

COMPLAINTS POLICY

BRAMHALL HIGH SCHOOL

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1. INTRODUCTION:

At Bramhall High School all staff are dedicated to giving all children the best possible education and caring properly for their health, safety and welfare at all times. We are committed to working closely with parents/carers and believe that the school and parents/carers must work together in partnership, each carrying out our own particular responsibilities to help students gain the most from their time in school. We also desire to have good relations with our neighbours and the wider community.

If you feel that something is not going quite as you would like it to, that we are doing something that you are unhappy with, or not doing something that you feel we should, please tell us about it.

The prime aim of the school's Complaints Policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. Malicious complaints may incur appropriate action by the school.

Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to the school about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures, such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions, we will use this complaint procedure.

2. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CONCERN AND A COMPLAINT

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint procedure. We would like to reassure you that the school takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

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 a lack of action'.

3. SCOPE OF THIS COMPLAINT POLICY

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by the school other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed in Appendix 1.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LEA) 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 legal action is commenced against the school in relation to the complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaint procedure in relation to the complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

4. ACHIEVING A RESULT THAT YOU ARE SATISFIED WITH

Each day the school makes many decisions and tries hard to do the best for all the children. Your comments, either positive or negative, are helpful for future planning. As a school we are committed to continuous improvement. Parents and other members of the local community should feel comfortable asking questions and sharing concerns.

Prior to a discussion it is helpful to make a few notes on the following:

- What is your main concern?
- How would you like the school to help?
- What would you like to happen after you have told the school your concern?

Please be aware that schools are very busy places and only by making an appointment in advance can we guarantee to see you.

If you have a particular need, disability or personal circumstance that make registering a concern or complaint challenging, please contact our Complaints Officer by telephone, email or letter and make her aware of this and we will do our best to accommodate your requirements.

5. HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN OR MAKE A COMPLAINT

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. The school requests that parents make their first contact the child's Head of Year, tutor, subject teacher or Head of Department. If you are not the parent/carer of a child at our school, or if you are unsure who to raise the concern with, please contact Mrs D Brennan (dbrennan@bramhallhigh.stockport.sch.uk)

On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within **five to ten school days**. The vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if, having allowed sufficient time to deal with the issue, you are not satisfied with the result, please write to or call the school within ten school days and state what you would like the school to do. The school will then take your complaint through the following procedure.

6. THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

There are three stages to the complaint procedure. In order to protect the rights of all parties it is important that the various stages of the procedure are adhered to as far as possible. Should a complaint, therefore, be reported to a governor, Chair of Governors or the LA, the complainant will be directed to the school for the matter to be considered by the appropriate member of staff in the first instance.

On this basis:

- Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the headteacher;
- Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to the chair of governors;
- Complaints about a member of the governing body should be addressed to the chair of governors;
- Complaints about the chair of governors should be addressed to the vice chair of governors;

Complaints against the entire governing body or complaints involving both the chair and vice chair should be sent to the Governor Service Manager within the local authority, who will determine the most appropriate course of action. This will depend on the nature of the complaint. Please mark all written complaints as private and confidential.

PLEASE NOTE:

Complaints about staff conduct will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedure, if appropriate. You will not be informed of any disciplinary action against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, you will be notified the matter is being addressed.

7. STAGES OF THE COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

STAGE 1

Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher). This may be done in person, in writing (preferably using the complaint form - see Appendix 3), or alternavtively by email using headteacher@bramhallhigh.stockport.sch.uk. Please mark them as 'Private and Confidential'.

The headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) **within 3 school days.**

The headteacher may provide an opportunity to meet with you in order to supplement any information previously provided. You can be accompanied to the meeting by a friend, relative or representative and arrangements for any interpreting facilities should be considered, where appropriate.

The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team, but not the decision to be taken.

It may be your complaint is resolved in whole or in part at the meeting. However, if there are outstanding issues these should be highlighted and the headteacher will provide you with a written response **within 10 full school days** and will signify the school's response at stage 1.

