

Bucknall Primary School **Complaints Policy**



Guidance for Complainants:

1 INTRODUCTION

In this school, all the staff are dedicated to giving all the children the best possible education and caring properly for their health, safety and welfare at all times. We are committed to working closely with parents and believe that the school and parents should work in partnership, each carrying out their particular responsibilities to help the pupils gain the most from their time at school.

If you feel that something is not going quite as you would like it to, we are doing something you are unhappy with or not doing something you feel we should, please tell us about it.

In the first instance, please discuss your concern with your child's class teacher, or the particular teacher most closely concerned.

If, after doing this, you do not feel that your concern has been properly addressed, or if your concern is about a particular teacher, please discuss the matter with the Headteacher.

If, after doing this you are still not satisfied, you can address a formal complaint to the Governors of the school.

2 THE FIRST STEP

As a first step, if you are unhappy with anything about the school, please talk to the teacher most involved.

Usually, teachers are available for a short while after classes have finished, but to make sure that the teacher has time to listen properly to what you have to say, it may be worth telephoning the school to make an appointment. We would hope that most concerns can be resolved in this way.

The teacher will not only try to address your concern but will report the matter to the Headteacher so that they are aware of your concern and what is being done about it.

3 THE NEXT STEP

Very occasionally, it may be that your concern cannot be resolved by the teacher, or you may feel that the situation has not altered. If this is the case, you should raise the issue with the Headteacher yourself.

It would be helpful to telephone the school and make an appointment so that the Headteacher can set aside the time to sit down and talk through the situation carefully with you. Invariable, matters can be sorted out satisfactorily this way.

4 TAKING MATTERS FURTHER

We would expect most, if not all, complaints to have been resolved through the stages described so far in this policy. In exceptional circumstances, however, this may not be the case and you may wish to pursue the matter further and more formally.

Matters relating to the internal management and organisation of the school, discipline within the school and other such matters would normally be raised with the governing body. Although this happens rarely, the governors have a Sub Committee and a specific procedure for handling such issues. The following general principles will apply:-

- 4.1 You should set out your concern in writing, and address it to the Clerk to the Governors.

CLERK TO THE GOVERNORS:

Mrs J Trotter
Bucknall Primary School
Main Street
Bucknall
Lincs
LN10 5DT
Telephone: 01526 388233

If, for some reason, you do not feel that you can do that, please telephone the Clerk and explain that you want to make a complaint but are unable to set it out in writing. The Clerk will produce a typewritten statement of your complaint, at your instruction, for you to sign.

- 4.2 The Governors will then meet formally to consider your complaint. They may invite you to come along and amplify what has been written down, and they may well invite other people to give their point of view on what you have said.

The Governors will then have to make a decision in the light of what they have been told. This decision of the governors is normally final.

The governors may, on receipt of your complaint, ask someone to investigate what you have said. In particularly serious matters, this could well be an officer of the County Council's Education Department. In such cases, you will receive a copy of the investigation report prior to the governors meeting to discuss the matter.

You may, of course, address your complaint directly to the Education Department of the County Council, not the governors. If you do, you should address it to the Director of Education and Cultural Services, County Offices, Newland, Lincoln LN1 1YQ. A senior officer will study what you have written and may refer it to the governors suggesting an investigation is called for. Normally, however, you need to note that unless your complaint is about the governors, what you have said will have to be considered first by the governing body.

5 OTHER MATTERS

Safeguarding Referrals

Schools have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of their pupils under section 175 of the Education Act 2002. Where members of staff have a concern about the welfare of a child, they have a duty to make a referral to the appropriate organisation, usually Local Authority Children's Social Care Services. It is not for the school to investigate or make a judgment about possible abuse or neglect, but they must refer any concerns they may have. As such, complaints about safeguarding referrals made in accordance with a statutory duty will not be considered under this procedure.

Time Limits for Raising Complaints

Complainants should make the school aware of their complaint as soon as possible after the matter or incident has occurred that they wish to complain about. Usually, we would expect this to be done within three months of the incident occurring and if the complainant does not contact the school within that time, the complaint will not usually be considered.

If the complaint relates to a continuing act, then occurrences outside of the three month time limit will usually be considered alongside the more recent occurrence.

If you feel there are exceptional circumstances that have prevented you from meeting the time limit, you can provide an explanation of these circumstances along with your complaint so that Governors can take them into account.

The final decision rests with Governors as to whether your complaint will be considered when it is raised outside of the three month time limit. In addition, where your child is no longer on roll at the school and your complaint is considered exceptionally, it will usually only be possible to have your complaint considered under the final stage of the school's procedure.

Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour

Staff and Governors are keen to ensure that all genuine complaints are dealt with fairly and promptly and in accordance with our agreed procedures. We would again emphasise that most matters can be resolved by discussing issues with our staff at the informal stages of our procedure.

Regrettably, there are times when complainants raise issues with or about staff in ways which are unacceptable. This can cloud the concern at the heart of the complaint, which may result in the delay or hindrance of a resolution. It can also have an adverse effect on pupils, staff and the effective running of the school.

Examples of behaviours that we consider to be unacceptable are as follows:

- Refusing to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- Making excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

- Introducing trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and/or harassing individual staff members in a way which appears intended to cause personal distress rather than to find a resolution;
- Refusing to cooperate with the complaints procedure as set out in this policy, while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- Refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the consideration proceeds and/or making unjustified complaints about those trying to deal with the complaint;
- Pursuing unreasonable outcomes which are disproportionate to the nature of the matters in hand;
- Persisting in repetitious complaints when these have been previously determined under the school complaints procedure;
- Electronically recording meetings, telephone calls and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other persons involved;

A complainant's behaviour may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:-

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with the school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached. In addition, the school expects that any person wishing to raise a concern or complaint will:

- Follow the school complaints procedure.
- Treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect.
- Recognise the time constraints that staff operate under and allow them a reasonable amount of time in which to respond / address any issues.

You should send written details of your complaint, with any correspondence and evidence to support your complaint, to the Clerk to the Governors at the school address:

CLERK TO THE GOVERNORS:

Mrs J Trotter
 Bucknall Primary School
 Main Street
 Bucknall
 Lincs
 LN10 5DT
 Telephone: 01526 388233

If, for any reason, you do not feel able to do so, you should contact the Clerk, via the school, who will record your complaint as a statement for you to sign.

6 External Appeal

The decision of the Governors' Complaints Committee is normally final; however, if you are dissatisfied with their response, you may be able to take your complaint to an external body.

For certain complaints about schools maintained by the Local Authority, such as Bucknall Primary School, complainants can write to the Secretary of State for Education. You must do this in writing, either by post to:

School Complaints Unit
Department for Education
2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate
Manchester
M12WD

Or, by using the online School Complaints form. This can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

You should be aware that the School Complaints Unit (SCU) will usually only consider a complaint once the school's internal processes have been exhausted. The SCU will examine whether the complaints policy and any other relevant policies were followed in accordance with the provisions set out. The SCU will also examine whether the school's policies adhere to education legislation. The SCU will not usually re-investigate the substance of the complaint.

Please note that, unless your complaint is about the governors' response or lack of response, your complaint will generally have to be considered first by the governing body of the school.

This policy was reviewed in September 2017.
It will be reviewed in September 2018.

Complaints form

Please complete and return to the Headteacher or the Clerk to Governors, depending on the stage of your complaint. You will receive an acknowledgement and an explanation of the process.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Your address:

Postcode:

Daytime phone number:

Evening phone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

What action, if any, have you taken to try and resolve your complaint?
(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:

Signature:

Date:

Official use only

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date of referral: