



Barbara Speake Stage School

Barbara Speake Stage School Complaints Procedure Policy

Policy Statement

The Barbara Speake Stage School aims to provide the highest quality of education and care for all children attending the school. We regard relationships with parents as very important and aim for easy and open communication between home and school.

However, we recognise that there are times when misunderstanding, confusion or genuine concerns give rise to complaints. The intention of this policy is to provide a clear transparent process that will enable such complaints to be dealt with promptly, fairly proportionately.

The school's guiding principles in complaint resolution are:

- To give careful and prompt consideration to all complaints
- To seek to achieve a just and fair outcome, taking due account of all relevant evidence
- To attempt to resolve complaints through dialogue and mutual understanding, and at as early a stage as possible.

While many concerns can be resolved quickly by an informal approach to the appropriate member of staff, there may be occasions where a more formal approach needs to be followed, as outlined below. All complaints will be dealt with by the teachers involved as well as School Management, in full co-operation with the parents or guardians of the child concerned. Should however a parent fail to meet any contractual obligations towards the school as set out in our terms of payment and agreement, then there is no right of complaint.

The policy outlines three stages of complaint:

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Stage 2: Formal Resolution

Stage 3: Panel Hearing

Definitions

- Complaints will be made to staff in different positions of responsibility. These guidelines incorporate categories typical to the whole school.
- A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.
- A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or lack of action'*.
- The Head Teacher will be the point of reference for complaints before they are referred to the Complaints Panel.
- Where timescales are given in 'working days', this is defined as Monday – Friday during term time (<http://www.barbaraspeake.com/index.php/full-time-school/term-dates>). Complaints received during school holidays will be dealt with as soon as possible as is practicable but are likely to take longer to resolve due to the unavailability of relevant staff. Under such circumstances the complainant will be notified of any extension to the timescales and the reason(s) why an extension is necessary when the complaint is acknowledged.
- A written record will be kept of all complaints that are made in writing under the format part of this procedure. Records will include whether the complaint was resolved following a formal procedure or proceeded to a panel hearing, any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld)
- The proprietor is Miss. Barbara M Speake and the Head Teacher is Mr. David Speake.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within **five** working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within **28** days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during school holidays. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further **28** days, if the appeal is lodged during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against Barbara Speake Stage School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or head teacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the head teacher, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Barbara Speake Stage School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- The school encourages parents to make contact at an early stage if they do have any worries or concerns in order that we can work together to address the concern before it escalates to the point that might require any sort of formal procedures.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's class/year teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the class/year teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult the Head Teacher. The member of staff should make a brief written note including the date of the concern/complaint and of any conversations or meetings with

parents and of the action/resolution.

- Complaints made directly to the Head Teacher will usually be referred to the relevant class/year teacher unless the Head Teacher deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- Time scale: if parents raise a concern or complaint, the school will make contact within two working days of receiving the concern/complaint. However, parents need to be aware that the vast majority of staff at the school work part time. So, if a concern or complaint is initially raised with a subject teacher, it could be up to 4 working days before the communication is received by the member of staff (e.g. an email sent to an academic member of staff on a Wednesday evening is unlikely to be received by the member of staff until at least Monday of the following week).
- Should the matter not be resolved within seven working days or in the event that the class/year teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.
- However, if the complaint is against the Head teacher, parents should make their complaint directly to the Assistant Head Teacher.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in a formal written letter (email is acceptable) to the Head Teacher stating explicitly that they wish to invoke the formal complaint procedure. The Head Teacher will decide after considering the complaint the appropriate course to take.
- In most cases, the Head Teacher will meet the parents concerned, normally within seven working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head Teacher to carry out further investigations. If this is the case, an appropriate timescale will be agreed with the parent for further discussion/communication.
- The Head Teacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head Teacher is satisfied that, so far as practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed within fourteen days of this decision in writing (most likely by email). The Head Teacher will also give reasons for his decision.
- If the complaint is against the Head Teacher, the Assistant Head Teacher on behalf of the Complaints Panel will call for a full report from the Head Teacher and for all the relevant documents. The Assistant Head may also call for a briefing from members of staff and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Assistant Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Complaints Panel will give reasons for their decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Complaints Panel, who will call a hearing.
- Written Communications to the Complaints Panel, need to be marked Private & Confidential and address to Complaints Panel, c/o Barbara Speake Stage School. Any such communications will be forwarded to them unopened at the earliest possible opportunity.
- The Complaints Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of who shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Complaints Panel will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within **fourteen days**.
- If the panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties normally not later than **seven** days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within seven days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Head Teacher.

A written record will be kept by the Head teacher of all formal complaints, including any action(s) taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether it is upheld) and of whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or progressed to a panel hearing.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 3.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Barbara Speake Stage School. They will consider whether Barbara Speake Stage School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

Date published: January 2019

Review date: September 2019