If you do not wish to meet with the Headteacher, or the Headteacher does not consider it necessary to convene a meeting, you will receive a written response after your complaint has been investigated and **within 10 full school days**. This will also signify the school's response at stage 1.

If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide you with an update and revised response date.

If you remain dissatisfied, you have the right to progress the complaint to the next stage. To do this, you should write to the Chair of Governors, via the school, within fifteen school days of receipt of the response letter from the headteacher.'

STAGE 2

Your letter to the Chair should outline the complaint, the reasons for your dissatisfaction and your preferred outcome. The school will forward the letter to the Chair of Governors **within 3 school days**. It should be in an envelope marked private and confidential for the attention of the Chair of Governors and sent via the school, or handed in at the school Reception. This will help to ensure s/he fully understands the issues when investigating the matter.

Following completion of the investigation, the Chairperson will write to you, outlining their decision, any actions that have been or will be taken, and any recommendations to the school or Governing Body. This will normally be done **within 15 school days** of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Chair of Governors is unable to meet this deadline, s/he will provide you with an update and revised response date.

If you remain dissatisfied you have the right to progress the complaint to the next stage. You should do this by writing to the Complaints Resolution Service (CRS) within a maximum of 15 school days of receipt of the response letter from the Chairperson. Your letter should outline the elements of the chair's response you remain dissatisfied with and your preferred outcome. The CRS will commence arrangements for the meeting of the Governing Body Complaints Panel.

STAGE 3: APPEAL TO THE GOVERNING BODY COMPLAINTS PANEL

Within 5 school days of receipt of the request to proceed to stage three, the CRS will write to you, the headteacher, Chair of Governing Body, any relevant witnesses and members of the appeal panel to advise of the date, time and place of the meeting, which should take place within 20 school days of receipt of your request. In addition, the letter will explain the main issues relating to the complaint, how the meeting will be conducted and the parent's and school's right to submit further written evidence to the panel.

This evidence should be returned to the CRS in sufficient time to enable it to be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days prior to the meeting. The complaints panel is made up from elected members of the governing body (excluding Associate Members) who have had no significant involvement with the complaint. This may include the Chair of Governors if not previously involved.

You can be accompanied to the meeting by a friend, relative or representative and arrangements for any interpreting facilities should be considered where necessary.

It should be noted that the standard of proof applied by the Panel will be the civil standard of, 'balance of probabilities' and not the criminal standard of, 'beyond reasonable doubt' as generated under Police or Court processes.

Only in exceptional circumstances should any party introduce previously undisclosed information or witnesses. If this happens it may be in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that all parties have time to consider and respond to any new information. The panel will also consider whether any additional material is appropriate to the complaint under consideration, and not relating to matters other than the parents original concern: NB: - no new complaints should be raised.

A decision letter will be produced and sent to the parent and Headteacher within 15 school days of the meeting stating the decision(s) of the panel and the basis on which the decisions were made. The complaints panel is the final stage of the schools' complaint procedure and you will be advised that if you remain dissatisfied, you can forward the complaint to The Secretary of State at the Department for Education. This can be done going online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on 0370 0002288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

8. ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

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

9. WITHDRAWAL OF A COMPLAINT

Parents can withdraw a complaint at any stage. This should preferably be done in writing.

10. CLOSING A COMPLAINT

It is reasonable that complaints be considered to have lapsed if no response or contact has been received from you within the prescribed timescales of the complaint procedure. Where a complaint is not officially withdrawn but you have not been in contact or fail to attend a complaint panel meeting with no apology or due cause, it will be within the jurisdiction of the complaints panel and / or the LA to decide whether to proceed with the complaint. Guidance should be sought from the LA prior to any decision being taken.

Where the decision is taken to close the complaint, a letter will be sent from the school advising you forthwith.

