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Proud to achieve**

# Barnes Junior School

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## Policy & Procedures for Handling Complaints

### Introduction

Most parents have positive relations with schools but on occasions things may go wrong. The guidance in this document aims to make sure that the interests of pupils, parents and school staff are taken into account when dealing with complaints.

Whether you are a parent or a member of the public the place to start is the school.

In the majority of cases, Headteachers and/or school governors are responsible for investigating complaints about their services or staff. Initial complaints regarding school should be directed to the Headteacher. If the complaint is about the Headteacher or you have not received a satisfactory response from the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors should be contacted.

The Governing Body of Barnes Junior School has adopted this policy in order to provide clear guidance to all stakeholders of the steps to follow in the event of a complaint.

It has been devised in accordance with Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, which states that *“all maintained schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides”*.

### Aims and Objectives

The school will give careful consideration to all concerns/complaints and deal with them fairly and honestly. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any concern/ complaint to be fully discussed, and aim to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding. The school will respect people’s desire for confidentiality, wherever possible, although some information sharing may be necessary to carry out a thorough investigation.

### Procedures

#### **Stage 1 – Initial contact with the school (Informal Stage)**

Any problem or concern should be raised promptly and discussed initially with the class teacher who may request that you make an appointment to give you sufficient time to have your concerns listened to fully.

On occasion, the class teacher may propose a meeting is held with the Year Group Leader or any other relevant member of the school staff responsible for the area or action you are concerned about.

The school considers any concerns very seriously and most problems can be resolved at this informal stage; however, if you feel that your concern has not been resolved you can raise a formal complaint using the process detailed in Stage 2 below.

### **Stage 2 – Consideration of Formal Complaint by the Headteacher**

If you feel that your concern has not been resolved at the informal stage and you would like the concern formally investigated by an appropriate person from the school, please submit your complaint in writing to the school. If you would like help to submit a written complaint, the school will be happy to provide the assistance of someone unconnected with the complaint.

During this stage, the Headteacher can delegate the task of collating evidence and information relating to the complaint to other senior member of staff.

#### **If the matter is about:**

- the day to day running of the school
- the interpretation of school policies
- the actions of staff at the school

it will be investigated by the Headteacher or other senior members of staff.

The decision on any action to be taken as a consequence of the complaint and the response will come from the Headteacher.

#### **If the matter is about:**

- the Headteacher of the school

it will be investigated by the Chair of Governors or a person nominated by the Chair of Governors.

The person(s) carrying out the investigation will review the way in which the complaint has been handled by the school and ensure that the issues have been dealt with properly and fairly. A response will be issued in writing to you with the outcome of the investigation and any subsequent actions the school intends to take within 15 school days of receiving the complaint.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome from Stage 2, you may choose to refer your complaint to Stage 3 of the complaint process. Written notification of your decision to progress the complaint for consideration by the Governing Body must be sent to the School within 15 days of the completion of Stage 2.

### **Stage 3 – Consideration of formal complaint by the Governing Body**

At this Stage, the Chair of Governors has discretion to agree to a complaint review panel meeting if it would be helpful in resolving the complaint.

The aim of the complaint review panel is to resolve the complaint and to achieve

reconciliation between the school and the complainant(s). However, it may sometimes only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations to reassure complainants that the complaint has been taken seriously.

The complaint review panel will comprise of persons who have no detailed prior knowledge of the complaint, and will have no connection with the complainant. The complaint review panel will consider the complaint as well as the manner in which the complaint was addressed and decide whether it has been dealt with properly. They will make a final decision about the case and will determine whether the complaint has received fair and proper consideration within the school's complaints procedure. If they have any concerns, they may direct that further investigation take place. The meeting will normally take place within 15 school days of your request.

Complainants will have the opportunity to submit written evidence on the complaint prior to the meeting of the panel and also to attend, accompanied by a friend/partner if they wish, to present their case. The Headteacher will be given the same opportunities and will be permitted to invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by you to attend the meeting.

The complainant will be informed of the date, time and place of the meeting. The letter will also explain what will happen at the meeting. As a general rule, no new evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meetings by the complainant at this stage. The decision of the panel will normally be communicated in writing to the complainant within 15 School days of the meeting.

The decision taken at Stage 3 is final. For most complaints this decision will be the last step in the process.

#### **Stage 4 – Appeal to the Secretary of State**

If you are still not satisfied and feel that your complaint has not been investigated fairly, you may wish to put your complaint to the Department for Education clearly stating your grounds for appeal. Further details can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/state-schools>

The Department for Education will not usually investigate complaints until the School's own complaints procedures have been exhausted.

#### **General Principles of Dealing with Complaints**

Written records will be kept of all complaints and their outcomes, whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, when a complaint is submitted in writing or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing.

The person(s) who will investigate the complaint may take statements from other persons where it is considered helpful or where their evidence would be material to the complaint. All correspondence, statements and records of complaints will be kept confidential but will be available for inspection.

Complaints from employees, where they concern employment matters, will be treated as a grievance or will be dealt with through other procedures where they fall outside the scope of these complaints procedures.

This procedure does not cover concerns about the following, for which there are separate arrangements laid down by law:

- Matters relating to the exclusion of pupils from the School where there are separate arrangements in place
- Pupil admissions
- Certain matters concerning provision for special educational needs.

If it becomes apparent that the complaint warrants the use of a disciplinary or capability procedure, then the matter will be dealt with in the appropriate manner. Complainants are not entitled to know which procedure is used in such instances or the final outcome.

Any third parties that use School premises for any purpose are encouraged to adopt their own complaints procedures.

The Complaints Review Panel will aim to reach an outcome in respect of any complaint, decide and agree upon appropriate action to be taken as a result of the complaint and make recommendations to change processes/procedures to ensure concerns of a similar nature do not reoccur. The outcome of the complaint will be categorised using the four criteria shown below:

- Upheld
- Partially upheld
- Not upheld
- Unable to substantiate

<b>Policy approval date:</b>	16/10/2017
<b>Review date:</b>	September 2020

**BARNES JUNIOR SCHOOL**

**Formal Complaint Form (Only for use at stages 2 and 3 of the complaints procedure)**

<b>Your Name</b>
<b>Full Address</b>
<b>Postcode</b>
<b>Email</b>
<b>Telephone or mobile contact number</b>
<b>Relationship to Child</b>
<b>Full name of Child</b>
<b>Child's Class Teacher</b>
<b>Please give full details of your complaint (please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)</b>

<b>What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (e.g. who did you speak to and what was the response)?</b>
<b>What actions do you feel may resolve the complaint at this stage?</b>
<b>Please confirm the details of any additional information that you have attached with regard to your complaint (e.g. details of complaint submitted on 2 separate pages)</b>
<b>Signed</b>
<b>Date</b>

Please return completed form to Simon Ward, Headteacher, Barnes Junior School, Mount Road, Sunderland, SR4 7QF who will acknowledge receipt and outline what actions will be taken.