



Complaints Policy

Introduction

Most parents have positive relations with schools but on occasions things may go wrong. The guidance in this document aims to make sure that the interests of pupils, parents and school staff are taken into account when dealing with complaints.

Whether you are a parent or a member of the public the place to start is the school. It is much better if matters can be sorted out within school even if this might feel awkward in the beginning. There is usually more than one side to any dispute or misunderstanding and it is important that all the facts are known so that the best solution can be found.

In the majority of cases, Headteachers and/or school governors are responsible for investigating complaints about their services or staff. Initial complaints regarding schools should be directed to the head teacher. If the complaint is about the head teacher or you have not received a satisfactory response from the head teacher, the chair of governors should be contacted.

If you contact the Local Authority without first having gone through the above procedures, you will be referred back to the school in the first instance and follow its procedures.

Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 states that the Governing Body of a school shall establish procedures for dealing with all complaints relating to the school, other than those to be dealt with in accordance with any other statutory provision.

The guidance in this document does not cover concerns about the following, for which there are separate arrangements laid down by law:

- The school curriculum, collective worship and religious education and the provision of information required by law
- Appeals about admissions
- Appeals about exclusions
- Appeals about assessments and statements of special educational needs

Vexatious Complaints

The Headteacher and Governing Body are fully committed to the improvement of the school. They welcome feedback from parents/carers and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible.

Sometimes, however, parents or carers pursuing complaints or other issues treat staff and others in a way that is unacceptable. Whilst it is recognised that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, the school will not accept threatening or harassing behaviour towards any members of the school community.

An unreasonably persistent complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include persons who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner.

Unreasonable behaviour may include actions that are:-

- out of proportion to the nature of the complaint, or
- persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted, or
- personally harassing, or
- unjustifiably repetitious
- an insistence on pursuing unjustified complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes
- to justified complaints
- an insistence on pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner
- (eg using abusive or threatening language; or
- making complaints in public; or
- refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint.

If the complainant behaves unreasonably as outlined above the Chair of the Governing Body will write to the complainant explaining that the complaint has been through all the stages of the procedure, is now exhausted and the case is now closed.

Stage 1 – Initial Contact with the School

Many concerns will be dealt with informally when you make them known to the school. The first point of contact should be your child's class teacher.

We may request that you make an appointment, as this will ensure we can listen to your concerns fully and allocate an appropriate amount of time.

Occasionally these discussions do not always resolve the concern, and if you are still dissatisfied your concern will become a formal complaint.

Stage 2 – Consideration of your Complaint by the Headteacher

If you are still concerned after discussion with your child's teacher, the next step is to request a meeting with the Head Teacher.

The headteacher will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved.

If the complaint centres on a child the school will talk to the child concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question. The school will normally talk to children with another staff member present.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's safeguarding procedures, if appropriate.

The head teacher will keep written/typed, signed and dated records of all meetings and telephone conversations, and other related documentation.

Once the school has established all the relevant facts, the Head Teacher will make you aware of the follow-up action the school is intending to take.

Stage 3 – Consideration by the Governing Body

If your concern has already been through Stages 1 and 2 and you are not happy with the outcome, the next step is to make a formal complaint to the Governing Body within 15 days of the completion of Stage 2.

The Chair of Governors has discretion to agree to a complaint review panel if he/she feels it would be helpful in resolving the complaint.

At this Stage, the complaint will be considered by a Panel comprising Directors or Members of the Local Governing Body (depending on who undertook the initial investigation at the previous stage).

Where the complaint is considered by a panel of Directors/Local Governing Body members, this will comprise of persons who have no detailed prior knowledge of the complaint, and will have no connection with the complainant.

The aim of a complaints review panel is to resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the parent(s). However, it may sometimes only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations, which will reassure you that your complaint has been taken seriously.

Should the governing body agree to hold a complaint review meeting, you will be informed of the date, time and place of the meeting by letter. The letter will also explain what will happen at the meeting and inform you that you are entitled to be accompanied to the meeting.

With agreement of the chair of the panel, the Head Teacher may invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by you to attend their meeting.

The format for such a meeting would be for you to attend to present your case and allow the Governing Body to take evidence. A separate meeting will then take place to allow the Head Teacher to do the same.

As a general rule, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meetings by any of the participants.

The clerk will send you and the head teacher a written statement outlining the decision of the panel within two weeks.

Stage 4 – Complaint to the Secretary of State

If you are not satisfied and feel that your complaint has not been investigated fairly, you may wish to put your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education clearly stating your grounds for your appeal.

Contact details for the Secretary of State can be found at www.education.gov.uk.
The School Complaints Form to the DfE can be found at [schools complaints form](#).

We would advise that, unless the Academy is shown to have behaved unreasonably or not to have followed their own procedures, there is likely to be little further action that can be taken. This is because governing bodies are empowered to deal with many issues without reference to either the Local Authority or the Secretary of State.

BARNES INFANT ACADEMY

FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM

Your Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone Number

Relationship to Child

Child's Name

Child's Class Teacher

Please give full details of your complaint (please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (eg who did you speak to and what was the response)?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details