



Nurture-Believe-Inspire-Achieve

Danson
Primary
School

Complaints Policy

Danson Primary School

Complaints Policy

Procedure for handling concerns and complaints

At Danson Primary we want our pupils to be healthy, happy and safe, and to achieve. We recognise that parents, guardians or carers play an important part in making this happen. Cooperation between parents, staff and senior leaders leads to a shared sense of purpose and a positive atmosphere in the school.

The procedure set out below offers the opportunity for concerns and complaints to be resolved as quickly as possible. This document sets out the school's procedure for addressing complaints. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed in a confidential manner and aim to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding. It should be used only when informal attempts to resolve problems have been unsuccessful.

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Please note that this procedure does not apply to issues concerning the curriculum, collective worship, admissions, exclusion appeals, decisions about your child's special educational needs or grievances by school staff. These are the subject of separate complaints procedures.

Complaints that fall outside of this procedure:

Complaints relating to the following issues are covered by a separate/specific policy.

- Pupil admissions; please contact the London Borough of Bexley
- Pupil exclusions; please see the school's Behaviour Policy
- Staff grievance, capability or disciplinary; these are covered by the school's Capability, Disciplinary and Employee Resolution procedures
- Where the complaint concerns a third party used by the school; please raise the issue directly with the school. The school will refer the issue to the third party to be dealt with under their own complaint procedures but will monitor the outcome.
- Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests – please see the school's Data Protection and Freedom of Information policy

Framework of Principles

This policy will:

- be easily accessible and publicised
- be simple to use and understand
- be impartial
- be non-adversarial
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
- respect people's desire for confidentiality, wherever possible (some information sharing may be necessary to carry out a thorough investigation)
- address all points of issue, providing an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- provide information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

Aims and Objectives

The school will give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them fairly and honestly. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and aim to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Danson Primary 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.

Informal Stage

Every effort should be made to resolve the difficulty informally in discussion with either the class teacher, a senior member of staff or the head teacher.

If you have any concerns about the school or the education provided, please discuss the matter in the first instance with *your child's class teacher*.

Parents, carers or guardians should, in the first instance, make an appointment to speak to the class teacher about the concern. It is best to resolve issues at this point.

- *Concerns should initially be handled informally in a manner that offers the best way of resolving issues.*
- *A class teacher should offer an appointment to discuss the issue as quickly as possible, as this will give both parties time to talk about it calmly and politely without being interrupted. This can allow parties to remain calm. It will also show a commitment to resolving issues.*
- *It is important for parents to recognise that schools are busy organisations and that it may not be possible to offer an appointment straight away. Appointments should be made through the School Office.*
- *The parties involved should be encouraged to offer their view of what would be a realistic resolution to the problem.*

If your concern has not been addressed /resolved to mutual satisfaction please the proceed to your child's Year Group Leader, or Phase Leader at the earliest opportunity. The school considers any concerns very seriously and most problems can be resolved at this stage. If a resolution to the issue is proving difficult to find, the Senior Leadership Team or Assistant Head Teachers can speak to the Headteacher regarding the issue who may be willing to offer informal intervention. However, there is no obligation on any Headteacher to become involved at this level.

- *It is always best to resolve issues informally at the earliest possible time but if the person is not satisfied with the result of the talk with the teacher or Year Group Leader then he/she can ask for an appointment to meet with a member of the SLT or with the Assistant Headteacher*
- *It is in everyone's interest, particularly the child or children, for concerns and complaints to be sorted out quickly and smoothly.*
- *The aim should be that discussions end on a positive note with no bad feeling.*
- *It is good practice for a member of the Senior Leadership Team to write a letter to parents summarising what has been agreed regarding the issue.*
- *A member of the Leadership Team, Assistant Headteacher, Deputy Head Teacher may feel that a particular Head Teacher's input would be helpful in bringing about a resolution but there is no obligation on any Head Teacher to become involved at this level.*

Formal Complaints

Stage 1: Complaint Heard by Head Teacher

Formal complaints must be made to the Head Teacher (unless they are about the Head Teacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.

The Head Teacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days.

The Head Teacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Head Teacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The Head Teacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the Head Teacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

Stage 2

If, following a meeting with the Headteacher, parents/carers feel that their concerns/complaints require further attention then they may choose to refer the matter to the school's Governing Body who will investigate the matter. In this instance, parents may write to the Chair of Governors at the school address or via the Clerk to Governors at the Civic Offices in Bexleyheath. The Chair, or a nominated governor, will convene a governing body complaints panel. Your formal complaint will be investigated by the Chair of Governors or a Governor nominated by the Chairman.

A letter of acknowledgement from the Chair of Governors will be sent within 5 school days.

The formal complaint will be investigated by the Chair of Governors and a reply sent within 15 school days of receiving the complaint.

Stage 3

If the complaint is still not resolved, parents/ carers may request that the matter will be referred to a Complaints Panel. This must be done in writing to the school within 10 school days of receiving the response at Stage 2.

If the complainant is not satisfied after the Chairman or nominated Governor has completed their review at Stage 2, a panel of 3 governors will meet to consider the complaint and make a final decision about it on behalf of the Governing Body.

The panel will consist of governors who have no detailed prior knowledge of the complaint, or connection with the complainant. The meeting will normally take place within *15 working days* of your request.

You will have the opportunity to submit written evidence on the complaint prior to the meeting of the panel and also to attend, accompanied by a friend/partner if you wish, to put your case. The head teacher will be given the same opportunities. The panel will write to you with its conclusion within *10 working days* of the meeting.

The Complaints Panel will communicate their findings in writing to all parties within 10 school days. The Complaints Panel can:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the school's system or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur

The decision of the panel is final. The decision of the panel is final. If you are not satisfied with the way the governors have dealt with this matter you may wish to put your complaint to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families.

Monitoring and Review

The governing body monitors the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The head teacher logs all formal complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure.

Local Authority

The Local Authority has no power to investigate complaints about general matters covered by the Governing Body. Independent Review In the rare circumstance that the complainant remains dissatisfied with the response by the Governing body, he/she would have the right to refer the matter to the Secretary of State for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1 3BT. We would advise parents that unless the school and/or the Local Authority have behaved unreasonably or not to have followed their own procedures, there is likely to be little further action that can be taken as Governing Bodies are empowered to deal with many issues without reference to either the Local Authority or the Secretary of State.

Vexatious Complaints Policy The Headteacher and staff deal with specific complaints as part of their day-to-day management of the school in accordance with the School's Complaints Procedure. However, there are occasions when complainants behave in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing concerns. The consequences are that the actions of the complainants begin to impact negatively on the day-to-day running of the school and directly or indirectly the overall well-being of the children or staff in the school. In these exceptional circumstances, the school may take action in accordance with the policy.

Availability

A copy of this procedure is available to all parents on request.

