

Berridge Primary & Nursery School



Complaints Policy

Reviewed by Governors
September 2025

Berridge Primary School Complaints Policy

How we will deal with your concerns and complaints

Berridge Primary School

Bobbers Mill Road

Hyson Green

Nottingham

NG7 5GY

Tel: 0115 9155851 (Bobbers Mill Site) Tel:0115 9155813 (Brushfield Site)

Statement of Intent

Berridge Primary School aims to resolve all complaints at the earliest possible stage and is dedicated to continuing to provide the highest quality of education possible throughout the procedure.

This policy has been created to deal with any complaint against a member of staff or the school as a whole, relating to any aspects of the school or the provision of facilities or services. Any person, including a member of the public, is able to make a complaint about the provision of facilities or services that the school provides. This policy outlines the procedure that the complainant and school will follow. Once a complaint has been made, it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

Parents of SEND children should follow this same procedure.

School will ensure that:-

- Your complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.
- Your complaint will be investigated thoroughly and fairly.
- If your complaint is urgent we will prioritise.
- We will provide you with an update at each stage.
- You will be informed what we are going to do to put things right.

Definition

- For the purpose of this policy, a “**complaint**” can be defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction’ which can be regarding actions taken or a perceived lack of action.
- Complaints can be resolved formally, through this procedure, or informally dependent on the complainant’s choice.
- A concern can be defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt’ for which reassurance is sought. School aims to address concerns informal but this can be changed into a complaint if the person raising the concern wishes to escalate the matter further
- Any complaint or concern will be taken seriously, whether formally or informally, and the appropriate procedures shall be taken.
- A ‘grievance’ is an issue raised by a member of staff where they feel the school has not implemented a policy or process fairly or properly. Grievances will be dealt with in line with the school’s Grievance Policy.

- Please see appendix 1 for limitations to the complaints policy. The school is legally bound to certain duties such as teaching the national curriculum and following safeguarding procedures for example. Complaints must be mindful that their desired outcome may not be possible as schools must follow statutory guidance.

How to make a complaint

In the first instance

Should you have a concern or if you wish to make a complaint, you can do this:-

- by telephone
- in person
- in writing, by letter or email

Complaints are not restricted to parents of attending pupils. The school will consider all complaints.

We endeavour to resolve most concerns and complaints quickly and informally. Please contact the appropriate member of staff to arrange a suitable meeting time to discuss your concern further. If your concern is about special needs then it may be more appropriate to arrange to meet the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator.

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Complaints are expected to be made as soon as possible after an incident arises to amend the issue in an appropriate timescale. The school upholds a three month time limit in which a complaint can be lodged regarding an incident. Complaints made outside this time limit will not be automatically refused and exceptions will be considered. We will consider complaints made outside of term time which have been received on the first school day after the holiday period. When referring to timescales, school refers to working weeks during term time when the school is open and does not include holiday periods as part of the working week.

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

School will take reasonable steps to investigate any concerns or complaints raised but recognises that factors may be out of the school's control such as a pupil/staff member has left the school and is not able to be contacted, for example.

If the member of staff you speak to in the first instance is unable to resolve the matter, please make an appointment with the Head Teacher. We will attempt to address your concern or complaint but this is not always possible. The next step moves to a formal process:-

Stage one – Informal concern made to a member of staff

- A complaint may be made in person, by telephone or in writing.
 - The member of staff the complaint has been made against can discuss the concern with the headteacher or deputy headteacher to seek support.
 - To prevent any later challenge or disagreement over what was said, brief notes of meetings and telephone calls are kept and a copy of any written response is added to the record. These notes are kept securely on the school's IT system and, where appropriate, encrypted. The headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.
 - If the concern is about the headteacher, the Chair of Governors should be informed and will need to handle the complaint
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- Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be discussed with the Headteacher in the first instance and if a formal complaint is required then the complaint should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. The Clerk will then arrange for the complaint to be heard. This will be done by a suitably skilled and impartial member of the governing body (stage 1) and then a committee of members of the governing body (stage 2)
 - complaints against the entire governing body or complaints involving both the Chair and Vice Chair should also be sent to the Clerk, who should then determine the most appropriate course of action. This will depend on the nature of the complaint. The clerk may consider appointing an independent investigator who will provide a formal written response.
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- In case a complaint is made initially to a governor, the complainant should be referred to the appropriate person. The governor in question should not act alone on a complaint outside the procedure; if they do, they cannot be involved if the complaint is subject to a hearing at a later stage of the procedure.
 - Within 15 school days, the complainant and the relevant member of staff should discuss the issue in a respectful and informal manner to seek a mutual resolution.
 - At this stage, the complainant will be asked what they think might resolve the issue – any acknowledgement that the school could have handled the situation better is not an admission of unlawful or negligent action.

