Barry Primary School Complaints Policy

Owned By	Head Teacher
Date Reviewed	July 2026
Next Review	July 2027
Signature : Chair of Governors	

Complaints Policy

When a parent feels that there is cause for complaint about a school issue, this will be investigated. There are three stages to move through. The vast majority of day-to-day concerns can be resolved informally, often immediately by the class teacher, Phase Leader, Deputy Head or Headteacher. If a parent raises such a concern, it will be logged by the class teacher. If it cannot be resolved quickly, or requires further action, we will move to Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure and a meeting will be arranged within five school days, as outlined below.

Stage 1 – The Initial Approach

Guidelines

- We encourage parents to raise concerns with staff without undue formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing. It may be appropriate on occasions for someone to accompany or act on behalf of the parent or staff member.
- It may be unclear whether a parent is making a complaint, if it comes in the form of a question or in expressing an opinion. A preliminary discussion will clarify the issue and help decide whether the parent wishes to take matters further.

Procedure

1. Parents should have the opportunity for informal discussion regarding their concerns with the appropriate member of staff. This discussion should aim to clarify the nature of the concern and assure them that the school wishes to hear about it. The discussion should also aim to clarify what kind of outcome the parent is seeking. This discussion will be logged by the class teacher.
2. If the member of staff first contacted cannot deal with the matter that day, s/he should make a firm arrangement to deal with it at a future date or refer the matter to the Phase Leader, Deputy Head or Headteacher. In either case, the concern will be recorded by the class teacher.
3. If the parent wishes to take matters further, or feels that a matter has not been resolved, then the matter will enter Stage 1 of the formal proceedings. A note of the name and date should be taken on the “Stage 1 – Parental Concern” pro-forma. An informal meeting should be arranged between the parent and the Phase Leader, Deputy Head or Headteacher at an appropriate time, within five school days of the initial approach unless mitigating circumstances prevent this time scale, in which case at the soonest opportunity. The first contact should check later to make sure that the initial referral has been successful.
4. It is the headteacher’s responsibility to ensure that staff have guidelines about when to refer a matter on and when not.
5. If the concern relates to the Headteacher and the parent feels unable to raise it with her/him, they are advised to contact the Chair of Governors.
6. The staff member / Headteacher dealing with the concern should make sure that the parent is clear about the outcome. This should be recorded in writing using either the complaints proforma or a parent conversation form.
7. All parties must be aware of the need for confidentiality at this stage, so that the procedure is not compromised. Staff will discuss matters with their line manager or the Headteacher. Parents are asked not to discuss the matter with a wider audience e.g. in the playground.
8. If no satisfactory solution has been found, the parent should be informed about how they should proceed if they wish to take the matter further and make a formal complaint. They should be informed of any advice and support that may be available to them.

Stage 2 – Formal complaint to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors.

Guidelines

- The Headteacher needs to determine who has responsibility for responding to a formal complaint, including the decision about his/her own involvement at various stages.
- If the complainant is dissatisfied with the action of the Headteacher, or the Headteacher has been very closely involved informally, the Chair of Governors should carry out all Stage 2 procedures, with support if necessary from another governor, and with advice from a Local Authority (LA) Officer if required.
- Individuals on the governing body should not become involved at this stage to avoid prejudicing their possible future involvement.

