



Barnet Hill Academy  
FAITH • EXCELLENCE • KNOWLEDGE

# Complaints Policy

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01 Sep 2020  
V 3.0

# Complaints Procedure

## 1. Rationale

The education of the pupils that attend Barnet Hill Academy (referred as 'the School' in the remainder of this document) is very important and the action of the individuals who work in it should be open to comment, question and, sometimes, criticism. These concerns are either sorted out informally, often as a result of discussion, or become formal complaints.

The School will give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them fairly and honestly.

## 2. What is a complaint?

A concern is:

- a worry or
- a matter of anxiety or
- a dissatisfaction

Over any subject connected with the education or welfare of any pupil currently at the School. A complaint is the formal expression of a concern.

Please Note: The School has separate policies for Safeguarding Children and for Anti-Bullying. Hence, if the concern or complaint is about one of these, the procedures in the relevant document will take precedence over the procedures in this document.

## 3. Aims of the policy

The Aims of this policy are:

- to develop a procedure supported and followed by the whole School community;
- to ensure openness in regard to the procedures for dealing with any concern or complaint (see 3.1);
- to inspire the trust and confidence of parents (Includes guardians or carers (of pupils at the School) here and remainder of this document) in the procedures adopted by the proprietor;
- to protect the rights and professional integrity of staff members and other employees of the School;
- to define procedures in dealing with concerns and complaints.

## 4. Preventative Strategies

The School will encourage early resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible hence reducing the number of formal complaints.

This document will be available to all parents who wish to have a copy. The Policies page on the School's website will instruct parents on how to get a copy.

#### **4.1 Complaints Officer**

The following staff designations will be assigned as Complaints Officers. The Principal will appoint the senior teaching staff as the Complaints Officers (CO) (the identity of whom will be well publicised) for the school:

- Primary School CO – A senior member of the teaching staff
- In the absence of the above, another senior member of the teaching staff shall address the matter

Should both the CO and another senior member of the teaching staff be unavailable, the Principal will address the complaint.

These members of staff shall be suitably trained so that the policy can be effectively managed and carried out as and when required. The CO is responsible for the operation and management of the School complaints procedure. The CO and his/her deputy:

- need to know the complaints procedure and understand how its processes operate;
- will follow the procedures when concerns/complaints are made and will encourage early resolutions;
- advise parents and other staff on the complaints procedure and the expectation on all parties to ensure everyone involved follows the procedures;
- Keep records of all concerns and complaints.

The CO should establish a good working relationship with parents. Regular communication should help to build the understanding, trust and confidence which will help to secure effective co-operation in cases of complaints.

#### **5. Procedures for complaints**

This section shows the procedures that will be taken when a parent has a concern regarding a School matter.

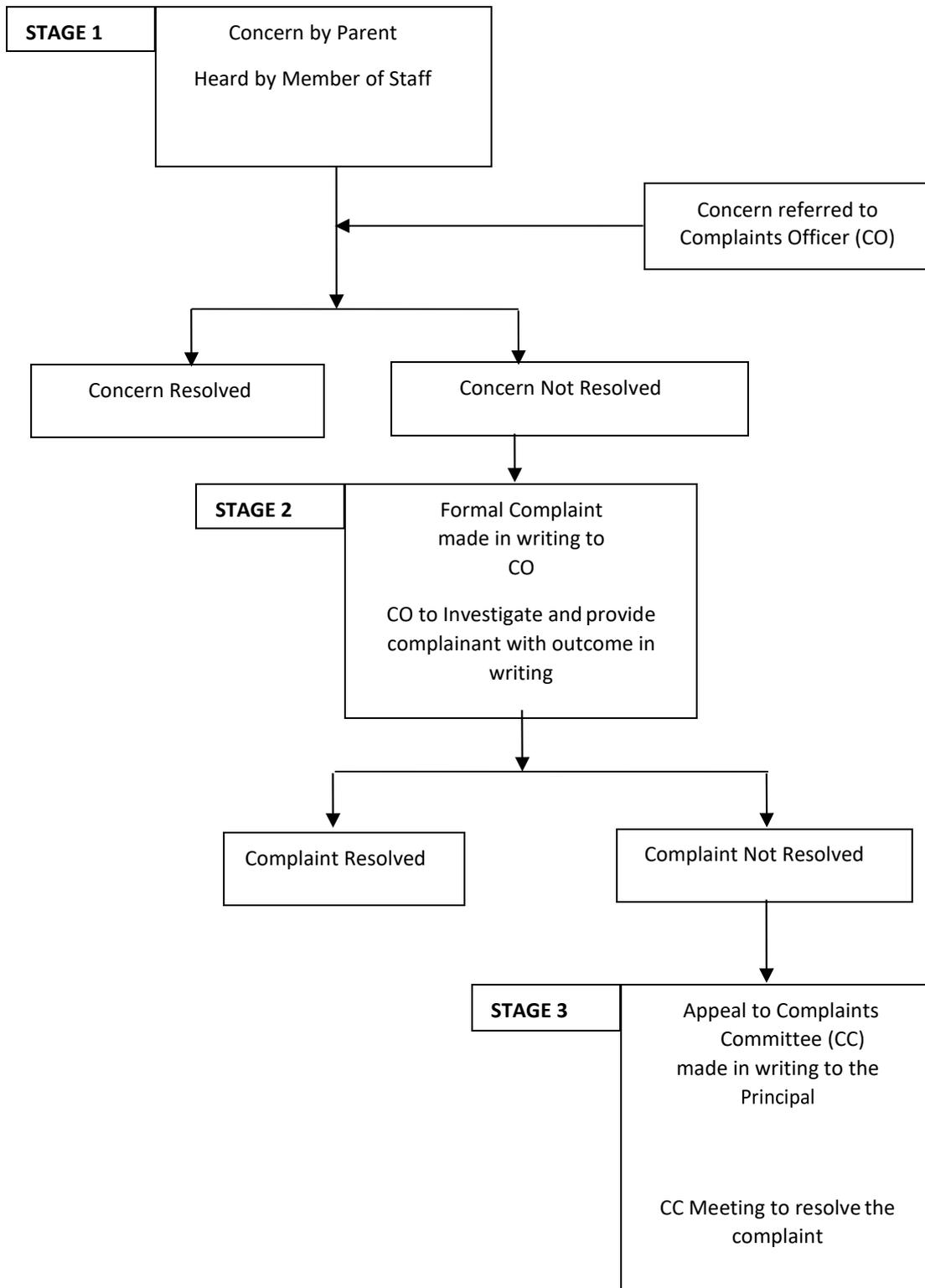
All staff (including teachers, non-teaching staff and voluntary workers) at the School MUST make time to see parents to discuss any concern that they may have.

