



Beechlawn School

Dealing with Complaints made by Parents

Dealing with complaints made by Parents

A note for Teaching Staff

1. Aims

The Key aims of the school's procedure for dealing with complaints made by parents about members of the teaching staff are:

- To put in place a set of arrangements which is clearly understood by all those involved.
- To have arrangements which are fair to all those involved.
- To seek ways of resolving disputes and dealing effectively and promptly with such complaints as are made.

2. Principles

The school's procedures are based on the following principles:

- Complaints will be taken seriously and investigated properly.
- All decisions about actions that are to be taken in light of complaints will be based on accurate and reliable evidence
- Proper professional standards will be observed throughout, teachers against whom complaints are made being given every opportunity to respond to them.
- Confidentiality will be protected as far as possible.

3. First Steps

Parents who have complaints to make about or against members of the school's teaching staff will be expected to make them directly to the Principal, preferably in writing. If parents approach other members of staff or members of the Board of Governors, they should be referred to the Principal and asked to take their complaints to him directly.

The only exceptions that there could be to this general rule would be those arising when the complaint is of such a trivial or superficial nature as to be able to be dealt with summarily (if it requires to be dealt with at all).

The general rule, however, ought to be that set out in the first paragraph, for it is a key principal of the school's procedures for dealing with parents' complaints that they will be dealt with by the Principal in person and not by anyone else. Those who decline to bring their complaints to the Principal cannot expect them to be taken seriously.

4. Assessing the complaint

When the complaint is made, the Principal's first step will be to make a preliminary assessment of its seriousness and significance.

Complaints which are evidently trivial, superficial, unfounded or based on misunderstanding will be dealt with accordingly, without any further investigation.

The teacher(s) concerned will, however, be informed of the complaint and of the action taken to deal with it, for it will be a key element of the procedure that those against whom complaints are made will be aware of this fact from the outset and will also be told the substance of the complaint.

5. Investigating complaints of a serious nature

If it seems to the Principal, after he has made a preliminary assessment of a complaint, that it is serious and that further information is needed before a decision can be made about it, the following steps will be taken:

- a)** the teacher(s) concerned will be told of the Principal's decision and asked to provide such further information as he may regard as necessary
- b)** the parent(s) who have made the initial complaint may also be asked to provide further information in support of the complaint and, if so, will be asked to make it as detailed and specific as possible
- c)** the Principal will, if he considers it necessary, seek information from other members of staff and, if appropriate from pupils, informing the teacher(s) concerned of this beforehand and stressing the critical importance of confidentiality to all those from whom further information is sought.

Any investigation into a complaint will have as its purpose the acquisition of additional information. It will be conducted as quickly as the circumstances allow and no further action will be taken nor any decision made until the outcome of the investigation has been known to the teacher(s) concerned and he/she/they have had an opportunity to comment on it.

6. Further action following an investigation

If, following investigation, it is possible for the Principal to deal with a complaint in a straightforward manner and without initiating any further action, he will do so, notifying the teacher(s) concerned of the steps that he has taken and of the response that the parent(s) concerned may have made to them.

If, however, it seems to the Principal that further action of some sort needs to be taken by the teacher(s) concerned, the following arrangements will apply:

- a)** should the complaint that has been made be regarded as of serious nature and also have been found, on investigation, to be upheld, the Principal will expect the teacher(s) concerned to agree with him the steps that he/she/they will take to deal with the issues complained of and the time-scale within which they will be taken, a written statement of this agreement being made and both the Principal and the teacher(s) concerned having copies
- b)** should further action of this kind be regarded as necessary and appropriate, the parent(s) who made the complaint will be informed of it and given details of the actions that are to be taken
- c)** where the teacher(s) concerned take further action in light of a complaint made by parents, progress towards the achievement of the objectives agreed will be monitored by the Principal after an agreed period of time as well as the end of the period of time agreed in (a) above.

7. Disciplinary action and the school's disciplinary procedure

The procedures for dealing with complaints are not part of the procedures for dealing with disciplinary matters and do not have the same objective, but the school's disciplinary procedures will be used (and the teacher or teachers concerned informed accordingly) if:

- a)** the complaint originally made by parents is found on investigation to be justified and concerns action or a failure to act by a teacher sufficiently serious to justify disciplinary action

or

- b)** remedial actions of certain kinds having been found to be necessary after investigation of the complaint made and having been agreed with the teacher(s) concerned, the teacher(s) fail to take these actions (or fail to take the within the time agreed) and can show no good reason for not having done so.

8. Membership of professional association and access to advice

It is recognised throughout that nothing in this statement of the school's procedures for dealing with complaints made by parents about or against teachers limits in any way the right which any teacher has to seek the advice or guidance of the professional association to which he or she may belong or to initiate action under the school's procedures for dealing with grievances.

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