



Battledown Centre for Children and Families
A Specialist Early Years Centre

Complaints Policy

This policy covers all aspects of school's work including Special School, Extended Services (inc Daycare) and Child Development Centre

Committee Responsible: School Development & Improvement

Date of Policy: March 2017

Review Date: March 2020

Signed: R Sutton
Chair of Governors
Date: 28/3/17



Procedure

General Principles: This procedure is intended to allow you to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school, or the services that it provides. An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances. To allow for a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, the school will not consider any complaint that was raised more than 3 months after the event.

For some issues the procedure for handling complaints is defined by statutory provisions rather than via the school. These include:

- Special education needs
- Child protection/Safeguarding
- School admissions
- The school curriculum
- School exclusions

Complaints by staff will be dealt by following the Whistleblowing Policy.

Raising a concern or complaint

Informal Stage:

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To that end, staff are made aware of the procedures, so that they know what to do if they receive a complaint.

We respect the views of a complainant if they indicate that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the member of staff can refer the complainant to another staff member. Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the member of staff can refer the complainant to the Chair of Governors.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, she/he may consider referring the complainant to another staff member, who may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

Where the first approach is made to a governor, the next step would be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure. It would be useful if governors did not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages, in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.

Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved by this informal stage. In the case of serious concerns, it may be appropriate to address them directly to the Head Teacher (or to



the Chair of the Governing Body, if the complaint is about the Head Teacher). (See Appendix A for contact details).

Formal Stage:

If your concern is not resolved at the informal stage you must put the complaint in writing and pass it to the Head Teacher. You should include details that might help the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents.

It is very important that you include a clear statement about what you hope might reasonably contribute to a resolution of the problem at this stage. Without this, it is much more difficult to proceed.

The Head Teacher may invite you to a meeting to discuss your complaint and to seek a resolution. If you accept that invitation, a friend may accompany you if you wish to help you in explaining the nature of your complaint.

It is possible that your complaint will be resolved through this meeting. If not arrangements will be made for the matter to be referred to the Chair of Governors. In any case, you should learn in writing, usually within 5 days of the school receiving your formal complaint, of how the school intends to proceed. This notification should include an indication of the anticipated timescale.

The Chair of Governors may invite you to a further meeting to discuss your complaint and to seek a resolution. Again, if you accept that invitation, a friend may accompany you to help you explain the nature of your complaint. In any case, you should learn in writing, usually within 5 working days of the Chair of Governors receiving your formal complaint, of the outcome.

If you are not satisfied with the way in which the process has been followed, you can request that the governing body reviews the process followed by the school in handling the complaint. You must make this request in writing to the clerk to the governing body, within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure. The next step from this will be the **Review Process** shown below.

If your complaint is about the Head Teacher you will need to refer the matter directly to the Chair of the Governing Body who will be responsible for ensuring that it is investigated appropriately. Please see the flow process on Appendix B.

Review Process:

A panel of three members of the governing body will conduct any review of the process followed by the school. The panel may choose their own chair and this will usually take place within 20 school days of receipt of your request.



The panel will first receive written evidence from the complainant of perceived failures to follow the procedure.

The panel will then invite representatives of the school (Usually the Head Teacher or the Chair of the Governing Body panel that has considered the matter), as appropriate, to make a response to the complaint.

The panel may also have access to the records kept of the process followed.

The panel can:

- 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 systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

There are several points which any governor sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember:

- a. It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make-up of the panel, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.*
- b. The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.*
- c. An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel motional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.*
- d. The governors sitting on the panel need to be aware of the complaints procedure.*

You, and the school representatives, will be informed in writing of the outcome, usually within 5 school days of the panel meeting.

The matter will then be closed as far as the school is concerned.

If you believe that the Governing Body has acted unreasonably, you can write to The Schools Complaint Unit. (see Appendix A)



Appendix A

Contact Details

Clerk to the Governors

c/o Battledown Centre for Children & Families
Harp Hill
Cheltenham
Glos
GL52 6PZ
Email: clerk@battledown.gloucs.sch.uk

Chair of Governors

c/o Battledown Centre for Children & Families
Harp Hill
Cheltenham
Glos
GL52 6PZ
Email: chair@battledown.gloucs.sch.uk

The School Complaints Unit (SCU)

Department of Education
Second Floor
Piccadilly Gate
Manchester
M1 2WD

Accompaniment and Representation

The names of independent organisations that can provide advice and/or support to parents/carers if required and can be obtained from Special Educational Needs and Disability Information and Advice Support Service) SENDIASS Gloucestershire:
Freephone: 0800 158 3603 - mobile users may be charged Direct lines: 01452 389344 / 01452 389345 Email: sendiass@carersgloucestershire.org.uk

SENDIASS Gloucestershire
2nd Floor Messenger House
35 St Michael's Square
Gloucester
GL1 1HX



School Complaints Procedure
Flowchart for dealing with complaints

