



COMPLAINTS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

At St Bede's, we strive to provide a good education for all our children. The headteacher and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents and carers. However, under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, the school is obliged to have procedures in place to address any complaints which may be received. The following policy sets out the procedures that the school follows in such cases.

This policy does not apply to complaints in relation to which there are separate procedures (e.g. exclusions, admissions, child protection, etc).

This policy is not intended to cover occasions where parents or carers have a worry or doubt over a matter which can be easily addressed and resolved by speaking informally to the relevant class teacher or to the headteacher (preferably by appointment if requiring some discussion). All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it affects the child's progress.

DfE guidance suggests a complaint, rather than a concern, may be generally defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*'.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to apply formal procedures, but all complaints will be taken seriously and the school will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The school aims to be fair, open (subject to the requirements of confidentiality) and honest when dealing with any complaint. We will give careful consideration to all complaints, and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding. In all cases, **we will put the interests of the child above all else**. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

- Where a complainant feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the class teacher, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the headteacher. The headteacher will consider any such complaint very seriously, and investigate each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved by this stage.
- Should the complaint be about the headteacher, a complaint may be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint, and how the school has handled it so far. The parent should send this written complaint to the chair of governors, c/o the school and marked "*Private and Confidential*". The chair of governors will do all s/he can to resolve the issue



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through a dialogue with the school and the complainant, but if the complainant is unhappy with the outcome, they can make a **formal** complaint, as outlined below.

- Only if an informal complaint fails to resolve the matter should a **formal** complaint be made to the governing body. Again, this complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint, and how the school has handled it so far and the complainant should send this written complaint to the Governing Body, c/o the Chair of Governors. (Alternatively, it may be agreed with the chair of governors that the original correspondence may be referred to the Governing Body.) We ask complainants not to discuss a formal complaint with any governor outside this procedure.
- Complaints about the Chair of Governors or any individual governor should be made by writing to the Clerk of the Governing Body, c/o the school.
- A panel of the governing body will consider all written complaints within three weeks of receipt. If deemed necessary, it will arrange a meeting to discuss the complaint, and will invite the person making it to attend the meeting, so that s/he can explain the complaint in more detail and, if necessary, explain what they believe would put things right. The school will give the complainant at least three days' notice of the meeting.
- After considering all the evidence, the governor panel will consider their decision and inform the complainant about it in writing. The governors will do all they can at this stage to resolve the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction.
- If the complainant is still not content that the complaint has been dealt with properly, then s/he is entitled to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education.

UNREASONABLE COMPLAINANTS

The appendix below also forms part of this policy.

MONITORING & REVIEW

The governors will monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The headteacher will log all complaints received by the school, and record how they were resolved.

Governors will take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all via the school website and on request, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if necessary.

Adopted May 2016

To be reviewed May 2019



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Appendix to St Bede's Complaints Policy

UNREASONABLE COMPLAINANTS

St Bede's is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially. 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.

We define 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:



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- 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 St Bede's, 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 St Bede's.

Barring from the School Premises

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry.

Schools will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community. If a parent's behaviour is a cause for concern, a school can ask him/her to leave school premises.

In serious cases, the headteacher can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the parent may wish to make.

Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the headteacher or Chair of Governors. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department for Education. Once the school's own complaints procedure has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.