

BRAMPTON ABBOTTS CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL
POLICY ON COMPLAINTS

1. Introduction

1.1 We strive to provide a good education for all our children. The headteacher and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents, carers and guardians (henceforth referred to as parents). However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents. The following policy sets out the procedures that the school follows in such cases.

1.2 If any parents are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's class teacher immediately.

1.3 This policy is written having regard for the advice contained in the DfE guidelines document "School Complaints toolkit 2014".

1.4 Parts of this policy needs to be read in conjunction with other school policies e.g. Staff Discipline, Conduct and Grievance Policy, Safeguarding Children & Child Protection Policy and Allegations of Abuse against Staff Policy.

1.5 All parents have the right, as a last resort, to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education, if they still feel that their complaint has not been properly addressed.

2. Aims and objectives

2.1 Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints, and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

3. The complaints process

3.1 STAGE 1: If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. In our experience, most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress.

3.2 STAGE 2: Where parents feel that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the headteacher. The headteacher considers any such complaint very seriously, and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved by this stage.

The headteacher will record details of the complaint on a Parent Liaison/Complaints form with one copy filed in the Parent Liaison/Complaints File under the child's name and another filed in the child's permanent record.

3.3 STAGE 3: If the parent is not satisfied with the response of the headteacher or the complaint is about the headteacher, the complainant should write to the Chair of Governors to request that their complaint is considered further. The Chair will investigate and seek to resolve matters. S/He will complete a separate Parent Liaison/Complaint form and a copy will be filed with the Clerk to Governors and in the child's permanent record.

3.4 STAGE 4: Only if matters have not been resolved after both headteacher and Chair of Governors have been approached should a formal complaint be made to the Governing Body. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint, and addressed to the Chair of Governors.

3.5 Within three weeks of receipt of a formal letter of complaint, the Complaints Committee of the governing body will arrange a meeting to hear the complaint. They will invite the parent to attend the meeting, so that s/he can explain the complaint in more detail. The headteacher and/or members of staff together with nominated 'witnesses' may also be invited to attend. The parent and other attendees will be given at least seven days' notice of the meeting.

3.6 After hearing all the evidence, the governors will consider their decision and inform the parent about it in writing. The aim of the hearing will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the parent.

3.7 If a parent is still not content that the complaint has been dealt with properly, then s/he is entitled to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education. Letters should be addressed to: The School Complaints Unit (SCU), Department for Education 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate Manchester M1 2WD Further details can be found on the DfE web-site at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/complaints-procedure>

4. Monitoring and review

4.1 The governors monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The headteacher logs all complaints received by the school, and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis.

4.2 Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

4.3 Detailed guidelines relating to procedures referred to in this policy are dealt with in the appendix.

4.4 This policy will be reviewed every two years, or before if necessary.

Policy approved by Governing Body on 29-01-15

Signed Paul Mason position GB Chair

Policy due for review Autumn 2017

Recommended procedures relating to the Complaints process.

5. Comment, Concern or Complaint

5.1 A parent may, in conversation with a member of staff or a governor, make a comment, share a concern or complain about something. The hearer may need to make a judgement regarding what they have heard; was it a comment, a concern or a complaint.

5.2 A comment is merely an observation or opinion that needs no immediate response or action. It may however influence the hearer's view-point at some future time when involved in a related debate.

5.3 A concern is usually a relatively minor issue and in most cases should be referred to the class teacher for attention, however concerns should be noted in the class record of concerns book.

5.4 All complaints require a response and possibly action.

Governors or other third parties who hear a parent complaining should advise the parent to speak with the appropriate class teacher, who will be expected to take action and record details in the class record of concerns book. (This is stage 1 of the Complaints procedure)

5.5 If a complaint is received from someone other than a parent it will be dealt with in much the same way as if from a parent.

6. Complaint (Stage 2) to the Headteacher

6.1 Having received a complaint the headteacher will be expected to investigate and take any action thought appropriate following which s/he should have a meeting with the parent(s) to explain her/his response to the complaint. Notes of any meeting with parents should be taken and either included on the Parent Liaison/Complaints form or attached as an appendix to this form.

6.2 If, as part of her/his investigation, the headteacher asks a member of staff or third party for a written statement, this should also be filed in the Parent Liaison/Complaints File unless the complaint needs to be dealt with under any of the following policies: Staff Discipline, Conduct and Grievance Policy, Safeguarding Children & Child Protection Policy and Allegations of Abuse against Staff Policy. A member of staff or a third party has the right to consult a union or legal representative when drafting their statement should they deem this appropriate.