- If an appropriate resolution cannot be sought at this informal level, or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome following the initial discussions, the complainant may wish to proceed to the next level of the procedure.

Stage two – Formal complaint made to the headteacher

- An appointment with the headteacher should be made, as soon as reasonably practical, to avoid any possible worsening of the situation. The complaint should make it clear that they wish to make a formal complaint and are dissatisfied with the informal stage so the headteacher can advise them of the school's procedures if required.
- As part of the investigation, the school will want to establish what actions have been taken by the complaint to resolve this matter informally
- Stage two of the process will be completed within 15 school days. Where the situation is recognised as complex, and it is deemed to be unable to be resolved within this timescale, the headteacher will contact the complainant to inform them of the revised target date via a written notification.
- If the complaint is against the headteacher, the complainant will initially need to write, in confidence, to the chair of the governing board. The chair will seek to resolve the issue informally before moving directly to stage three of the procedure.
- Where the headteacher or chair of the governing board has made reasonable attempts to accommodate the complainant with dates for a complaint meeting and they refuse or are unable to attend, the meeting will be convened in their absence and a conclusion will be reached in the interests of drawing the complaint to a close.
- Where there are communication difficulties, the complaint may be made in person or via telephone.
- To prevent any later challenge or disagreement over what was said, brief notes of meetings and telephone calls are kept, and a copy of any written response is added to the record. These notes are kept securely on the school's ICT system and, where appropriate, encrypted.
- In terms of a complaint being made against a member of staff, the headteacher will discuss the issue with the staff member in question. Where necessary, the headteacher will conduct interviews with any relevant parties, including witnesses and pupils, and take statements from those involved.
- All discussions shall be recorded by the headteacher and findings and resolutions will be communicated to the complainant either verbally or in writing.
- School will take reasonable steps to investigate the facts of the complaint but accepts that factors may hinder the investigation and are out of the school control. If a pupil

has left the school, for example it may not be possible to contact them. If the complaint is made several months after the incident, the individuals involved may not fully recall the information which may hinder the investigation.

- Once all facts are established, the headteacher shall contact the complainant in writing with an explanation of the decision. The complainant will be advised of any escalation options (for example, escalation to stage three) and will be provided with details of this process.
- Any further action the school plans to take to resolve the issue will be explained to the complainant in writing.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome suggested, the procedure will progress to stage three.

Stage three – Investigation by the chair of governors

- The complainant should submit any complaint in respect of the headteacher's investigation in writing to the chair of governors.
- The chair of governors will carry out an investigation and consider all available evidence
- If the complaint is about the headteacher and complainant is dissatisfied with the informal outcome of the Chair of Governors they should write to the Deputy Chair of Governors.
- The complainant and the headteacher will be informed of the outcome within 20 school days of the chair of governors receiving the complaint. The complainant will be advised of any escalation options (for example, escalation to stage four) and will be provided with details of this process.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, considers the decision to be perverse, or believes that the chair/deputy chair has acted unreasonably, they may request that the governing board reviews the complaint (stage four).

Stage four – Complaints appeal panel (CAP)

- Following receipt of a stage three outcome, the complaint should be made in writing to the chair of governors within 10 school days.
- Where there are communication difficulties, the complaint may be made in person or via telephone.
- To prevent any later challenge or disagreement over what was said, brief notes of meetings and telephone calls are kept, and a copy of any written response is added to the record. These notes are kept securely on the school's ICT system and, where appropriate, encrypted.

