



SCHOOL COMPLAINTS POLICY

BRICKHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

JANUARY 2018

Written by Bedford Borough Council

SCHOOL COMPLAINTS POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for resolving any concerns or complaints made to the school and the governing body. Occasionally parents, carers, pupils or other adults will have concerns about an aspect of the school's work. These concerns can usually be resolved by arranging a meeting to discuss the issue with the relevant member of staff.

The staff and governing body at Brickhill Primary School would prefer that all concerns should be addressed and resolved informally with the member of staff involved. All concerns and complaints will be handled with absolute confidentiality.

However there may be occasions when a concern cannot be resolved by meeting and discussing this with the member of staff and then the parent/carer may decide to make a formal complaint.

Once a formal complaint has been made it is important that all parties are aware and follow the procedure in the Complaints Policy. Complaints regarding admissions, exclusions, safeguarding and special educational needs, will not follow this policy. Please ask at school for further information if your complaint concerns one of these areas.

Complaints should be raised as soon as possible. Any complaint raised **more than one month** after the incident has occurred cannot be considered, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

All the designated timescales in this policy apply during term time, additional time will be required over school holiday periods. Where the head teacher or chair of governors is unable to comply with the timescales, he/she will inform the complainant. This will only arise if the complaint is complex or the availability of key people is a problem.

An anonymous complaint will not be investigated unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The purpose of the following procedure is to ensure a fair and consistent approach to dealing with complaints for all parties.

Stage 1

If the concern has not been resolved informally and the parent/carer wishes to pursue the issue, then a formal complaint should be made. All complaints should be put in writing to the head teacher.

If the complaint is about the head teacher, a letter should be sent to the chair of governors, addressed to the chair at the school and marked 'Private and Confidential'.

The head teacher or chair of governors:

- Will acknowledge receipt of the letter within 5 school days
- Will ensure that the complainant has a copy of the Complaints Policy
- Will investigate the complaint

This will involve:

- requesting information relating to the complaint from the member of staff (or head teacher if the complaint is about the head)
- requesting information relating to the complaint from the complainant
- meeting with the member of staff or head teacher
- meeting with the complainant
- reviewing the evidence
- making notes throughout the investigation
- informing both parties in writing of the outcome of the investigation within 14 days of acknowledging the complaint

The outcome of the investigation will be:

- To uphold the complaint
- To dismiss the complaint
- Cannot uphold the complaint due to lack of evidence

This should be the conclusion of the complaint.

Stage 2

If the complainant is not satisfied that the head teacher has addressed the complaint properly, then the complainant may request that the governing body reviews the head teacher's handling of the complaint.

If the complainant is not satisfied that the chair of governors has addressed the complaint properly then the complainant may request that the governing body reviews the chair's handling of the complaint.

A request to the governing body to review the complaint must be made within 7 days of receiving the written conclusion of the previous investigation.

The complaint will now be reviewed by the governing body's Complaints Committee. The Committee will meet within 21 days of receiving the request to review the complaint.

The Complaints Committee will:

- Acknowledge receipt of the request to review the complaint in writing within 5 school days
- Appoint a clerk to administrate the review
- Request that the clerk collates paperwork from all parties

The Complaints Committee may review the complaint through the paperwork, but will usually review the complaint through a Hearing, which is a meeting for all parties to attend.

The head teacher and the complainant may bring a companion to the Hearing; the companion will be for support but not to contribute to the Hearing. The head teacher and the complainant may bring witnesses for the complaint to the Hearing.

The procedure for the Complaints Committee Hearing will be:

- The clerk will liaise with all parties to arrange an agreed date for the hearing
- The clerk will arrange the hearing and send all paperwork to all parties in advance
- The hearing will be held in private
- The chair of the Complaints Committee will ask all parties to introduce themselves
- The complainant will be asked to state their case
- Any witnesses for the complainant will be asked to speak
- Questions will be asked, from the panel and possibly from the head teacher
- The head teacher will be asked to state their case
- Any witnesses for the head teacher will be asked to speak
- Questions will be asked, from the panel and possibly from the complainant
- Both parties will be asked to sum up their case
- The chair of the Complaints Committee will explain that the Committee will write to both parties within 5 school days with the outcome of the review
- The complainant and the head teacher leave the hearing

In certain circumstances an alternative procedure for the hearing may take place:

- The complainant and any companion/witnesses attend the hearing and the complainant is asked to explain their case
- Any witnesses for the complainant will be asked to speak
- The chair of the Complaints Committee will explain that the Committee will write to both parties within 5 school days with the outcome of the review
- The complainant and any companion/witnesses leave the hearing
- The head teacher and any companion/witnesses attend the hearing and the head teacher is asked to explain their case
- The chair of the Complaints Committee will explain that the Committee will write to both parties within 5 school days with the outcome of the review

- The head teacher and any companion/witnesses leave the hearing

The outcome of the review will:

- Uphold the complaint, the Committee will give reasons
- Dismiss the complaint, the Committee will give reasons
- Cannot uphold the complaint due to lack of evidence

If the complaint is upheld, the Committee will refer the result and any recommendations to the governing body. The governing body will reassure the complainant that every effort will be taken to ensure that the same thing will not happen again and that school procedures and policies will be reviewed as a result of the complaint.

Whatever the result of the review, this ends the complaints procedure.

The chair of governors and the head teacher may well close a complaint if it is deemed 'vexatious'. This may happen if it is clear there is insufficient evidence to pursue the case, but a complainant is persistently raising the issue. Equally this may happen if a complaint has been investigated and no justification for the complaint found.

A complainant may decide to pursue an issue with the Secretary of State at the Department for Education.

Policy Reviewed and updated.....

Signed.....