

Complaints Policy

Introduction

- THIS DOCUMENT IS a statement of the aims and principles regarding complaints at Bushy Hill Junior School.
- THIS POLICY WAS LAST REVIEWED in Summer 2016
- THIS POLICY WILL BE REVIEWED in Summer 2017

OVERVIEW

This policy is written in accordance with government obligations as stated in Section 29 of the Education Act 2002. Governing bodies of all maintained schools in England are required to have in place a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and any community facilities and services that the school provides. A complaint can be made by parents or carers of pupils registered at a school, a complainant can also be a member of the wider community or representing an ex- pupil. The law also requires the procedure to be publicised.

There are certain complaints which fall outside the remit of Governing Body's complaints procedure, for example, staff grievances or disciplinary procedures.

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS- INITIAL CONCERNS

Schools need to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at an early stage will reduce the number of formal complaints.

Concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. (It would be helpful if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.)

It is expected that staff will resolve issues promptly or pass to a member of SLT who will deal with the matter immediately.

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS- FORMAL PROCEDURES

The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

FRAMEWORK OF PRINCIPLES

An effective complaints procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means where possible
- be easily accessible and publicised
- be simple to understand and use
- be impartial
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action
- ensure a full and fair investigation
- respect people's desire for confidentiality
- address all points at issue and provide an effective response
- keep the school's senior leadership team informed at each stage

INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS

It is suggested that at each stage, the person investigating will:

- establish WHAT has happened so far and WHO has been involved
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- meet with the complainant or contact them if additional information is required
- clarify what actions the complainant would like to happen to resolve the issue
- interview those involved in the matter
- conduct an interview with an open mind
- keep notes of interviews and meetings or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes

RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

Possible means of resolving a complaint may be: an apology, an explanation, an admission that a situation could have been handled differently or better, an assurance that the event complained of will not recur, an explanation of steps that will be taken to assure the issue will not happen again, an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

It is useful if the complainant were encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem. **An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is NOT the same as an admission of negligence.**

VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

An occasion may arise when, despite all stages of procedure being followed, a complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body is able to inform them in writing that the issue has been exhausted and the matter is now closed. If the complainant writes again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be regarded as vexatious and there is no obligation on the school to respond.

However, if the same complainant should raise a separate complaint, the appropriate procedure should be applied. It is the complainant that is vexatious; not the correspondence.

TIME LIMITS

Complaints should be considered and resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible. The complaints procedure should have realistic time limits for each action within each stage. However, where there is need for further investigations, new time limits can be set. The complainant should be notified of the time limits given.

Whilst most complaints will be after an incident arises, some may be made later. Schools cannot have a blanket policy of refusing to consider any complaints not lodged within a stated period.

PART 2: THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Our school has five stages to resolve a complaint which are in line with Surrey County Council's guidance:

- Stage 1- Informal: concerns raised with class teacher
- Stage 2- Informal: complaint heard by staff member (not the subject of the complaint)
- Stage 3- Formal: complaint form received and heard by Headteacher.
- Stage 4- Formal: complaint heard by Chair of Governors
- Stage 5- Formal: complaint heard by Governing Body's complaints appeal panel

The Headteacher and Chair of Governors have the right to refer the complaint to the most appropriate stage.

PART 3: MANAGING AND RECORDING COMPLAINTS

RECORDING COMPLAINTS

The school will record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. A complaint can be made in person, by telephone or in writing. An example of the complaint form can be found in the appendix. A brief note of meetings and telephone calls will be kept and a written response added to the record.

GOVERNING BODY REVIEW

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, making changes as necessary. Complaints information shared with the whole Governing Body should not name individuals in case an appeals panel needs to be consulted.

When did you report the problem to the school?
To whom at the school did you report the problem?
What was the response?
Have you complained to the school about this before? Yes / No
If so, to whom and when?
What steps do you feel <u>should have been taken</u> by the school to resolve the matter?
What steps do you feel <u>should now be taken</u> by the school to resolve the matter?
Signature
Date
Official Use: Date acknowledgement sent: By whom: Complaint referred to: Date: Action taken: By whom: Date of communication (within 10 days)