



POLICY DOCUMENT

Beenham Primary School School Complaints Procedures

Any person may make a complaint or voice a concern about facilities or services that a school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply.

This document sets out the policy for dealing with concerns and complaints. The content complies with Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016 (Department for Education – January 2016)

Definitions:

A concern - an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.

A complaint - an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.

The school takes concerns very seriously and makes every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible without the need to refer to a formal complaints procedure.

This procedure should be used for:

- Formal concerns or complaints relating to the schooling of your child
- Formal concerns or complaints about the education and care provided to pupils at the school
- Formal concerns or complaints about the school's operational arrangements

This policy should not be used for:

- Formal concerns or complaints about the actions of a governor – please write to the Clerk to the Governing Body
- Grievances raised by staff about their employment – (see staff grievance policy)
- Whistle-blowing (see separate policy)
- Allegations of abuse should be discussed with the Headteacher or senior staff member (see separate policy)
- Formal concerns or complaints about the actions of another parent should be reported to the Headteacher who will investigate.
- Formal concerns or complaints about services provided by others who may use school premises or facilities.

Investigating Complaints

At each stage the person investigating the complaint will ensure that they:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained about, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind
- keep notes of any interview or meeting

- communicate with the complainant at each stage over discussions and agreements reached. Expected resolutions At each stage in the procedure, successful resolution of the complaint will take priority.

If appropriate one or more of the following may be offered:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

Timeliness

This procedure is limited to matters which can reasonably be investigated. We expect complaints to be made as soon as possible after an incident arises (three months is generally considered to be an acceptable time frame in which to lodge a complaint); However, we will consider exceptions if there are special circumstances which have led to a delay in making the complaint.

On occasion, the school may need to extend the time to respond to a complaint. This may be because of resource or capacity issues, or because additional information needs to be obtained to investigate the complaint. In such cases, the school will provide a holding letter, explaining the reason for the delay, and providing a date by which a response will be supplied.

Raising a concern or complaint

Stage one (Informal) It is normally appropriate to communicate directly with the member of staff concerned. Appointments to meet with a member of staff can be arranged via the school office or Class Dojo.

Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information and it's anticipated that most complaints will be resolved by this informal route. Complaints must not be referred to individual governors, the complainant should be referred to the appropriate person above and advised of the procedure. Governors must not act on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage.

Stage two (formal) If a concern or complaint isn't resolved at the informal stage (stage one) a complaint can be put in writing (including email) to the Headteacher.

If the concern or complaint is about the Headteacher the complaint can be made to the clerk of the Governing Body for the attention of the chair.

It is important to include a clear statement of the actions that you would like the school to take to resolve the concern.

What to expect

The school will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days. The Headteacher or chair of governors may invite you to a meeting to clarify your concerns or complaint and explore the possibility of an informal resolution. Feel free to bring a friend or family member to support you. Any investigation will begin as soon as possible and you will be informed in writing of its conclusion when completed.

Once clarified some concerns or complaints may be handled through a separate policy or procedure to resolve them as quickly as possible and to safeguard the interests of the individuals involved. A summary of possible concerns and the relevant policies is given in appendix A.

Stage three (Governing Body review) If you are not satisfied with the manner in which the complaints process has been conducted you may request a review by the governing body. Any such request must be made in writing to the clerk of the governing body within 10 school days of receiving the conclusion of the formal investigation (stage two).

The request must include a statement of any perceived failures of the procedure. A review panel will be composed of three members of the current governing body and the investigation will usually start within 15 school days of receiving the request.

The panel will investigate the complaint promptly and impartially. You will receive a written explanation of the outcome and action taken within 5 school days of the panel meeting. Individual complaints will not be heard by the whole governing body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up. Any governors involved in earlier stages of the complaint will be excluded from sitting on the panel to preserve its independence.

WHEN THE SCHOOL'S PROCEDURE HAS BEEN COMPLETED

If a complaint has completed the school procedure and the complainant remains dissatisfied, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State has a duty to consider all complaints raised but will only intervene where the governing body has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and where it is expedient or practical to do so.

The School Complaints Unit (SCU) considers complaints relating to LA maintained schools in England on behalf of the Secretary of State. The SCU will look at whether the complaints policy and any other relevant statutory policies were adhered to. However, the SCU will not normally re-investigate the substance of the complaint. This remains the responsibility of schools. The SCU will not overturn a school's decision about a complaint except in exceptional circumstances where it is clear the school has acted unlawfully or unreasonably. If the SCU finds that the school has not handled a complaint in accordance with its procedure, the SCU may request that the complaint is looked at again.

If legislative or policy breaches are found, the SCU will report them to the school and the complainant, and where necessary, ask for corrective action to be taken.

Further information can be obtained from the SCU by calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288 or going online at: www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus or by writing to: Department for Education School Complaints Unit 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD Legal Action

If, at any stage of the process, the complainant starts legal action in relation to the matters under considerations, the complaints process will automatically cease, and all further correspondence will be with the Schools' legal representatives.

Record Keeping

We will comply with their obligations under the Equality Act 2010. A copy of all written communication should be retained for reference. Complainants have a right to copies of these records under the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts. Only complaints relating to the schooling of a specific child would be kept within the child's files. Other issues will be filed separately in a secure location and will be retained for a period of 7 years.

Monitoring and evaluating the policy

All documentation regarding complaints (including notes of any related meetings and telephone calls), the action taken and the final outcome will be recorded and a summary included in the Headteacher's termly report to governors as and when required. The governing body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary.

Complaints information shared with the whole governing body will not name individuals. The monitoring and review of complaints by the school and the governing body is a useful tool in evaluating the school's performance and will contribute to school improvement. Any underlying issues identified will be addressed.