The New Beacon
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# Complaints Procedure

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| Revised by: | Susan Lyons |
| Revision Date: | March 2026 |
| Next Revision Date: | March 2028 |

## Introduction

The New Beacon 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 with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure.

The New Beacon makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and prospective pupils on the School's website and in the School office during the school day. In addition, The New Beacon will ensure that parents of pupils and prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the format in which it is published or available, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulation 2014, The New Beacon 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.

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.

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. The only exception to this is if the complaint is a review of a decision taken by the Head to exclude or require the removal of a pupil under Section G, clause 62 of the School's Terms and Conditions in which case such a review must be requested by no later than **five term-time working days excluding weekends** from the date of the decision to exclude or require the removal of a pupil.

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

## What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action' in relation to 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. 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.

A complaint is different to a concern. A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Concerns should be raised with your child's Form Tutor. However, this procedure deals with complaints, and parents are encouraged to identify any issue raised as a 'complaint', if they wish this procedure to be followed.

Parents should not approach individual Governors to raise concerns or complaints. Governors have no power to act on an individual basis and it may prevent them from considering complaints if escalated to Stage 3 of the procedure.

**Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially and no child will be penalised for a concern or complaint that has been raised in good faith.**

## The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

### Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's Head of Section. In many cases, this will allow the matter to be satisfactorily resolved straightaway. If the Head of Section cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult the Deputy Head.
- If the complaint needs investigating, confidentiality will be observed as far as is consistent with proper investigation and effective handling of a complaint. It is School policy that the making of a complaint by a parent will not in any way rebound adversely on their child.
- The Head of Section, or Deputy Head will make a written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved **within 10 term-time working days excluding weekends** or if the Head of Section 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.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to the Governors whose email address is clerk@newbeacon.org.uk.

### Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will meet / speak to the parents concerned, **within 10 term-time working days excluding weekends** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head, or their nominee, to carry out further investigations.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Head will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons **within 20 term-time working days excluding weekends** of the complaint being put in writing to them.

- If the complaint is against the Head, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to the Governors. The Chair of Governors, or their nominee, will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors or their nominee may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to, or meet with, the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair of Governors or their nominee is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair of Governors or their nominee will give reasons for their decision.

- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure within **within 10 term-time working days excluding weekends** of receiving the Stage 2 decision.

**Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the Clerk to the Governors, who will act as Secretary to the Panel, **within 10 term-time working days excluding weekends** 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.

- The Secretary to the Panel will refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Chair of Governors will appoint one Panel member to act as Chair of the Panel. The Secretary to the Panel, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint **within 5 term-time working days excluding weekends** and schedule a hearing to take place **within 20 term-time working days excluding weekends**.

- 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. These particulars must be submitted **within 10 term-time working days excluding weekends** of the Panel meeting. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties **not later than 5 term-time working days excluding weekends** prior to the hearing.

- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. The Head or any member of staff 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 but should not be a legal representative, unless this has been agreed for specific agreed reasons before-hand. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.

- The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the way the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.

- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint 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 the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to**:**
    - dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part; or
    - uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
    - make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, **within 5 term-time working days excluding weekends 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 Head. 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.
- The Panel's decision shall be final and not subject to further appeal. A statement to this effect will be contained within the letter detailing the decision of the Panel.
- Any complaint of a decision taken by the Head to exclude or require the removal of the pupil under the School's Terms and Conditions 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 Head 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.

**Early Years Foundation**

Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate) or Ofsted. Parents will be notified by Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received. The ISI does not operate fixed response timescales and will respond in accordance with its own complaints procedures.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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

ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

Or by letter to: ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA.

**Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints**

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

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 term-time working days excluding weekends**. Stage 3, the Panel Hearing, will be completed **within a further 20 term-time working days excluding weekends**.

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 because 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.

## Recording and Retention of Complaints

The School will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the Stage 1 (informal stage), the Stage 2 (formal stage) or proceed to a Stage 3 (Panel hearing), along with any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

## Persistent correspondence

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

## Other Considerations

- Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an Inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Education Act requests access to them, or where disclosure is required under other legal authority.
- It should be noted that in the unlikely event it is found that the Complaints Procedure has not been met because of the way a particular complaint has been handled, the Secretary of State has no power to compel the School to alter its decision on the complaint, only to take regulatory action to address the failure to meet the complaints standard, so that future complaints are dealt with correctly.

## Complaints regarding Boarding Pupils

Boarders' parents can also complain to ISI.

The address for ISI is as follows: Independent Schools Inspectorate, Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA; telephone 020 7600 0100.