Procedure

1. Parents who wish to pursue a formal complaint at Stage 2 should be asked to put their complaint and their desired outcome in writing to the Chair of Governors or Headteacher. The Chair of Governors or Headteacher should acknowledge the complaint orally or in writing within 3 school days of receipt, giving a brief explanation of the complaints procedures and a target date for providing a response. Ideally, this should be within ten school days. If it is not possible to deal with the matter in this time, the complainant should be informed of when it is likely to be concluded.
2. The Chair of Governors / Headteacher may offer an opportunity to meet with the complainant. The complainant should, if s/he wishes, be allowed to be accompanied by a friend or relative who can speak on his/her behalf. Interpreting facilities should be made available if required.
3. If necessary, the Chair of Governors / Headteacher should interview any witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres around a pupil, the pupil should also be interviewed, normally with the parent or guardian present. In some circumstances, this may not be possible or appropriate and a senior member of staff with whom the child feels comfortable should attend with him/her. If a member of staff is complained against, the needs of that person should be borne in mind. Advice may be sought from HR or the LA.
4. The Chair of Governors / Headteacher should keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.
5. Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Chair of Governors / Headteacher should either write to the complainant or arrange a meeting to discuss or resolve the matter. This meeting should be followed by a letter summarising the outcome of the meeting. The complainant should be advised in this letter that if they remain unhappy with the outcome, s/he may appeal to a panel of governors. The complainant should notify the Chair of Governors within two weeks of receiving the letter detailing the outcome of the complaint if they wish to take the matter further.

Stage 3 – Appeal to the panel of governors

Guidelines

- Complaints only rarely reach the appeal stage, but it is important that the governing body is ready to deal with them. At this stage, the Chair of Governors may wish to seek advice from the LA's Senior Education Officer.
- The aim of the appeal to a panel of governors is to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it may only be possible to establish the facts of a situation and make recommendations for future action, and to satisfy the complainant that the complaint has been taken seriously.
- It is important that the governing body is impartial and independent and is seen to be so. The full governing body should not consider individual complaints. The governing body should therefore establish a panel to deal with complaints, by nominating from a pool of governors from which three can be drawn for any hearing.
- Panel members should have had no prior involvement with the complaint. Generally, the chair of governors is not on the panel as s/he may have been involved at an earlier stage.
- Individual governors should not be involved in looking into complaints before this stage to avoid prejudicing their potential involvement. If parents with complaints approach individual governors, they should refer the complainant to the school's complaints procedure, making the necessary introduction to a member of staff or Headteacher if appropriate.
- Complaints that reach the appeal stage will do so because the complainant is not satisfied with the response so far. In this situation it is helpful for the governing body to view any complaint as being against the school rather than an individual staff member whose actions may have led to the original complaint.

Procedure

Upon receipt of a written request from the complainant to proceed to Stage 3, the following procedures should be followed, and a suitable clerk to the governing panel appointed.

1. The clerk should write acknowledging receipt of the written request, informing the complainant that it will be heard by a committee of the governing body within fifteen school days of receipt.
2. The clerk should convene a meeting of the complaints committee at a time when it is convenient for the complainant and the school.

3. The clerk should ensure that the complainant, Headteacher and any other witnesses are given at least five school days notice in writing of the date, time and place of the hearing or otherwise are in full agreement of the shorter timescale. The letter of notification to the complainant should also inform him/her of the right to be accompanied by a friend or relative who can act as advocate. The chair should ensure that interpretation facilities are available if required. The letter should set out the procedure for the conduct of the hearing and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the committee.
4. The clerk should invite the Headteacher to attend the hearing and to submit a written report for the committee in response to the complaint. The Headteacher may also invite the Chair of Governors or any other member of staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to respond in writing and / or in person to the complaint. Any involvement of other staff should be at the discretion of the chair of the committee.
5. All relevant documents should be received by all parties (including the complainant) at least five school days before the meeting of the panel. This provides adequate opportunity to read them prior to the start of the meeting.
6. An LA officer or HR representative may be invited to attend the meeting to advise the committee.
7. The panel should elect a chairperson who should ensure that proper minutes of the meeting are taken.
8. The chair of the panel should try to ensure that the proceedings are sufficiently informal as possible and that the complainant and other participants feel at ease,
9. At the conclusion of the representations and questions, the chair should explain that the panel will consider the issues and write to both parties with their decision or judgement within three school days.
10. All except for the governors' panel and any advisors should then withdraw and the panel should consider the evidence. This should include:

- a judgement about the validity of the complaint;
- appropriate action to be taken by the school and / or the parent;
- where appropriate, recommendations on changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not arise in the future.

