



BARNFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Governors of Barnfield Primary School have adopted the following procedure to respond to concerns and formal complaints from members of the school community or general public.

Aims

- To ensure that parents can easily inform the school of complaints or concerns
- To ensure a positive and appropriate response from the school within the quickest possible time
- To ensure consistent responses in the handling of complaints by school and Governors

The difference between a concern and a complaint

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'*.

Who can raise a concern/complaint?

Any person, including members of the general public, may raise a concern or make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply; these include:

- School admissions
- Exclusion of a pupil from school
- Statutory assessment of Special Educational Needs
- School reorganisation proposals
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation
- Whistle blowing
- Complaints about services supplied by other providers who use school premises/facilities
- Staff grievances or staff disciplinary procedure.

The school may not limit complaints or concerns to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school.

Principles informing the concerns/complaints procedure

This procedure is designed to:

- Be well publicised and easily accessible
- Be simple to understand and use
- Be impartial
- Be non-adversarial
- Allow swift handling with established time limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- Allow a mediation process if agreed by the complainant
- Allow for a hearing of a panel of Governors, where appropriate
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality, wherever possible

- Address all points of issue, provide an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary
- Provide information to the school's Leadership Team – including Governors - so that services can be improved.

Procedure for dealing with concerns/complaints

Stage 1 – Informal

Department for Education guidance (January 2016) draws a distinction between informal and formal stages of raising concerns/complaints.

If parents, pupils or members of the public have concerns they should:

1. Discuss their concerns with the member of staff most directly involved; if not satisfied, then:
2. Discuss their concerns with a senior member of staff or the Pastoral Manager; if not satisfied. Then:
3. Discuss their concerns with the Headteacher – *this part of the procedure is the first **formal** stage*

At each stage in the procedure, the school will bear in mind ways in which a concern or complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the concern or complaint is valid in whole or in part.

Complainants should be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence. Equally, an effective procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

Only where all these avenues have been tried and found unsatisfactory should the complainant take a complaint to the Chair.

If the headteacher considers s/he can do no more to resolve a concern/ complaint it should be stated explicitly that the complainant can write to the Chair of Governors if not satisfied. Complainants should be encouraged to take this step because an unresolved complaint can be damaging.

Making a Complaint to the Governing Body

Stage 2 - Formal

*Department for Education guidance draws a distinction between informal and formal stages of raising concerns/complaints; this part of the procedure is the **second formal** stage*

Where informal attempts have been unsuccessful in resolving a complaint, the complainant should write to the Chair of Governors via the school office or the email chair@barnfield.barnetmail.net .

The communication should be marked 'FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION' and staff in the school office must ensure that the letter is forwarded without delay (if a letter is provided rather than an email).

On receipt of the complaint the Chair of Governors will:

- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- Meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

At this point the Chair of Governors will investigate the complaint and send a written summary of their findings to the parent.

Governors' Complaints Panel

Where the complainant is still not satisfied that their complaint has been dealt with fully and properly, they may choose to take it to a panel of Governors.

The complaints Committee considers the complaint and reaches a decision; the parents are informed of the decision and that if they are not satisfied with the decision, they may submit an appeal to the Governing Body's Appeal Committee

Stage 3 – Appeal

Appeals Committee

Parents notify the Clerk to the Governing Body that they wish to appeal against the decision of the Governing Body's Complaints Committee; The Appeals Committee decides whether or not to uphold the decision of the Complaints Committee. The parents are notified of the decision of the Appeals Committee.

Unreasonable, Serial and Consistent Complainers

The school will do its best to be helpful to people who raise a concern or complaint. However, in cases where the school is contacted repeatedly by an individual making the same points, or asking to reconsider the position, it may be appropriate for the Chair of Governors to respond advising that the procedure has been completed and the matter is now closed, or the school may choose not to respond. The application of a 'serial or persistent' ruling should be against the subject or complaint, not the complainant.

Can a complaint be taken further?

A complaint cannot be taken to the local authority. The local authority cannot investigate school matters on a parent's behalf nor can it review how the school has dealt with your complaint. If you feel that the school has acted unreasonably or has not followed the correct procedures, you can contact the Secretary of State for Education.

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