



# Complaints Procedure

How to make a complaint about a school



**BARNSLEY**  
Metropolitan Borough Council

## **WELCOME**

The Local Authority hopes that you are happy with the way schools are managed.

The Local Authority welcomes your views on what schools are doing well and what schools could do differently to make things better for you and/or your child.

### **Q: Why raise a concern or make a complaint?**

A: It is helpful for school to know about things that are wrong, so that they can try and put them right.

### **Q: Who can raise a concern or make a complaint?**

A: Anyone can raise a concern or make a complaint about a school.

### **Q: What if I need help in raising a concern or making a complaint?**

A: You can ask a friend, relative or advocate to help you raise a concern or make a complaint. He or she can write and speak on your behalf at any time. However, if you do ask someone to help you, you should let the school know this at the beginning of your concern/complaint. The person helping should make sure that they only write or speak on your behalf and do not express their own views.

You can also contact the Complaints Adviser who works for the Directorate for Children, Young People and Families.

The Complaints Adviser can be contacted by writing to:

Complaints Adviser  
Barnsley MBC  
Directorate for Children, Young People and Families  
Berneslai Close  
Barnsley  
S70 2HS

Or by telephoning: 01226 773535

### **Q: What can I raise a concern or make a complaint about?**

A: You can raise a concern or make a complaint about anything that a school is responsible for.

## **Q: How do I raise a concern or make a complaint?**

A: You can raise a concern or make a complaint by following the school's complaints procedure.

### **The Complaints Procedure:**

Each school will have its own complaints policy and procedure which you can obtain from the school. In the main, schools' complaints procedures are similar to the procedures set out below.

### **What to do first – concerns/informal discussion**

In the past the Local Authority has found that most complaints can be dealt with through an informal discussion with the appropriate member of staff in school. Because of this, the Local Authority would always advise you to talk your complaint over with someone in school before making the complaint formal. This would normally be with your child's class teacher (primary schools) or the form tutor, subject teacher or head of year (secondary schools) and you should do this as soon as you have a concern or complaint.

However if this does not resolve your concern/complaint, you can then take it to the next stage of the complaints procedure.

### **What to do next - formal complaint**

The next stage of the Complaints Procedure is to make your complaint to the headteacher of the school. You can do this in writing or by making an appointment to see the headteacher in person.

Please note that the headteacher is very busy and it is unlikely that he/she will be able to see you without an appointment.

The headteacher will decide whether to:

- (i) deal with the complaint themselves; or
- (ii) delegate to an appropriate member of staff

The headteacher will investigate your complaint by talking to the relevant members of staff within school or where necessary by talking to pupils.

The school will acknowledge your formal complaint in writing normally within 5 school days, and within a further 20 school days an investigation of the complaint will be undertaken.

Once the investigation is complete the headteacher or the delegated member of staff will contact you with an outcome. The outcome will usually be given to you in writing; however it may also be given by telephone or in person. It is normally given within 5 school days of completing the investigation.

### **If your complaint is about the headteacher**

If your complaint is about the headteacher, you would need to put your complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors for the school.

The Chair of Governors can be contacted by writing to school and addressing your letter 'For the attention of the Chair of Governors'.

As in the previous stage the Chair of Governors will investigate your complaint by talking to the relevant people in school. They will then contact you with an outcome.

### **If you remain dissatisfied – making an appeal**

If you are still not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint you will be advised whether or not you have grounds on which to make an appeal to the Governing Body's Complaints Committee. An appeal cannot be made simply on the grounds that you disagree with the outcome.

At this stage your complaint will be heard by a panel or committee of school governors. These governors would have no previous knowledge of your complaint. To make sure that complaints are heard fairly at this stage we would ask you not to discuss your complaint with school governors.

A Complaints Committee meeting with the panel of governors will be held normally within 15 school days of you informing the school that you wish to appeal. This meeting would be your opportunity to give details of your complaint and say why you think the outcome offered by the headteacher and/or Chair of Governors is not satisfactory. Please note that the panel will only hear details of your original complaint. It is therefore important that you only talk about things mentioned in the previous stage and not about things that might have happened since then. If you do mention something different, the panel may ask the headteacher or Chair of Governors to consider your complaint again taking into consideration the new information.

The Governors will hear your complaint and then talk about what they think should happen next. If the Governors agree that the outcome given by the headteacher and/or Chair of Governors is satisfactory you cannot take your complaint any further in school.

If the Governors do not agree with the outcome of the complaint, they will talk to the headteacher and/or Chair of Governors about what to do next.

The decision of the Complaints Committee will be sent to you, in writing, soon after the meeting.

It is important to note that some decisions that are made in school are the responsibility of the headteacher. This means that even if the Chair of Governors or the panel does not agree with the headteachers' decision, they cannot do anything to change it.

This is the final stage of the formal Complaints Procedure.

### **The role of the Local Authority**

You can contact the Local Authority if you feel that school has not followed the correct procedure when dealing with your complaint. The Local Authority can look at how a school has investigated your complaint and tell the school whether this was done right or not. The Local Authority cannot make the school re-investigate a complaint and cannot investigate the complaint itself.

However if you feel that the school has acted illegally you can take your complaint to the Secretary of State for Children, Young People and Families.

### **Further information**

Please contact the school or the Directorate for Children, Young People & Families for advice if you or someone you know needs this information in: braille, on audiotape, in large print, or in another language.



## Complaints Form Services for Children, Young People and Families

Please fill in this form if you wish to make a complaint about a school. **When you have completed this form please send it to the headteacher.**

**If in doubt, send it to the Complaints Manager, Barnsley Council Services for Children, Young People and Families, Berneslai Close, Barnsley S70 2HS.**

Your name:

Mr/Mrs/Miss?

Your child's name  
if appropriate

School name:  Class:

Your address:

Postcode:

Telephone no:

Have you already discussed this with a member of staff?

Yes

No

If so when and  
who was it?:

Please use the space below to tell us about your complaint.  
(Please attach additional sheets if necessary)

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their complaint. The box occupies most of the page below the instructions.

Please tell us what you would like us to do to put things right.

Signed:

Date:

Thank you for your comments.  
We will be in touch as soon as possible with regard to your complaint.