11. TIME LIMITS

You should make the school aware of your complaint as soon as possible after the matter or incident has occurred that you wish to complain about. Usually, we would expect you to do this within three months of the incident occurring and if you do not contact the school within that time, we will not usually consider your complaint.

If your complaint relates to a continuing act, then occurrences outside of the three-month time limit will usually be considered alongside the more recent occurrence.

If you feel there are exceptional circumstances that have prevented you from meeting the time limit, you can provide an explanation of these circumstances along with your complaint so that governors can take them into account.

The final decision rests with governors as to whether your complaint will be considered when it is raised outside of the three-month time limit.

12. UNREASONABLE COMPLAINANT BEHAVIOUR

Staff and Governors are keen to ensure that all genuine complaints are dealt with fairly and promptly and in accordance with our agreed procedures. We would again emphasise that most matters can be resolved by discussing issues with our staff at the informal stages of our procedure.

Regrettably, there are times when complainants raise issues with, or about staff, in ways which are unacceptable. This can cloud the concern at the heart of the complaint, which may result in the delay or hindrance of a resolution. It can also have an adverse effect on students, staff and the effective running of the school.

Examples of behaviours that we consider to be unacceptable are as follows:

- Using abusive or threatening language and/or behaviour.
- Making excessive demands on staff time and resources in pursuit of a complaint, whether in person, by phone, email or letter.
- Harassing individual staff members or governors in a way which appears intended to cause personal distress rather than to find a resolution.
- Refusing to cooperate with the complaints procedure as set out in this policy.
- Persisting in repetitious complaints when these have been previously determined under the school complaints procedure.
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the consideration proceeds and/or making unjustified complaints about those trying to deal with the complaint.
- Pursuing unreasonable outcomes which are disproportionate to the nature of the matters in hand.
- Electronically recording meetings, telephone calls and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other persons involved.

The school expects that any person wishing to raise a concern or complaint will:

- Follow the school complaints procedure.
- Treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect.
- Recognise the time constraints that staff operate under and allow them a reasonable amount of time in which to respond/address any issues.

Where a complainant raises a complaint in a manner which the school feels is unreasonable, actions may be taken to remedy this. In line with our Respect Policy the actions will be proportionate to the nature of the behaviour and may include:

- An informal approach to inform the person that the behaviour is unacceptable and needs to be modified.
- A formal written communication advising the person that the behaviour is unacceptable and appropriate action may be taken if the behaviour is not modified.
- Setting limitations on the method and frequency of contact with staff / school personnel.
- Refusing to register and process further complaints about the same or similar subject matter where the matter has already been determined, or where complaints are vexatious, or where complaints are personally harassing and deliberately targeted at one or more members of staff without good cause.
- Setting limitations on the person's access to the school site.

It should be noted that parents/carers and members of the wider community do not have an automatic right to enter school grounds and may be banned from entering the school site, with immediate effect, after an incident where behaviour has been verbally and/or physically aggressive.

