



## **Bartley CE Junior School**

### **Complaints Policy**

Bartley CE Junior School is dedicated to providing the best possible education and support for its pupils. This means having a clear, fair and efficient procedure for dealing with any complaints, so that any issues that arise can be dealt with as swiftly and effectively as possible.

This procedure does not apply to complaints about:

- Admissions to school
- Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- School re-organisation proposals
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievance and disciplinary procedures
- Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use the school's premises or facilities

In these cases, there are other separate and statutory procedures. The school will not respond to anonymous complaints under this policy, however, the headteacher and / or chair of governors will consider whether the issue and fear of identification are genuine or the issue is one of child protection.

#### **When an issue or concern first arises**

If you have a concern that you would like to take up with the school you should initially inform a member of staff either in person, over the telephone or in writing. You may wish to approach your child's class teacher first as they will be best placed to help you directly or by letting you know which other member of staff you should be speaking to. We encourage parents to approach staff with any concerns they may have, and aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding. We will take your concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. The chair of governors and headteacher reserve the right to refer complaints that are taken

straight to them back to the appropriate member of staff if it does not warrant their involvement at that point.

A complaint becomes formal when you feel that your concern is too serious to be dealt with informally, or when you feel that informal approaches to the school have not been adequately dealt with.

### **What happens if I need to make a formal complaint?**

#### Formal Stage One – Headteacher

A formal complaint should be made in writing to the Headteacher giving details of the concern. The Headteacher will respond to you in writing within five working days.

If the complaint requires an in-depth investigation, the Headteacher will acknowledge this and let you know that a full response will take longer than usual. A response will be prepared within 20 working days.

#### Formal Stage Two – Chair of Governors

If a complaint is made about the actions of the Headteacher, it would be normal for the Chair of the Governing Body to carry out an investigation at this stage. You should write to the clerk of the governors, care of the school, enclosing a letter for the Chair of Governors, outlining the complaint and the reasons for pursuing it beyond the Headteacher's response.

Written confirmation of receipt of the response will be made within five working days and a response from the Chair of Governors will be made within 20 working days. The matter may be discussed with the Headteacher as part of this process.

### **I still feel the matters have not been resolved. What should I do?**

#### Formal Stage three – Governing Body Complaints Panel

It is very rare that a complaint will reach this stage, but if it does, the next step in the process involves an independent and impartial review by a panel from the Governing Body. You should write to the Clerk to the Governors, care of the school, requesting a panel hearing. The Chair or nominated Governor will convene a Governing Body complaints panel. The clerk will write to you to acknowledge receipt of the written request for a panel hearing and set a date for this. The date would normally be within 20 days of the receipt of the request. The clerk will manage paperwork associated with this appeal, including recording the proceedings and informing parties of the panel's decision. For general complaints: this is the final stage of the school's complaints procedure. If a parent believes that the headteacher's and/or governors' actions have been unreasonable or the correct process has not been adhered to, the only recourse is to the Secretary of State. Parents should contact the Local Authority's complaints advisor for advice.

### **Unreasonable/Vexatious Complaints**

Bartley CE Junior School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain.

Bartley CE Junior School defines unreasonable complaints as “those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people’s complaints”.

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

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, 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 are incompatible with the school’s complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces 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
- makes unjustified comments 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 a 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

The complaints process will not be able to be followed if the complainant does not follow the correct process for making communication about the complaint. Should the complainant try to make contact with any member of the Bartley School community about the complaint in a way that doesn’t follow the process indicated in this policy the complaint will not be able to proceed and the school may consider action if there is any perceived harassment, or potential safeguarding concerns for the school governors, staff, pupils or school property.

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

Whenever possible, the headteacher or chair of governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues the headteacher or chair of governors will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it.

Date reviewed: **September 2017**

Approved by governing body: **October 2017**

Date for next review: **October 2019**