6.3 The headteacher will be expected to report any (stage 2) complaints to the Personnel Committee.

6.4 In the absence of the headteacher the deputy head may have to deal with a stage 2 complaint.

7. Complaint (Stage 3) to the Chair of Governors

7.1 The Chair will endeavour to investigate and respond to any complaint however received (e.g. by phone, letter, email, face-to-face). However parents will first be referred to the class teacher (or head teacher).

7.2 If the complaint has not been resolved under stages 1 or 2, the first part of the Chair's investigation will be to ask the headteacher for all relevant background to the complaint. The Chair may then ask to see documentation and/or interview some members of staff.

7.3 In the course of her/his investigation the Chair may ask for written statements and/or copies of certain school records and should at the same time seek permission to present these documents at a formal (stage 4) hearing if this becomes necessary. (reference 6.2)

7.4 The Chair's investigation should be done solely by her/him and not jointly or by 'committee'. Other members of the GB may be required for a (stage 4) Complaints Panel and it is important that they remain independent of any previous part of this complaints process.

7.5 The Chair's investigation should be thorough and s/he should clearly communicate ongoing progress with those individuals involved within the school to avoid unnecessary upset. This may be done directly or through the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher.

7.6 At the conclusion of her/his investigation the Chair will report her/his findings to the headteacher and will meet the parents to respond to their complaint. The Chair should enlist another governor to join her/him as a note-taker at the meeting with parents.

7.7 The Headteacher will feedback to members of staff involved upon the findings of the Chair's investigation.

7.8 All papers acquired during the investigation will be filed in school in a sealed envelope together with the Parent Liaison/Complaints form and a written report of the investigation. These papers should remain on file for the period that the pupil is at Brampton Abbots or for 6 years, whichever is the longer.

7.9 In the absence of the Chair another governor might be tasked with dealing with a complaint as described above.

8. Complaint (Stage 4) to the Governing Body

8.1 A first letter of complaint to the Chair of Governors will be dealt with under stage 3. However if the matter remains unresolved the parents may request a hearing of their complaint by the GB Complaints panel.

8.2 A letter of complaint, which may be the letter received by the chair at stage 3, should be sent to the Clerk to Governors with copies to the Chair and the headteacher.

8.3 The Clerk will be asked to arrange a meeting of the GB's (three person) Complaints Panel which might be chaired by the Vice-Chair of Governors and will never include governors who are staff governors. It is probably best if parent governors are also excluded from sitting on this panel.

8.4 The Clerk will invite the parent to nominate 'witnesses' who might be invited to the hearing and the headteacher will be asked to represent the school together with any other member of staff who is implicated in the complaint. The Chair (or deputy) will also be asked to report on her/his investigation.

8.5 Relevant papers will be copied to the parents, headteacher (& staff), chair of governors and panel members before the panel hearing. These papers may include the letter of complaint, notes of meetings with parents, report of chair's investigation, response from headteacher and statements from staff or third parties ('witnesses'). The parent will be invited to submit additional papers e.g. witness statement. No statements shall be included in this pack without the permission of the 'author'.

8.6 It is important that advice is taken from the LA's legal department and/or the HR department before these papers are circulated; there may be reasons (e.g. data protection) why a paper or part of a paper should be with-held or perhaps unnecessary third party or irrelevant data redacted. It should be emphasised that these papers are confidential to attendees of the meeting and for the sole use of the panel.

8.7 The Chair of Governors may, as a result of her/his investigation, have papers in addition to those circulated; these may include photo-copies of school documents or statements from people who have not given permission for circulation. S/He should hand all these papers over to the panel chair before the start of the hearing.

8.8 The panel will interview separately the parents, chair of governors, head-teacher, staff and other third parties who may if they wish be accompanied by a 'friend'; in the case of staff this is likely to be a union rep. The order in which people are interviewed will be determined by the panel chair but the parents are likely to be called first.

8.9 All interviewees will be asked if they agree with the notes of any meeting at which they were present. (If possible this can be done before the panel meeting.)

8.10 The Complaints panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

9. Timescales

It is important that complaints are resolved as quickly as possible. Parents need to be advised of the length of time required to deal with a complaint and if the following recommended timescales cannot be met then they should be notified of revised times.

Stage 1: 5 school days

Stage 2: 5 school days

Stage 3: 2 school weeks.

Stage 4: all involved in a Complaints Panel hearing should be notified of date & time at least one week in advance and papers should be circulated 3 days ahead of the meeting. The panel will endeavour to deliver its report within 2 weeks of the meeting.