

BOURN C of E PRIMARY ACADEMY
COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE



Complaints policy
Committee responsible: HR&PR
November 2017

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Bourn Church of England Primary Academy strives to provide excellent education for all our children. The whole team at School works very hard to build positive relationships with all parents/carers. However, Bourn Primary follows best practice and therefore has procedures in place in case a complaint is raised. The following policy sets out the procedures that the School follows in such cases.
- 1.2 If any parents/carers 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. We stress that there is a clear difference between a concern and a complaint. We take concerns seriously and work professionally to resolve them effectively.
- 1.3 Parents/carers should be assured that making a complaint will not adversely affect their child.
- 1.4 Any person who has a legitimate interest in the school may make a complaint. A complaint from someone who is not a parent/carer of a pupil at the school will follow this procedure, starting at the formal complaint Stage 2.
- 1.5 This policy is available from the School Office and the website.

2. Aims

- 2.1 Bourn Primary Academy 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. Our complaints procedure is accessible and simple to use and understand. It aims to be non-adversarial. In all cases we put the interests of the child above all else. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed and then resolved within established time limits

3. The Complaints Process

<p>Stage 1 Informal</p> <p>Expression of concern made to the School.</p>	<p>If a parent/carer is concerned about anything to do with the education that the school is providing, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's Class Teacher. In our experience most matters of concern may 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. Most issues can be resolved on the spot with apologies where necessary. Members of the School Management Team may be involved at this stage.</p>
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<p>Stage 2 Formal Complaint to the Head Teacher</p> <p>Expression of concern made to the School in writing.</p>	<p>The complainant is asked to be brief and clear about the issue and to state what would, for them, provide a resolution. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, the complaint should be submitted within 90 calendar days of the event/issue causing the complaint.</p> <p>The Head Teacher considers any such complaint very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved by this stage. The outcome of the Head Teacher's investigation will be communicated in writing within 15 school days.</p>
<p>Stage 3 Chair of Governors</p> <p>Complaints should rarely reach this formal level but, should they need to, a complainant can make a formal complaint to the Chair of Governors.</p>	<p>Complaints at this stage should be received within 10 school days of the Head Teacher's decision. The complainant's letter should be addressed to the Chair of Governors (marked "Private and Confidential") c/o the School address, and should set out why they remain unhappy and what would constitute a satisfactory outcome.</p> <p>The Chair of Governors (who will not have been previously involved in the complaint) will consider the case. If meeting with the complainant and others involved is considered necessary, there will be adequate notice given, to prepare for the meeting. The Chair of Governors will make their decision in private and will communicate their response within 7 school days.</p>
<p>Stage 4 Governors' Appeal Panel</p> <p>The complainant may take the complaint further to the Governors' Appeal Panel.</p>	<p>If the complaint is not resolved, and all previous stages have been exhausted, a complainant may make representation to the Governors' Appeal Panel by sending a letter to the Clerk to the Governing Body c/o the School address, marked "Private and Confidential" within 15 school days of the Chair of Governor's response.</p> <p>The panel will consist of at least three people who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and at least one panel member will be independent of the management and running of the School.</p> <p>The panel will meet to consider the complaint. The complainant will be invited to attend if they would like to and they may also be accompanied if they so wish. The complainant will be provided with adequate notice of the meeting. A decision concerning the complaint will be provided in writing within 15 school days where possible.</p>

<p>Stage 5 Further Representation</p> <p>If the complainant still remains dissatisfied they may make further representations.</p>	<p>Complaining to the Education Funding Agency (EFA)</p> <p>If, after following all stages of this complaints procedure, the complainant does not think that their complaint has been resolved, they can send their complaint to the Education Funding Agency (EFA).</p> <p>The Education Funding Agency (EFA) will normally only consider a complaint about an Academy after the Academy's own complaints procedure has been exhausted.</p> <p>The EFA cannot review or overturn decisions about complaints made in respect of Academies. The EFA can only investigate whether the Academy considered the complaint appropriately.</p> <p>If the EFA finds that an Academy did not consider a complaint appropriately it can ask the Academy to re-consider the complaint or amend its complaints procedure.</p> <p>Complaints should be sent by post to:</p> <p>Academies Central Unit (Academy Complaints) Education Funding Agency Earlson Park 53-55 Butts Road Coventry CV1 3BH</p> <p>Or by email to:</p> <p>academy.questions@education.gsi.gov.uk</p>
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- 3.1 Should a complainant have a complaint about the Head Teacher, they should first make an informal approach to the Chair of Governors (as detailed in Stage 3 above), who is obliged to investigate it. The Chair will do all they can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if the complainant is unhappy with the outcome, they can make a formal complaint, as outlined above.

If the complaint involves the Chair of Governors then the complaint should be sent to the Vice Chair of Governors who will act in the role of Chair for this process.

- 3.2 In the case of a vexatious complaint where, despite all stages of this policy being followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied, they are not entitled to reopen the same issue. In such cases, the Chair of Governors is able to inform them in writing that the process has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.
- 3.3 An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances. These would include serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school might consider it appropriate to contact outside agencies.

3.4 The time frames listed above will be kept to as far as possible. Should this not be possible, the complainant will be kept informed.

4. Investigating Complaints

- 4.1 It is suggested that at each stage the person investigating the complaint makes sure that they:
- 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 further information is required;
 - clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
 - conduct any interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
 - complete all necessary notes.

5. Resolving Complaints

- 5.1 At each stage of the complaint, the school and the complainant will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:
- an apology;
 - an explanation;
 - an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
 - an assurance that the event that was the basis of the complaint will not recur;
 - an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it does not happen again. Details of any disciplinary procedures that have taken place as a result of the complaint are not released.
 - an undertaking to review school policy or procedure in light of the complaint;
 - an explanation that there is insufficient evidence and thus the complaint cannot be upheld;
 - an explanation that, following investigation, the concern is not substantiated by the evidence.
- 5.2 An admission that the school could have handled things better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

6. Monitoring and Review

- 6.1 The Governors monitor the complaints procedure in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Head Teacher logs all Stage 2 complaints received by the school and records how they have been resolved. These logs are presented to the Chair of the Governing Body as part of the regular meetings between the Head Teacher and the Chair.
- 6.2 The 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/carers, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.
- 6.3 This policy is reviewed as necessary at meetings of the HR and Performance Review committee.
- 6.4 All documents relating to a complaint are kept confidential.

Other policies to refer to:

- Persistent Complaints and Harassment Policy