All staff must keep accurate and detailed records of concerns and complaints.

Unreasonable complaints will be dealt with in line with our unreasonable complaints procedures.

## 5.1 Summary of Complaints Procedure

### 5.2



### **5.3 Investigation Procedure**

Those investigating concerns or complaints at each stage, should ensure that they:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- assure them that the school wants to listen and resolve their concerns;
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview.

### **5.4 Resolution Procedure**

At any Stage, the member of Staff trying to resolve the situation will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following depending on the nature and actual circumstances of the concern:

- identify what sort of outcome the parent is looking for;
- explain to the parent how the situation happened;
- provide a response immediately or provide a date by which the response will be given;
- investigate the matter;
- agree an action with the parent (with dates as appropriate);
- put in writing if this seems the best way of making things clear;
- apologise;
- admit that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- provide an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- provide an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again.

### **5.5 Stage 1 - Concerns (Informal stage)**

In general these will be dealt with by the staff member involved with the complaint e.g. the class teacher. The Staff member shall follow procedure as described in 5.2 and 5.3 above. This matter should be either:-

- resolved or
- referred to the CO within 10 School days.

A parent may wish to directly go to the Formal Complaint Stage. If this is the case then, the parent should be made aware of the formal complaints procedures.

### **5.6 Stage 1 - (Informal) concerns referred to the Complaints Officer**

The parent can request a referral if they:

- are not satisfied with the response from the staff member;
- find that the staff member involved is unavailable.

The staff member can refer the concern if they:

- cannot immediately deal with the matter;
- it concerns a School-wide matter.

In all cases the staff member will note the details of the concern and pass them to the Complaints Officer who will follow investigation and resolution procedures as described in 5.2 and 5.3 above.

The Complaints Officer will make parents aware of the formal complaints procedures if they are not satisfied with the outcome.

### **5.6 Stage 2 - Formal Complaint**

Where a parent has made an approach to the school through the informal stage (Stage 1) and is not satisfied with the outcome, they should write to the Principal giving details of their concerns and asking for the matter to be given further consideration.

Parents will be provided with a Formal Complaints Form (See end of this document) to write details of their complaints or they may write a free-form letter addressed to the Principal. Parents who feel unable to write a letter may get the help of other representatives (e.g. friends or relatives).

All complaints reaching this stage will be logged and acknowledged immediately by the School and copied to the Principal for information. Any complaint about the Principal will be forwarded to the Complaints Committee.

The Principal:

- will immediately acknowledge in writing the receipt of the complaint;
- will seek any clarification necessary about the complaint using the investigation procedures defined above;
- may also seek any necessary advice on the matter;
- should respond in writing to the parents addressing their concerns within 15 school days of receipt of the formal complaint (unless there are exceptional circumstances).

### **5.7 Stage 3 - Appeal to the Complaints Committee**

Where a parent has made an approach to the School through the formal complaints procedure (as above Stage 2) and is not satisfied with the outcome, they should write to the Principal to request that the Complaints Committee reviews their complaint, giving details of their concerns and asking for an appeal against the decision or action taken by the CO. This appeal must be requested within 10 school days of the receiving the CO's decision.