11. The school should ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes is kept confidentially on file in the school. This should be separate from the pupil's personal records.
12. The broad outcomes recommended by the panel can be reported to the next full governing body or appropriate committee with the identity of all those taking part remaining confidential. The governing body should monitor implementation of the recommendations.

The role of the LA

- The primary responsibility for resolving complaints rests with the governing body. The LA's role in school complaints is to provide advice to all parties.
- When the LA receives a general complaint which does not come under one of the areas covered by statutory requirements, nor is obviously concerned with child abuse or staff disciplinary matters, the complainant will be referred to the school's complaints procedure. The complainant will be advised to contact the Headteacher to take the matter further. If the complaint has already involved the Headteacher but has not achieved a satisfactory resolution from the perspective of the complainant, the LA officer may seek to resolve issues between the Headteacher and the complainant. If this is not possible or successful, the complainant will be referred to the Chair of Governors. In this situation the Headteacher will be notified of the referral and details of the complaint.
- LA staff will give advice to headteachers, governors and parents on the use of complaints procedures. For serious or complex complaints this will be through a Senior Education Officer.
- Where possible the LA will provide advice and appropriate support to complaints panels of governing bodies, including attendance of an officer at meetings to hear complaints.

Annex A
Procedure for the conduct of a Stage 3 Governors' Panel Hearing

1. The chair of the committee should invite all parties (except any witnesses) into the room, introduce them and explain the role of each person.
2. The chair should explain to all present that the purpose of the hearing is to review the complaint and try to resolve it and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it may only be possible to establish the facts of a situation and make recommendations about future action.
3. The chair should then ascertain whether the proposed procedure is acceptable. If so, the meeting will proceed along the following lines.

- The complainant describes his/her complaint and may call witnesses.
- The Headteacher may seek clarification from the complainant and any witnesses.
- The governors' panel or its advisers may seek clarification from the complainant and any witnesses.
- The Headteacher will respond to the complaint and may call witnesses.
- The complainant may seek clarification from the Headteacher and any witnesses.
- The governors' panel may seek clarification from the Headteacher and any witnesses.
- The Headteacher will be given the opportunity to sum up.
- The complainant will be given the opportunity to sum up.
- Both parties will leave the room to allow the panel to deliberate but any advisers may remain to offer technical and procedural advice.

4. The panel should make a decision or judgement on:

- The validity of the complaint;
- Appropriate action to be taken by the school and / or parent;
- Where appropriate, recommendations on changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure similar problems do not arise in the future.

5. NB if there is more than one complainant this procedure should be followed for each one in turn, unless the complainants agree to the complaint being heard with all present in one sitting.

Annex B
Dealing with complaints about racism

1. Racist behaviour to a child.
   The procedures to be followed are contained in the school's racist incident forms. The Headteacher reports the number (not detail) of racist incidents to the Governing board.

2. Racist incident alleged against school staff
- The report / complaint should be made to the Headteacher, or if the Headteacher is the subject of the report / complaint, to the chair of governors.
- As racism is a disciplinary offence, the normal disciplinary procedures are followed.

3. Institutional racism
- Parents who perceive that racist practice or policies are operated by the school should pursue these through the Complaints Policy.

4. Racist behaviour by parents / visitors.
   The Headteacher should be informed of any complaints about racism against parents or other visitors to the school site. The Headteacher may deal with it directly or involve the Police if the situation warrants a more immediate action, such as removal from the premises.