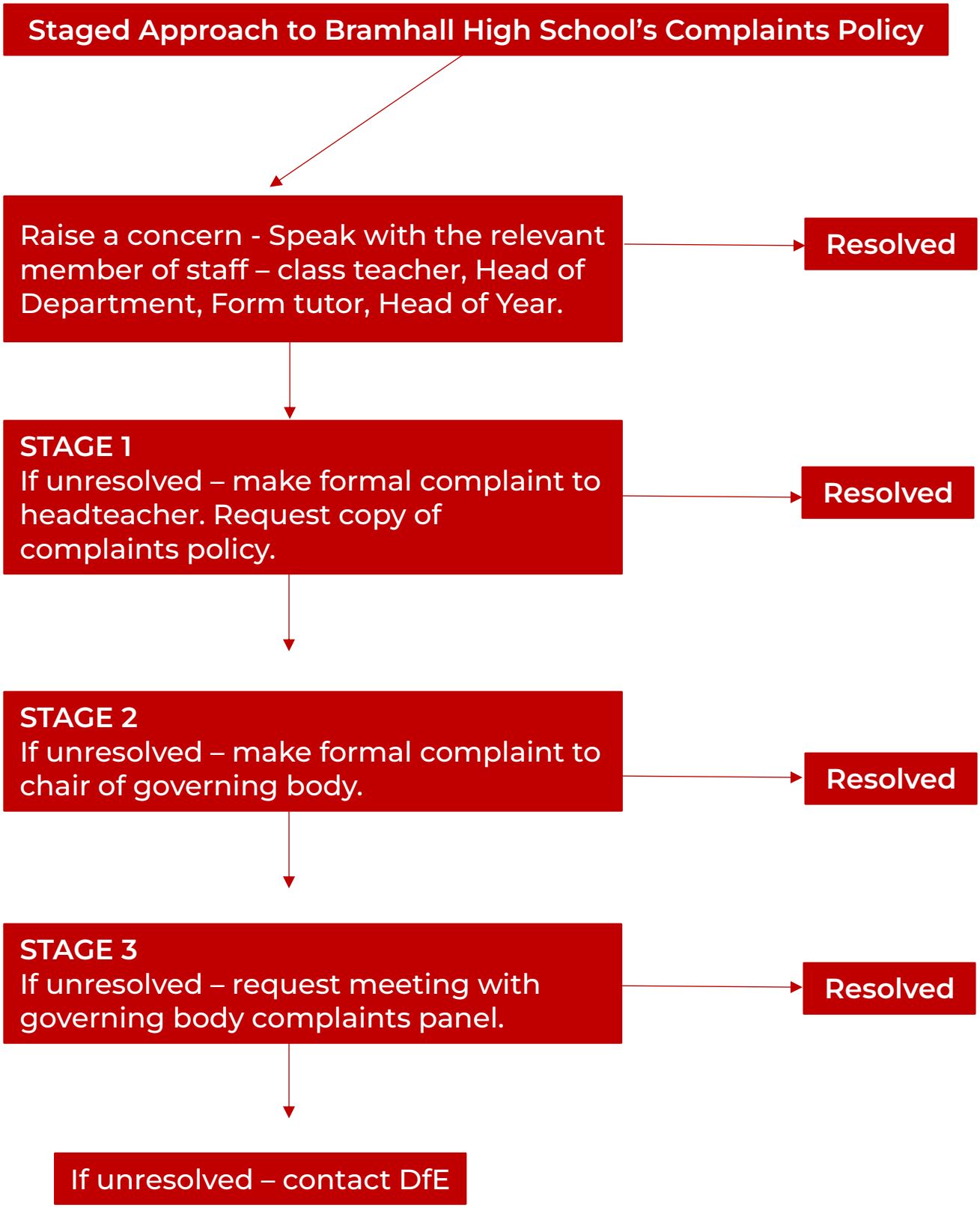
Any restrictions placed on a person as a result of this policy will be time limited, with a specified date as to when the restrictions will be reviewed and potentially lifted.

13. APPENDIX 1

Scope of this Complaint Procedure This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by the school other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to Schools, Statutory Assessments of Special Educational Needs, School Re-organisation Proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with the relevant service within the local authority
Matters Likely to Require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASSH).
Exclusion of Children from School*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-disciplineexclusions/exclusions. *complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaint procedure.
Staff Grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff Conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. You will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, you will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
Complaints About Services Provided by Other Providers Who May Use School Premises or Facilities	Providers should have their own complaint procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.

14. APPENDIX 2



15. APPENDIX 3: COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete and address the complaint to the headteacher (stage 1), the chair of governors (for stage 2, or complaints against the headteacher). Please mark the envelope Private and Confidential and return the school.

Your name:
Student's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the student (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Contact number:**
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the about it.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
OFFICIAL USE
DATE OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SENT:
BY WHO:
COMPLAINT REFERRED TO:
DATE: