



Byron College

Parents' Complaint Procedure

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Byron College aims to solve concerns and complaints as quickly and effectively as possible.

Anyone with parental responsibility for a pupil can complain if they are not satisfied with the service they receive.

The procedure for complaints is designed to ensure that, wherever possible, an informal resolution is attempted. All stages of the complaints procedure will be investigatory than adversarial.

Byron College will take all informal concerns and complaints seriously at the earliest stage to try to reduce the number that develop into formal complaints.

This is facilitated by our school administration staff who are fluent in the two other main languages spoken within our community, Greek and Arabic.

The underlying principle at Byron College is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures.

A pupil, parent or guardian wishing to make a complaint of any nature should explain the circumstances to the subject teacher, form teacher or any other senior member of the full-time academic staff.

The aim at this stage is to resolve the complaint at source.

It is likely that a problem will become more difficult to solve as more people become involved.

All staff will hope to be able to resolve issues on the spot or if that is not possible through mediation. This should include advice, information, discussion and explanation.

If concerns are taken directly to the Head Teacher or to other senior leaders, a parent may be asked if they have discussed their concerns with the relevant teacher and/or Head of Department, and should want to arrange a meeting to do that.

The main priority is to resolve the matter quickly and calmly, involving just the people needed to help solve the problem.

All complaints will be recorded and the action taken in response will also be recorded.

The responsibility for dealing with general complaints lies solely with the School.

All parents need to be informed that any anonymous complaint will not be investigated under the parents Complaint Procedure unless there are truly exceptional circumstances. These would include serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the School might have to involve appropriate external agencies or might conduct its own internal review to test for any corroborative evidence which might trigger a formal investigation.

PART A Complaining about the actions of a member of staff

Informal Stage

The complainant is normally expected to communicate directly with the member of staff concerned. This may be done by letter, by telephone or in person by appointment. At Byron College we believe that many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or by providing information and it is our experience that most complaints are resolved by this informal stage.

A written record of complaint will only be kept if the complainant specifically requests this. The member of staff involved is, however, obliged to report the event to a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

An unreasonable refusal by the complainant to attempt an informal resolution may result in the procedure being terminated. If the complaint is not resolved by meeting with the member of staff concerned the complainant should arrange to meet the Head Teacher to discuss their complaint.

Formal Stage

If the complaint is not resolved at the informal stage then the complaint must be put in writing and passed to the Head Teacher who will be responsible for its investigation.

All formal complaints will be logged in the School's Complaints Register, kept by the Head Teacher and available to Governors and external inspectors.

The written complaint should include all details that might assist the investigation. The Head Teacher may meet with the complainant to clarify the complaint.

The Head Teacher will collect such other evidence as deemed necessary.

The investigation will begin as soon as possible and concluded within 5 school days. When it has been concluded the complainant and member of staff will be informed in writing of the outcome.

The outcome will be one of the following:

- There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so that the complaint cannot be upheld
- The concern is not substantiated by the evidence
- The concern was substantiated in part or in full. Details will then be given of any action the School may be taking in response to the complaint. Details of individual actions taken in respect of a member of staff will not be given
- The matter has been fully investigated and appropriate procedures are being followed, which are strictly confidential.

The complainant will be told that consideration of their complaint by the Head Teacher is now concluded.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed by the Head Teacher, they may request a review by the Governing Board. Any such request should be made in writing and specifically state any perceived failures to follow the procedure.

Part B Complaining about the actions of the Head Teacher

Informal Stage

Any complainant is usually expected to arrange to speak directly with the Head Teacher.

Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification of the provision of information.

If the matter is not resolved, if both parties agree, then a third party may be invited to act as a mediator at a further meeting.

A refusal, unreasonably, to attempt an informal resolution may result in the procedure being terminated forthwith.

Formal Stage

If the complaint is not resolved at the informal stage the complainant must put the complaint in writing and pass it to the Chair of the Board.

The written complaint should include all details that might assist the investigation. The complainant will be invited to meet with the Chair or designated Governor to present oral evidence or to clarify the complaint.

The Chair will collect such other evidence as is deemed necessary. This may include the interviewing of witnesses and others.

The Head Teacher will be provided with a copy of the complaint and any additional evidence presented or collected by the Chair.

The Head Teacher will then be invited to meet with the Chair, separately, to present any written or oral evidence in response.

When the investigation has been concluded then the Head Teacher and the complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome.

Details of individual action taken in respect of a member of staff will not be given.

The complainant will be told that consideration of their complaint by the Chair is now concluded.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, finds the decision perverse or believes that the Chair has acted unreasonably then a request for a review can be made to the Chair, in writing, within 10 days of notice and include a statement specifying any perceived failures.

Part C Review Process

A panel of three members of the Board shall conduct any review of the process followed by the Head Teacher or the Chair.

The review will normally be conducted through the consideration of written submissions.

- The panel will be sympathetic to oral representations
- The panel will first receive written evidence from the complainant
- The panel will then write the Head Teacher or Chair, as appropriate, to make a response to the complainant
- The panel will have access to the records kept of the process followed.

The complainant, the Head Teacher or the Chair, as appropriate, will be informed in writing of the outcome. This may be to the effect that:

- There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld
- The concern is not substantiated by the evidence
- The concern was substantiated in part or in full but the procedural failure did not affect the outcome significantly so the matter is now closed
- The concern was substantiated in part or in full and the Governing Body will take steps to prevent a recurrence or to rectify the situation, where this is practicable.

Note: The complainant is not allowed access to any details of the investigation except for any statements that have been provided to the application of disciplinary procedures is strictly confidential.

An advisory note, produced by Byron College Head Teacher and Governors for all colleagues and employees who might find themselves recipients of concerns/complaints and feel they can enter with a dialogue.

How to listen to complaints

As soon as you realise that you are listening to a complaint, remember these points.

Say who you are

If you are unknown to the person, introduce yourself.

Ask for their name and use it	Anonymous complaints are acceptable only where there are special circumstances.
Don't pass the buck	Try not transferring any angry person from one place to another. Make sure you know the contact person for anything you can deal with yourself.
Don't be the flippant	First impressions count. The School may be judged on your immediate action.
Treat all complaints seriously	However small or trivial it may seem to you. The complaint will be an important problem for anyone who takes the trouble to complain.
Treat every complaint individually	Even if you have already received similar complaints on the same day, it is probably the person's first chance to have their say.
Be courteous and patient	Be sympathetic and helpful, but do <u>not</u> blame other colleagues.
Take time to find out exactly what the problem is	It is easy for someone to forget to tell you an important detail, particularly if they are annoyed or upset.
Don't take the complaint personally	To an angry or upset person, YOU are the School and the only one they can put their feelings to right now.
Stay cool and calm	Do not argue with the person – be polite and try to find out what the person thinks is going wrong, or has gone wrong.
Check that you are being understood	Make sure the person understands what you are saying.

Don't rush

Take your time. Let people have their say and let off steam if they need to. Listen carefully and sympathetically to their problems before replying and attempting to find a solution or offer a next step.