STAFF / PARENT CONVERSATION FORM

DISCUSSION WITH (NAME OF STAFF MEMBER OR PARENT):

CONDUCTED BY:

DATE: TIME:

SUMMARY OF CONVERSATION:

OUTCOME:

SIGNED BY: SIGNED BY:

COPY GIVEN TO (IF APPROPRIATE):

Barry Primary School – Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Initial Approach **Date…….**

Parent raising concern	
Nature of concern	
Discussed with	
Desired outcomes	
Action agreed	
Signed	Parent Staff member
Date to re-evaluate	
Issue resolved	Yes No
Signed	Parent Staff member
Date	
Further action required	**Move to Stage 2 – parent to put complaint in writing to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors**
Parent informed:	
Date	

Stage 2 – Formal complaint to the Headteacher or chair of governors

Date written complaint submitted	
Parent submitting complaint	
Nature of complaint	
Date of acknowledgement of receipt (within 3 days)	
Target date for response (within 10 days of receipt)	
Date of first meeting (to gather information)	
People present	
Information from meeting	
Additional information (where to find)	

Date of meeting to discuss / resolve issue	
People present	
Matters raised	
Actions agreed	
Outcome agreed	Yes No
Signed	Parent Chair / Headteacher
Date letter summarising meeting sent	
Date for response if dissatisfied with the outcome (within 2 weeks of receipt of letter)	

Stage 3– Appeal to the panel of governors

Date request received	
Date acknowledgement sent	
Date of Complaints Committee meeting (within 15 working days of receipt of complaint)	
Invitation sent to:	Parent Headteacher
LEA officer invited	Yes No
Complaint Committee Chairperson	
Parent input (summarised)	
Headteacher input (summarised)	
Judgement to be sent by (within 3 days)	

Outcome of the meeting	
Judgement about validity of the complaint	
Actions to be taken by school / parent	
If appropriate: recommendations on changes to school's systems / procedures	
Date when outcome reported to the Governing Body	

Raising concerns and resolving problems at your child's school

A Guide for Parents and Carers

Headteachers, School Staff and Governors in Northamptonshire are committed to maintaining a positive partnership with parents. Sometimes things happen which make children or parents unhappy. It is important that parents and carers feel able to raise concerns and do this in the best way.

In most cases, concerns and complaints can be resolved by talking to staff at the school. Sometimes parents may wish to raise a more formal complaint.

This guide describes procedures used by many schools for dealing with general complaints. You may wish to ask your school for a copy of their particular complaints procedures.

Schools are responsible for establishing their own complaints procedures. Many will use the approach below – but you do need to obtain the school's published procedures and follow the guidance and process they provide.

Typically there are three main stages involved in raising concerns or making a complaint.

Stage 1 – Initial Approach

It is important that parents contact the school first with their concerns and talk to a teacher or the Headteacher. Most problems can be sorted out in this way easily and informally.

Stage 2

If you are still unhappy, the next stage is to raise a formal complaint by writing to the Headteacher, (or chair of the Governing Body if you have already spoken to the Headteacher). The Headteacher (or nominated member of staff), or Chair of Governors will investigate your complaint. After they have looked into the issues, you may be asked to meet with the Headteacher or Chair of Governors or you may get a letter explaining the school's response.

Stage 3 – Appeal to Governors

If you are still unhappy after raising the complaint at Stage 2, you would need to inform the Chair of Governors in writing and request a hearing. The school's complaints procedures may offer the opportunity for your complaint to be heard by a panel of the governing body. You will be asked to meet with the panel and explain your case. The panel will listen to you and the Headteacher, and will inform you in writing of their decision.

Timescales for dealing with your complaint

Ideally, complaints should be dealt with quickly, but if your complaint is complicated or requires detailed investigation, it may take a longer time to sort out. The school should let you know how a complaint is being addressed and when you can expect to hear from them.

Other types of complaints

The following types of complaints about education are dealt with in different ways. There are special arrangements under the Education Acts if you want to appeal or complain about:

- admission to schools;

- exclusion from school;
- school re-organisation proposals;
- special education provision;
- religious education and collective worship;
- national curriculum issues.

You can ask your school or the Local Authority for guidance on the issues above, or one of the organisations listed below.

Useful contacts:

Service name	**website**
Children's Legal Centre	www.childrenslegalcentre.com
Department for Education	www.gov.uk/dfe
Kidscape	http://www.kidscape.org.uk/advice/parent-advice-line/
NSPCC	www.nspcc.org.uk

NB Complaints about County Council services are dealt with under the County Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure.

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