

## **Bridge Hall Primary School**

### **Procedures For Dealing With Parental Complaints**

At Bridge Hall 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 any member of the senior leadership team. A member of the senior leadership team and all teachers are normally available to talk to parents at the end each school day.

If parent/carers need more time to discuss the matter, they 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, in the first instance the class teacher or alternatively the Deputy Headteacher, or SENCO depending on the nature of the concern and the needs of the child. The member of staff may write notes during the meeting and arrange a follow up meeting or phone call.

#### **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 Deputy or the Headteacher. This should be in writing, as this will often make the situation clear to all involved parties.

The Deputy or the Headteacher will offer a meeting with the parent/carer or other complainant at a mutually convenient time to discuss and further clarify what the issues are and what the parent/carer wants to achieve.

If the issue is complex the Deputy or the Headteacher will 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, explaining the reasons for this and giving a timescale for when the investigation will be completed.

Together all parties will agree an acceptable outcome that is to the satisfaction of all parties involved. This should be written down and agreed by all parties so there is no misunderstanding and all parties should receive a copy.

## **Stage 2**

After meeting with the Deputy or the Headteacher, if the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, the complaint can be referred to the Vice chair or Chair of Governors. This should be in writing to the Chair at the school address. 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 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 explaining the reasons for the delay and when it is expected that the investigation will be completed. Reasons for the delay may be that the complaint is complex and needs more time or someone involved is absent through sickness or holidays.

## **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.

As far as possible it is recommended that Complaints Committees are a last resort.

The Chair of Governors will appoint a member of the Governing body as 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 will be given a copy of this report. It is important that the investigating officer is seen as impartial so s/he will not be a member of the associated complaints committee.

The Complaints Committee is made up of three members of the Primary School's Governing Body. Sometimes Governors need to be brought in from other schools' governing bodies to ensure impartiality.

The Complaints Committee will 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, colleague or union representative if they wish, however this is up to them to arrange and cannot delay the arrangement of the meeting. 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 a clerk to governors or a representative from HR 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.

#### **Stage 4**

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 it is a general complaint, or to the Local Authority if the complaint is about the curriculum and is a curriculum related matter.

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.

#### **Vexatious Complaints**

If properly followed, a good complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of the GB is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.