The Principal will formulate the complaints committee and appoint a Clerk.

Please Note: the Complaints Committee will only hear appeals that have already progressed through the informal and formal stages described above.

When a request for an appeal is written to the Principal and passed on to the Complaints Committee, the Clerk to the Complaints Committee will:

- immediately reply to the parents and acknowledge receipt of the appeal;
- check that all informal and formal procedures (above) have been adhered to;
- seek any clarification necessary about the nature of the complaint and/or the appeal;
- arrange for the Complaints Committee to meet and consider the appeal (this should be done as soon as possible but within 20 School days of receipt of the letter of appeal). The parents will be invited to this meeting, Parents may bring any representative or spokesperson if they so wish. The Principal and any other staff members involved may also be invited to this meeting.

### **5.8 Stage 3 - Complaints Committee Hearing**

The Chairman of the Complaints Committee shall invite (the panel):

- all members of the Complaints Committee (at least three) who have not been involved directly in matters related to the complaint and
- one member at least must be a local professional, independent member of the public (i.e. someone who is independent of the management and running of the school) this may be someone like a local solicitor, accountant, senior member or Principal of another school or college, etc

The Chairman shall also invite the parents to the same hearing and will inform the parents that they may also invite any representative to accompany them to the hearing.

If there is doubt on the impartiality of any of the panel, they may be asked to leave. In the case that the Chairman may be impartial, the Chairman shall be asked to leave and another member of the Complaints Committee shall Chair the hearing appeal panel.

In the case that there are less than 3 members in the panel at the hearing, the hearing will be postponed to another date which will be decided within 3 days:

In the appeal, details of the circumstances will be heard from:

- the parent (or their representative);
- the Principal;
- Witnesses (if any), Witnesses will only attend the hearing for the duration of their testimony.

Members of the Panel:

- may seek clarification by asking questions to the parent and/or the Principal;
- may ask the parent and the Principal to leave the room whilst the panel consider their decision.

The Complaints Committee will confirm to the Principal and parent, in writing, the panel's decision, within 5 School days of the hearing which can be any of the following:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's policies or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

## **5.9 Vexatious Complaints**

In the case where a parent persistently complains about the same subject, which has been resolved, then the Chairman of the Complaints Committee shall write to the parent and inform them that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

## **6. The Appeal Panel**

### **6.1 The Role of the Clerk to the Complaints Committee**

The clerk (a member of the Complaints Committee) is the main contact point for the complainant. The role of the Clerk in the complaints procedure is to:

- receive information about complaints;
- check that Stages 1 and 2 have been followed (if not inform the complainant of the School's procedures);
- inform the Chair of the Complaints Committee about a complaint;
- agree with the Chair a date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;
- meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- record the proceedings of the hearing;
- notify all parties of the panel's decision (This will include the Principal, Complaints Officer, complainant and others about whom a complaint has been made) and any findings or recommendations that have been made.

### **6.3 The Role of the Chair of the Hearing Panel**

The Complaints Committee will appoint one of its members to chair any complaints appeal hearing panel. In case of a dispute as to the suitability of the Chair, the Clerk will decide on the Chair for the hearing for the duration of the hearing.

The Chair of the Panel has a key role, ensuring that:

- the correct procedure has been followed;
- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are made;

- parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- the panel is open minded and acting independently;
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.

### **6.3 Checklist for a Panel Hearing**

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- the hearing is as informal as possible;
- witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence;
- after introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses;
- the Principal may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken;
- the Principal is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses;
- the complainant may question both the Principal and the witnesses after each has spoken;
- the panel may ask questions at any point;
- the complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint;
- the Principal is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint;
- both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues
- the Chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set timescale.

### **7. Records**

The Complaints Officer will:

- provide a copy of the findings and recommendations of the panel to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Principal
- keep a record of all complaints, whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; this record must show the action taken by the school, regardless of whether these complaints were upheld;
- keep all records relating to individual complaints (correspondence, statements, logs and other records) confidential in a secure file; allow inspectors from HMI or ISI to inspect these records; provide copies of the records to the DfE if requested or required

### **8. Monitoring and evaluation**

The Principal will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedures and resolutions. The Complaints Officer should ensure that complaints information shared with the Complaints Committee will not name individuals.

# Barnet Hill Academy

## Complaints Form

Please complete the form below fully and attach all relevant documentation, write on additional pages if necessary.

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### Please return this Form to: Complaints Officer

**Name of Complainant:**

**Address:**

**Contact Numbers (All parents/carers)**

**Day**

**Evening**

**Day**

**Evening**

**Date of Concern:**

**Name of Pupil:**

**D.O.B.:**

**Relationship to Pupil:**

**Brief Description of Complaint:**

**What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?**

**Signature:**

**Date:**