



Cherish, Nurture, Achieve

Complaints Policy

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Author	S James
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At Becket 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.

Definitions used in this policy:

Concern – ‘An expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.’

Complaint – ‘An expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.’

Concerns are dealt with usually on an informal basis. Escalating concerns or complaints will follow a formal process detailed below.

General principles

- This procedure is intended to allow you to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school, or the service it provides.
- An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- To aid any investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than 3 months after the event will not be considered.

Raising a concern or complaint

INFORMAL STAGE

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

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

Parent/carers must 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 will be directly involved with the pupil, for example, class teacher or Learning Mentor. The member of staff will write notes during the meeting. Parents/carers can ask for a copy of these notes. If the matter is

related to a safeguarding issue, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must be informed or their deputy if absent from school.

Serious concerns must be addressed directly to the Headteacher (or to the Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the Headteacher).

If you are uncertain about who to contact, please seek advice from the school office.

FORMAL STAGE

There are three formal steps:

Step 1

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

The Head teacher will offer a meeting with the parent/carer or other complainant at a mutually convenient time. At the meeting, and through discussion, the Head teacher 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. This will be written down and agreed by all parties so there is no misunderstanding. Again parents/carers will be given a copy of this.

If the issue is complex the head teacher will need to speak to other staff and pupils to investigate the concerns. This will happen within 10 school days. If this timescale cannot be met the head teacher will 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.

Step 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.

If the head teacher is the subject of the complaint, the complaint will go straight to the chair of governors and miss out Step 1. The chair of governors will 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 will inform the complainant of when it is expected that the investigation should be completed.

Step 3

If the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/ carer's satisfaction, or Chair of Governors feels that it is necessary, she/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 a Complaints Committee are a last resort.

The complaints committee is made up of three members of the school's governing body. Sometimes governors need to be brought in from other schools' governing bodies because the school's governors are 'tainted' because they have prior knowledge of the complaint.

The complaints committee will meet at a time convenient to all parties. The complainant, the head teacher, 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 supporter if they wish. The complaints committee will consider any written material, and also give the person making the complaint and the head teacher, 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 it is a general complaint, or to the Local Authority if the complaint is about the curriculum and is a curriculum related matter.

All complaints will be recorded formally by the school.

Unreasonable Complainants

Becket Primary is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Becket Primary defines unreasonable complainants 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 adopted 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 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 with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

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 Becket 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.

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. This may include banning an individual from the school.

Monitoring and review

The subject and frequency of complaints will be reported to the Governing Body. Senior Leaders and Governors will evaluate and review this information to inform the School Improvement Plan to ensure that the school is doing the best it can for its pupils. This policy will be reviewed every three years.

Complaints Process

Flowchart for Primary Schools

