. The School will normally conclude Stage 2 within twenty-eight working days of receipt.

The Head will keep or arrange for the keeping of written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to a Stage 2 reference.

The Head's proposals for resolving the concern or complaint will be put in writing to the parents who raised the matter, with reasons for the proposals.

Where a complaint concerns the Head, the complaint should be submitted in writing to the Chair of the Board, whose contact details are: Mr Simon Robinson Burton Hathow Preparatory School, Saxilby Road, Lincoln. LN1 2BB simon.robinson@burtonhathow.co.uk, or another suitably appointed person who has not been directly involved in the matters complained about, will consider and investigate the complaint under Stage 2 of this procedure.

The complaint will be acknowledged and responded to within the Stage 2 timescales. If the parent remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may request a Stage 3 Complaints Panel hearing. Any person directly involved in investigating or determining the complaint at Stage 2 must not subsequently sit as a member of the Stage 3 Complaints Panel.

Stage 3 – Reference to a Complaints Panel

Where a parent remains dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, they may request that their complaint be considered by a Complaints Panel. The request should be made in writing to the Head, or to the Chair of the Board where the complaint concerns the Head, within seven working days of receiving the Stage 2 outcome.

The request should explain why the parent remains dissatisfied and what outcome they are seeking. Requests received outside this timescale will be considered where there are reasonable grounds for the delay.

A Complaints Panel will be appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor of the School. The Panel will consist of at least three members, none of whom has been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

At least one member of the Panel must be independent of the management and running of the School. The independent member must not be a member of the School's workforce, governing or proprietorial body, or otherwise involved in the management of the School.

The Panel will be appointed within seven working days of receipt of the request for a Stage 3 hearing, wherever reasonably practicable.

The parent will be given the opportunity to attend the Complaints Panel hearing and present their complaint. The parent may be accompanied by a friend, relative or adviser of their choice.

The School will provide reasonable notice of the hearing date and details of the arrangements. The Panel will consider reasonable requests for adjustments to enable parents to participate effectively.

Legal representation is not an automatic entitlement under this procedure, although the Panel may permit it where appropriate. The parent may choose not to attend, in which case the Panel may consider the complaint on the written evidence available, provided the parent has been given a reasonable opportunity to participate.

The proceedings of a Complaints Panel shall be recorded in writing.

A Complaints Panel may adopt such additional procedures and conduct such investigations as it sees fit for considering a complaint.

A Complaints Panel may make such findings and recommendations, as it deems appropriate in the light of its consideration of the complaint, of the response of Burton Hathow Preparatory School to the complaint and of its investigations.

The Complaints Panel will issue its findings and recommendations in writing, together with the reasons for its conclusions. A copy will be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about.

The findings and recommendations will also be made available for inspection on the School premises by the proprietor and the Head.

The School will aim to provide the written outcome within ten working days of the hearing. Where this is not possible, the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay and the anticipated date of the outcome.

The decision of the Complaints Panel represents the conclusion of the School's internal complaints procedure.

Parents should note that the decision of the Complaints Panel will be final.

For the purposes of this procedure, a working day means a day on which the School is open to pupils during term time, excluding weekends, bank holidays and school holidays. Where a complaint is received outside term time, it will be acknowledged as soon as reasonably practicable and the relevant timescale will normally commence on the first working day of the following term. The School will endeavour to resolve complaints promptly and will inform parents where exceptional circumstances require an extension to the published timescales.

Anonymous Complaints

The School recognises that concerns or complaints may occasionally be raised anonymously. Such matters will be considered seriously and assessed according to the information available, particularly where safeguarding or pupil welfare concerns are identified.

Anonymous complaints may be more difficult to investigate fully where additional information cannot be obtained. The School will determine the appropriate action on a case-by-case basis, maintaining confidentiality and protecting personal information in accordance with applicable data protection legislation.

Where an anonymous complaint raises a safeguarding concern, it will be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and managed in accordance with the School's safeguarding procedures.

Confidentiality

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be treated confidentially and shared only where necessary and lawful.

In accordance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Schedule 1, Part 7, paragraph 33(k), complaint records will be made available where requested by the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

Information may also be disclosed where required or permitted by law, including where necessary for safeguarding, legal proceedings or the exercise of statutory functions.

Personal information will be processed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018 and the School's Data Protection Policy.

Information about individual complaints will not ordinarily be shared with the full Board, particularly where members may subsequently be required to participate in a Complaints Panel hearing.

Further Records and Provision of Information

The School will maintain a written record of all formal complaints received under Stage 2 of this procedure, including whether each complaint was resolved following the formal procedure or proceeded to a Stage 3 Complaints Panel hearing.

Records will include the nature of the complaint, relevant dates, investigations undertaken, the outcome, and any action taken by the School, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld.

The School will also maintain appropriate records of informal concerns and complaints to support effective resolution and identify opportunities for improvement. All records will be retained securely in accordance with the School's records retention arrangements and applicable legal requirements.

The School will make its complaints procedure available to parents of current and prospective pupils.

In accordance with Schedule 1, Part 6, paragraph 32 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the School will make

available the number of complaints registered under the formal complaints procedure during the preceding school year.

This information will be provided to parents of current and prospective pupils and, upon request, to the relevant regulatory or inspection authorities, as required by the Independent School Standards.

Number of complaints registered under the formal complaints procedure during the academic year 2025–2026: 0

Number of complaints proceeding to a Stage 3 Complaints Panel hearing: 0

Appendix 1 – Details of Concern or Complaint

Appendix 2 – Action Taken in Response to a Concern or Complaint

Appendix 1

Details of a Concern or Complaint

{May be used for Informal or Formal Concern or Complaint}

Full Name of Person Raising Concern or Complaint: Name of pupil (where applicable): Relationship of complainant to pupil: Contact details of complainant: Date the concern or complaint was first raised: Stage of complaint: Informal / Stage 2 Formal Supporting documents or evidence provided:	
Details of the concern or complaint:	
Steps already taken to resolve the matter:	
Outcome sought by the complainant:	
Full name of Staff Member recording/receiving the Concern or Complaint:	
Date & Time Concern or Complaint received by Head Teacher:	

CONFIDENTIAL (When submitted)

Appendix 2

Action Taken in Response to a Concern or Complaint

Complaint reference number:
Stage at which complaint was resolved:
Date investigation commenced:
Person responsible for investigation:

Decision Regarding Concern or Complaint:	
Complaint upheld / partially upheld / not upheld Evidence considered:	
Action(s) Taken:	
Name:	Position:
Signed:	Date:
Any Follow-up Action Required:	

CONFIDENTIAL (When completed)