

Beaver Road Primary School

Aim

To establish fair and consistent procedures to deal with complaints relating to the School, and any community facilities or services it provides, as required by Section 29 of the Education Act 2002.

Preamble

1. As a School, we encourage dialogue between parents, staff and governors. Whilst this formal procedure is required, it is not intended to cover the normal process of dialogue with parents and pupils, including the expression of negative comments about aspects of the school, and we hope that people will normally use these informal approaches to the School.
2. The formal procedure is not meant to cover cases where parents are concerned about developments, and just want teachers or others to keep an eye out for problems: for example, if a parent is concerned that their child is having difficulties in a subject, or there seems to be some aggravation between their child and another pupil. Such issues should be dealt with more informally.
3. This Complaints Procedure is for use when someone has either come to an impasse in the process of dialogue, or they feel that a more formal complaint is appropriate.
4. Stage 1 of the process below refers to informal complaints. However, complaints of a serious nature about the conduct of a member of staff should be made formally (Stage 2), and complaints about the Head should go straight to the Governors (Stage 3).
5. Copies of formal complaints, and any written response, will be kept in a file, held by the Head.

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Stage 1 - Informal Complaints

1. Any complaints received by the School will be forwarded to the appropriate member of staff and the person expressing the complaint will be advised who is dealing with the matter.
2. The relevant member of staff will, wherever possible, telephone or write to the person making the complaint by the end of the next working day, either to discuss the matter or to assure them that the matter is in hand.
3. The School will respect the views of a complainant who indicates that s/he would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In such cases, the complaint will be referred to another staff member.
4. Should a member of staff be unable to deal with a complaint, it will be referred to the relevant line manager.
5. If the complaint progresses to the appropriate member of the School Leadership Team and still cannot be resolved informally, the complainant will be invited to make a formal complaint, as in Stage 2 below
6. Where the first approach is made to a governor, the governor will refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure. Governors will not act unilaterally 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 of the procedure.

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Stage 2 - Formal Complaint

1. Formal complaints should be made on the Complaints Form, available from the School.
2. Upon receipt of a formal complaint, the Headteacher (or Deputy Headteacher in his absence) will normally ask another senior member of staff to investigate the matter and provide him with all relevant information.
3. The Head (or his representative) will inform the complainant that the complaint has been received and indicate the nature and timescale of any investigation and conclusion, which will normally be within 10 working days.
4. After considering all the available information, the Head (or his representative) will inform the complainant of the outcome of the complaint.
5. If the complainant is still dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further, s/he will be advised of the right to refer the complaint to the Governors.

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Stage 3 - Complaint Heard by Governors' Complaints Panel

1. The complainant should make a formal complaint to the Chair of Governors using the Complaints Form, available from the School. The Chair, or a nominated governor, will convene a Governing Body complaints panel, consisting of three governors, normally within 15 working days of receiving the complaint.
2. The governors' appeal hearing is the last School-based stage of the complaints process, and is not convened to merely rubber-stamp previous decisions.
3. Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole Governing Body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

The Panel can:

- a) Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
 - b) Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
 - c) Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
 - d) Recommend changes to the School's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.
4. No governor may sit on the Panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
 5. The aim of the hearing, which will be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the School and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations that will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.

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6. The Clerk to the Governors will be the contact point for the complainant and will:
 - a) set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
 - b) collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;
 - c) meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
 - d) record the proceedings;
 - e) notify all parties of the Panel's decision.

7. The Chair of the Panel will ensure that:
 - a) the remit of the Panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
 - b) the issues are addressed;
 - c) key findings of fact are made;
 - d) parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
 - e) the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
 - f) the Panel is open minded and acting independently;
 - g) no member of the Panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
 - h) each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
 - i) written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it.

8. The Chair of the Panel will ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, within two working days of the hearing.

9. The decision of the Panel will be final and the School's Complaints Procedure will then have been exhausted.

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Notes:

This policy incorporates guidance issued by the Department for Education and Skills in 2003.

The expression 'working days' refers to Mondays to Fridays during student terms.