- Written acknowledgement of the complaint will be made within five school days. This will inform the complainant that a CAP will hear the complaint within 20 school days.
- Neither the school nor the complainant should bring legal representation to the CAP proceedings; however, there are occasions where legal representation will be necessary, for example where a school employee is a witness in a complaint, they may be entitled to bring union or legal representation.
- The chair of governors, or another nominated governor, will convene a CAP comprising of three members of the governing board who have not been involved in the informal stages of the complaint.
- If the whole governing board is aware of the substance of a complaint before the CAP has been completed, an independent panel should be arranged to hear the complaint.
- The purpose of the CAP meeting is to evaluate the investigation of the complaint, actions taken to resolve the complaint and consider the conclusions made as a result of the investigation. The CAP meeting will determine with desired outcomes to resolve the complaint are realistic and achievable.
- The CAP meeting will focus upon the original complaint made at the informal stage and will not consider new complaints or concerns raised that have not been shared with school during the early stages of the policy when the appropriate members of staff or governors have not been had the opportunity to investigate and address them.
- The meeting should allow for:
 - The complainant to be present and accompanied at the hearing if they wish.
 - The complainant to explain their complaint and how they wish the complaint to be resolved
 - Any evidence, including witnesses who have been prior approved by the chair of the CAP, to be questioned.
 - Members of the CAP to question both the complainant and the headteacher to clarify the information received as part of the complaint.
- The complainant will receive a written response explaining the panel's findings and recommendations within 15 school days. This letter will also explain whether there are any further rights of appeal and to whom they need to be addressed.
- Where relevant, the person complained about will receive a summary of the panel's findings and recommendations.

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 4.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the school. They will consider whether 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

Unreasonable Complainants

We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. 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.

This school defines 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:-

- 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 Head Teacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues the Head Teacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school 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 six 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 the school.

Appendix 1

Complaints not in scope of this policy

A complaints procedure should cover all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services that a school provides other than complaints for which there are separate (statutory) procedures, including those listed below.

Admissions to schools

For school admissions, complaints should be addressed to Nottingham City Admission team.

Complaints about admission appeals for local authority maintained schools are dealt with by the appropriate ombudsman.

School re-organisation proposals

Contact the local authority or diocese, as appropriate, in the first instance and then escalate to us, if dissatisfied.

Statutory assessments of special educational needs

Concerns about statutory assessments of special educational needs should be raised direct with local authorities.

Matters likely to require a child protection investigation

Complaints about child protection matters should be handled:

- under the school's child protection and safeguarding policy
- in accordance with relevant statutory guidance

Refer to your local authority designated officer (LADO) or the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH).

Exclusion of children from school

Further information about raising concerns about exclusions is available in the [School discipline and exclusion](#) guidance.

Complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.

Whistleblowing

School has internal whistleblowing procedure for your employees, including temporary staff and contractors.

The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Concerns can be raised with DfE using our [contact form](#).

Volunteers who have concerns about schools should complain through the school's complaints procedure. Depending on the substance of the complaint they may also be able to complain to:

- the local authority
- DfE using our [contact form](#)

Staff conduct complaints

Complaints about staff are dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.

Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, you should notify complainants that the matter is being addressed.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities

Schools should direct complainants to follow the external provider's own complaints procedure.

Complaints about the curriculum

Complaints about the content of the national curriculum should be sent to DfE using our [contact form](#).

Complaints about the delivery of the curriculum are for schools to resolve through their complaints procedure. This includes:

- religious education (RE)
- sex and relationships education

The duty on local authorities to consider complaints of this nature was removed under section 45 of the Education Act 2011.

Complaints about collective worship

Complainants who are dissatisfied with the content of the daily act of collective worship (DACW) should be signposted to:

- the local authority
- the local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
- any other relevant body

Withdrawal from the curriculum

Parents and carers can withdraw their child from any aspect of RE, including the DACW. They do not have to explain why.

If parents or carers are not satisfied with the handling of a request to withdraw their child from RE or the DACW, schools should advise them to follow their complaints procedure.

The right of withdrawal does not apply to other areas of the curriculum where religious matters may be spontaneously raised by pupils or arise in other subjects such as history or citizenship.