



# Beaufort Primary School

## Complaints Policy

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## **BEAUFORT PRIMARY SCHOOL COMPLAINTS POLICY**

At Beaufort Primary School, we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which pupils will be helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially.

We recognise that sometimes things can go wrong and parents, carers and members of the public may need to make a complaint or raise concerns they have with the school.

This policy tells you what to do if this happens.

### **INFORMAL STAGE**

Most complaints/issues can be resolved informally and quickly by discussion with the member of staff concerned or the headteacher. Alternatively parents/carers can write to the member of staff or the headteacher outlining the issue clearly.

Any complaint/issue that is put in writing should be written clearly outlining all the issues and what it is hoped that the preferred outcome should be. All complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days.

Parent/carers should make an appointment to discuss their concerns with the member of staff who knows about the issue or incident. If the complaint relates to a pupil, ideally the member of staff concerned should be directly involved with the pupil, for example, class teacher. If the matter related to a safeguarding issue the headteacher or deputy headteacher must be consulted.

The member of staff will usually write notes during the meeting. Parents/carers can ask for a copy of these notes.

### **FORMAL STAGE**

There are three formal stages:

#### **Stage 1**

If a parent/carer is still dissatisfied after the informal stage, they, or the member of staff can refer the matter to the headteacher. This can be done in writing, as this will often make the situation clear to all involved parties.

The headteacher will offer a meeting with the parent/carer or other complainant at a mutually convenient time. At the meeting, and through discussion, the headteacher will clarify what the issues are. The hopes of what the parent/carer is trying to achieve will also be discussed. Together all parties will agree an acceptable outcome. This should be to the satisfaction of all parties involved.

These should be written down and agreed by all parties so there is no misunderstanding. Again parents/carers should be given a copy of this.

If the issue is complex the headteacher may need to speak to other staff and pupils to investigate the concerns. This should happen within 10 school days. If this timescale cannot be met the headteacher should inform the parent/carer that this will take longer, explain the reasons for this and give a timescale for when the investigation will be completed.

## **STAGE 2**

After meeting with the headteacher if the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, the complaint can be referred to the chair of governors. This can either be in writing to the chair at the school address, or alternatively the school can ask the chair of governors to contact the parent/carer direct. The headteacher can also refer the complaint to the chair of governors.

If the headteacher is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should go straight to the chair of governors and miss out Stage 1. The chair of governors may ask for the complaint to be put in writing (if this has not already happened).

The chair of governors will offer to meet with the parent/carer or other complainant, at a mutually convenient time.

The chair of governors has 15 school days to investigate the complaint. If it cannot be resolved within this time, the chair will inform the complainant and explain why it is taking longer. Reasons for this may be that the complaint is complex and needs more time or someone involved is absent through sickness or holidays. The chair of governors should, however, give a realistic timescale for when the complaint should be resolved. The chair should inform the complainant of when it is expected that the investigation should be completed.

## **STAGE 3**

If the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, or chair of governors feels that it is necessary, s/he can set up a complaints committee to consider the complaint. The chair of governors will decide if this is appropriate.

If the chair of governors can resolve the complaint there is no need to hold a Complaints Committee meeting. As far as possible it is recommended that Complaints Committees are a last resort.

The chair of governors can appoint an investigating officer to gather evidence and conduct preliminary interviews on the chair's behalf. The investigating officer will provide a detailed report of his/her investigation of the complaint. Parents/carers should be given a copy of this report. It is important that the investigating officer is seen as impartial. So whilst the investigating officer is another governor, s/he cannot be a member of the associated complaints committee.

The review committee is made up of three members of the school's governing body. Guidance is provided from the Local Authority to ensure that the process is followed correctly.

The complaints committee should meet at a time convenient to all parties. The complainant, the headteacher, the chair of governors and any member of staff the complaint is about will be invited to the meeting. Any person invited can bring a friend or supporter if they wish. The complaints committee will consider any written material, and also give the person making the complaint and the headteacher, chair of governors and staff an opportunity to state their case and to question others present. The committee will ensure that all present are treated fairly. The meeting will be minuted by the clerk to governors and everyone present will be given a copy of the minutes.

The committee will give its decision, in writing, within five school days after the meeting, along with the reasons for their decision.

If after this school based process the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, they should write to the Secretary of State.

If a complaint is not from a parent/carer of a pupil of the school (an example being a member of the public) these should be made directly to the headteacher, preferably in writing.

All complaints will be recorded formally by the school in a central log.

It should be noted that schools do not need to consider complaints made more than one year after the incident/situation.

If a complaint is made about an issue that is over a year old the school will write to the complainant explaining why this is the case.

## **UNREASONABLE COMPLAINANTS**

Beaufort Primary School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. Sometimes, however, parents/carers pursuing complaints or other issues treat staff and others in a way that is unacceptable or behave in an unacceptable manner. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening, inappropriate or abusive behaviour.

An unreasonable complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This includes parents/carers who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner and those who do not act in an appropriate manner towards staff.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:-

- does not make their complaint or resolution clear, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which do not follow the complaints procedure or with good practice;



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- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect 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;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes 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.

A complaint 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 a 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.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or chair of governors will discuss any concerns about unreasonable and inappropriate behaviour with the complainant informally.

If the behaviour continues the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Beaufort Primary School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.



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In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. DfE guidelines will be followed if any behaviour would result in a parent/carer being barred from the school premises.