

Bernards Heath Infant and Nursery School



Complaints Policy

Review Date:	October 2022
Next Review Date:	January 2024
Committee:	Resources
Reviewed by:	Hannah Rimmer

Introduction

This document outlines what happens when a parent or carer wishes to make a complaint; it covers both the informal and formal procedures.

We care about what you think. Each day we make many decisions at school and try hard to do so in the best interests for all children and families in our school community. Your comments about the decisions we make can help to shape our policy and practice. We welcome your feedback, both the type that can help us improve or that celebrates what we are doing well.

We refer to our home/school triangle in every parent meeting. What we understand by this is that effective communication between home and school is vital. We pride ourselves on building relationships with our families and tackling small issues before they grow. You are welcome to come and talk to us about a particular aspect of school life, policy or procedure without actually making a complaint - you might just want to share your experience with us, bring something to our attention or get some clarity on a situation.

If you are dissatisfied about the way your child is being treated, or any actions or lack of action by us, we would welcome the opportunity to talk to you in person and in private about this. You can make an appointment with us on the phone (01727 852106) in person at the office or via email: admin@bernardsheath.herts.sch.uk

Our aims

Your feedback/complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.

Your feedback/complaint will be looked into thoroughly and fairly.

If your complaint is urgent we will deal with it more quickly.

We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage.

We will apologise if we have made a mistake.

You will be told what we are going to do to put things right.

You will get a full and clear written reply to formal complaints within 28 school days (5½ weeks).

How to make a complaint in the first instance – Informal Stage

We hope that most complaints can be settled quickly and informally, either by putting matters right or by giving you an explanation. If there is something you are not happy about, or you don't understand why we are doing something in a particular way, please come in and discuss it with your child's class teacher in the first instance or another appropriate member of staff, this might be a subject or year group leader, the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) or a member of the leadership team including the Head and Deputy head teacher.

We know that it can feel uncomfortable to question or challenge something, but if you don't tell us what is concerning you we cannot explain what we are doing or try to put it right. If the member of staff you speak to in the first instance is unable to resolve the matter, you should make an appointment with the Head teacher or Deputy Head teacher.

We hope that at this point we can respond adequately to your feedback/concern/complaint but acknowledge that sometimes this is not possible. In this case there is a next step.

First Formal Stage – Stage 1

Request a meeting with the Head teacher who clarify with you whether you are making a complaint or sharing a concern.

If making a complaint they will then ask you to share:

- The details of your complaint
- What steps, if any, you have already taken to resolve your complaint
- What you feel would be a successful outcome

There is a written form that you would be asked to complete in advance of your meeting with the Head teacher (Appendix 1).

The Head teacher will investigate your complaint and aim to inform you of the outcome within 10 school days (2 weeks).

If your first contact is with an individual Governor, they will advise you to take up your concerns with the appropriate member of staff or Head teacher. A Governor should not be made aware of a potential complaint as they may be required to sit on a panel in the event of a formal hearing (Stage 2) and should be impartial.

If your complaint is about the Head teacher, you should write to the Chair of Governors. If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) you might find it helpful to talk to our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) or your child's named Special Needs Officer at the Local Authority. The SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS – formerly Parent Partnership) may also be able to help you.

Second Formal Stage – Stage 2

If you remain dissatisfied following Stage 1 and wish to take your complaint further, you will be asked to write a letter addressed to the Chair of Governors.

In the letter you should:

- Make it clear why you are complaining
- Say who you have spoken to already
- Explain what you want to happen as a result of your complaint

The Chair of Governors will arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated under the arrangements provided by Herts Local Authority. This will involve a Panel of Governors at a hearing where the complainant and the respondent are invited to attend. If the Chair of Governors or another Governor has been involved in discussions to help settle the matter at Stage 1, they will arrange for another Governor to take charge of the situation. Neither the Chair of Governors nor the Governor in charge will sit on the Panel themselves and they will instead ensure that a panel is convened in line with the timeframes and guidance provided to them by Herts Local Authority. These timeframes will be shared with you in the Governors' initial written response. The Governor in charge of investigating the complaint may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. It is not advisable for a panel to investigate and conclude matters without giving the complainant and respondent the opportunity to respond. Therefore a formal hearing with all in attendance is most preferable.

You should make sure that the Governors' Complaint Panel is provided with any written information or evidence you intend to use in a formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. The Chair of the panel may invite any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. The Chair should tell you who this person is before the meeting. If any member of staff is required by the Governing Body to attend a meeting they will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named in a complaint may also choose to attend a meeting,

even if not required to do so by the Governors. They may be represented. If this happens, we will inform you in advance.

When the panel has fully investigated your complaint, the Chair of the panel or the Governor in charge of the investigation will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the Governing Body. The Chair of Governors will then write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. Our Governing Body will aim to deal with your complaint within 28 school days (5½ weeks).

Further Recourse

Most complaints are resolved by the process above. Should your complaint not be resolved, your further options are as follows:

You can complain to the Secretary of State at the Department for Education:

The Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT
Website: www.education.gov.uk
Telephone: 0370 000 2288

In the case of complaints about Special Educational Needs provision, you may complain further to the Local Authority. This should be done by writing to the Children's Services Complaints Manager. It should be noted however that if you wish to pursue this route, you must do so within 20 working days (4 weeks) of receiving the written outcome of the hearing into your complaint. After 20 working days (4 weeks), neither the school nor the Local Authority is under any obligation to investigate or progress your complaint any further.

Useful Contacts

Advisory Centre for Education POHWER
Education Advice & Training Hertlands House
72 Durnsford Road Primett Road
London Stevenage
N11 2EJ SG1 3EE
Web: www.ace-ed.org.uk Web: www.pohwer.net
Phone: 0300 0115 142 Phone: 0300 456 2370

Children's Legal Centre National Youth Advocacy Service
Riverside Office Centre (NYAS)
Century House North Egerton House
North Station Road Tower Road
Colchester Birkenhead
Essex Wirral
CO1 1RE CH41 1FN
Web: www.childrenslegalcentre.com Web: www.nyas.net
Phone: 0345 345 4345 Phone: 0345 345 4345

Special Educational Needs & Disability Information Advice Support Service

(SENDIASS)

Web: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/sendias

Email: SENDIASS@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Phone: 01992 555847

Appendix 1

Bernards Heath Infant and Nursery School Complaint Form



Your Name:	
Your Address:	
Your Contact Number:	
Email Address:	
If you are making a complaint on behalf of someone else please provide their details below:	
Details of complaint:	
What steps, if any, have you already taken to resolve your complaint?	
What do you feel would be a successful outcome?	
Received by:	Date received: