COMPLAINTS POLICY

A. The school’s aim is education to understand the world and change it for the better.

B. The school wants to listen to the views of parents and carers about their child’s education and wellbeing at school.

C. The school will try to resolve any concerns or complaints as informally and as quickly as possible.

D. The school takes all complaints seriously and will provide a thorough and appropriate response.

E. No child will be penalised or intimidated as a result of a parent or carer making a complaint.

F. There is a set of clear and detailed procedures for handling complaints available for parents or carers who wish to pursue a complaint beyond the initial informal stage.

G. The school will ensure that all complaints are logged.

H. The full governing body will not discuss individual complaints and any governor receiving a complaint will direct the parent or carer to the school’s complaints information and procedures.

I. The governing body will monitor and review the effectiveness of the policy and procedures annually by receiving a summary report of numbers and types of formal complaints together with outcomes. Individual details will not be included.

J. Specific complaints or appeals relating to admissions, exclusions, Special Educational Needs provision or Safeguarding will be addressed individually through the admissions, exclusions SEN or Safeguarding policies. These policies are available on our website.

Complaints Procedure

There are five stages available to parents or carers seeking to address concerns or complaints relating to their child’s education at the school.

1. In most cases the parent should approach the member of staff concerned to discuss the matter informally.

2. If the parent or carer feels that the matter is not resolved or feels unable to discuss it with the staff member, the parent or carer should then discuss it with their child’s Head of Year.
3. If the concern is still unresolved, the parent or carer may contact:

   Assistant Head, Inclusion
   Deputy Head, Inclusion
   Deputy Head, Curriculum

   A parent or carer may also contact the Headteacher at any time.

4. If the matter remains unresolved, or if the complaint is about the Headteacher, the parent or carer should contact the Clerk to the Governors, Mrs Valerie Churchill (Valerie.churchill@bexley.gov.uk) within two weeks, to seek advice. The Clerk to the Governors will offer advice and, if necessary, liaise with the school on the parent or carer’s behalf in an attempt to resolve any issues or concerns.

5. If the matter still remains unresolved, the parent should write within two weeks to the Chair of Governors c/o Thomas Tallis School, setting out the complaint and the attempts made to resolve it. The Chair of Governors will investigate the matter and respond to it in writing.

6. If the parent or carer remains dissatisfied, they should write to the Chair of Governors or Clerk to the governing body requesting that a panel of governors is convened to hear the complaint. The panel will make a definitive and final response on behalf of the school that is binding upon the Chair of governors and Headteacher.

   Should this full procedure fail to lead to a resolution of the issues in the parent or carer’s view, they can write to the Secretary of State for Education at the DfES. The only situation where the DfES is likely to become involved, however, is where the governing body is judged to have acted unreasonably or has failed to fulfil its statutory responsibilities. Internal school matters are not in the Secretary of State’s remit.

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The Local Authority has no statutory power to intervene in such issues beyond giving advice or making recommendations. There is no right of appeal to the Director of Education or to Members of the Council. A final recourse for a parent might be to apply to the High Court for judicial review.
Informal Stage

1. Informal Discussion with Staff Member

The staff member will meet with the parent or carer (where possible, within three school days) to discuss and respond to the concern. If the staff member is unable to do so immediately, or the staff member subsequently needs to investigate the issue before responding, they will inform the parent or carer and provide a response within three working days. If the staff member cannot meet this deadline, they will contact the parent and explain the reasons for the delay and give a further time limit for their response. The staff member may ask their line manager to be present.

2. Informal Discussion with Head of Year

The Head of Year will meet with the parent or carer (where possible, within three school days) to discuss and respond to the concern. If the Head of Year is unable to do so immediately, or subsequently needs to investigate the issue before responding, they will inform the parent or carer and provide a response within three working days. If the Head of Year cannot meet this deadline, they will contact the parent and explain the reasons for the delay and give a further time limit for their response. The Head of Year may ask the Assistant Head, Pastoral or Assistant Head, Inclusion to be present.

3. Meeting with the Deputy Headteacher/Headteacher

The Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher will offer an appointment within five working days. If the Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher subsequently needs to investigate the issue before responding, they will inform the parent or carer and state when a response should be available, within five working days. If the Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline they will contact the parent or carer and explain the reasons for the delay and give a further time limit for their response.

4. Referral to Clerk to the Governing Body

The Headteacher will inform the parent or carer that if they remain dissatisfied they can write to the Clerk to the Governors within two weeks. The Clerk to the Governors will offer advice to the parent or carer and, if necessary, liaise with the school on their behalf in an attempt to resolve any issues or concerns.

If resolution is not achieved, the parent or carer will be informed that they can refer their concern to the governing body and should write to the Chair of Governors within two weeks.

5. Referral to Chair of Governors

Upon receipt of a parent or carer’s letter of complaint, the Chair of Governors will write to the parent within three days acknowledging receipt of the letter and stating that the matter will be investigated. The Chair of Governors will inform the parent or carer that a full response will be made in writing within 14 days. If it proves impossible to meet this deadline the Chair of Governors will write to the parent and explain the reasons for the delay and give a further time limit for the full response.
The Chair of Governors will send a copy of the school’s complaints procedures and policy to the parent or carer with the initial acknowledgement.

**Formal Stage**

1. **Referral to Panel of Governors**

If the parent or carer is dissatisfied with the full response from the Chair of Governors or, if the Chair of Governors fails to respond as outlined above, the parent may write to the Chair of Governors or Clerk of the governing body within a further 14 days, requesting that a panel of governors be convened to hear the complaint. The letter should be acknowledged within three days, and the panel convened to hear the complaint within a further three weeks. The Clerk should liaise with the parent to agree mutually convenient times.

**Constitution of Panel**

The panel will consist of three governors, none of whom will have detailed knowledge of the complaint or be involved personally in any way. There should be no more than one staff member on the panel.

**Panel Procedure**

Details of the meeting will be recorded by the Clerk to Governors. A panel member will be appointed Chair. The parent or carer may be accompanied by someone of their choosing.

The format of the hearing should be as follows:

- Parent or carer outlines complaint.
- Headteacher and panel are given opportunity to question parent or carer.
- Headteacher outlines school’s response to complaint.
- Parent or carer and panel are given opportunity to question Headteacher.
- Each side may ask witnesses to speak as appropriate.
- Everyone except panel and clerk withdraw.
- Panel considers its findings.
- Chair of the panel will write to the parent or carer, Chair and Headteacher setting out findings, within two days.
- Draft Minutes of meeting are sent to parent or carer, Headteacher, Chair of Governors and panel members within seven days.
- Anyone objecting to anything in the Minutes may write their comments to the Clerk within seven days of receiving them, and their letter will be appended to the Minutes.

As an alternative format, more in keeping with a “committee of enquiry” approach, the panel asks the parent or carer, the Chair of Governors and then the Headteacher to attend separately from each other. This avoids the possibility of argument, may help each person to speak completely openly (and may be quicker), but has the disadvantage that each party does not know what the others have said or has had the opportunity to question them. It is up to each governing body to decide which approach to adopt.

CR  
Adopted January 2016  
To be reviewed January 2017