

Beecroft Academy & The Beehive SureStart Children's Centre

Policy for Raising Concerns and Resolving Complaints

Spring 2016

From time to time those people who access services at our organisation may naturally have concerns about an aspect of the provision. Often, such concerns will resolve themselves, but on occasions parents/carers/service users may feel that they require additional help from our organisation in order that these concerns can be worked out.

The staff and governors of Beecroft Academy and The Beehive SureStart Children's Centre believe that they are partners, working with parents/carers/service users in order to provide a high quality service that enables all participants to reach their full potential. The staff and governors of Beecroft Academy and The Beehive SureStart Children's Centre therefore wish to work with parents/carers/service users in order to resolve any problems swiftly and efficiently so that the education of the child and the participation in a high quality service can remain the main focus.

This policy is designed to show the steps that should be taken in order that this resolution happens effectively. The resolution of a concern/complaint can take the three steps which are described in detail below:

Step 1: An Informal Concern

On most occasions an informal concern can be resolved immediately when a parent/carer/service user speaks to an appropriate member of staff e.g. in the case of a concern related to a child's education, the parent/carer should speak to their child's class teacher.

It will probably be necessary for the parent/carer/service user to make an appointment at a time which is convenient for both parties. The parent/carer/service user will need to let the member of staff know the nature of their concern when making the appointment so that they may make any necessary investigations prior to the meeting (where necessary and appropriate).

The purpose of the meeting detailed above should be to establish a solution or to agree a plan of action to resolve the concern that has been raised. If the meeting fails to do this then the parent/carer/service user should make an appointment to see the Headteacher/Children's Centre Manager.

The Headteacher/Children's Centre Manager will normally make further investigations and then meet with the parent/carer/service user to suggest a workable solution. If the parent/carer/service user continues to feel that the matter is not satisfactorily resolved then they may request a further meeting with the Headteacher/Children's Centre Manager, or consider making the matter the subject of a formal complaint.

It is important that these procedures are followed by all parents/carers/service users and that they seek resolution to a concern or complaint. A failure to follow procedure may result in the concern/complaint being terminated by the Governing Body later on.

Step 2: A Formal Complaint

If the concern is not resolved at the informal stage detailed above, it must be put in writing by the parent/carer/service user and passed to the Headteacher/Children's Centre Manager, who will either investigate the matter or delegate this responsibility to a senior colleague. The written complaint should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events and copies of relevant documents. The Headteacher/Children's Centre Manager may meet with complainant to clarify the matter. On the conclusion of the investigation, the Headteacher/Children's Centre Manager will write to the complainant with the outcome of the investigation. However, if the outcome of the investigation results in the implementation of staff disciplinary procedures, such procedures will remain strictly confidential.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, or if the complaint is about the Headteacher/Children's Centre Manager, then a full written complaint should be sent to the Chair of Governors at the school's address. The Chair of Governors will write to the complainant to confirm receipt of the letter and will investigate the matter fully and reply to the complainant within a further five working days. In some circumstances, the Chair of Governors may ask another Governor to carry out the investigation on their behalf. The Chair of Governors will collect any evidence deemed necessary to ensure an effective investigation and may interview other witnesses. The Headteacher/Children's Centre Manager will be provided with a copy of the complaint, any additional evidence presented by the complainant and any information collected by the Chair of Governors.

Once there has been an opportunity for the Headteacher/Children's Centre Manager to consider this information, he/she will meet separately with the Chair of Governors to present a response. A friend or representative may accompany the Headteacher/Children's Centre Manager at this meeting. On the conclusion of this meeting, the complainant and the

Headteacher/Children's Centre Manager will be informed, in writing, of the outcome. The complainant will not be informed of any disciplinary or capability action which may ensue.

These actions will then bring the Chair of Governor's investigation to a close. At this point, if the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the complaint has been investigated, a request may be made for the Governing Body to hold a formal review of the process, which will take the form of a hearing. Any such request must be made in writing to the Chair of Governors within two weeks of receiving notice of the Chair's investigation and must state the reasons for the implementation of the next stage.

NB The complainant is not entitled to access any details of the investigation except for any statements that may have been provided by their child.

Step 3: A Formal Review

On receiving a formal request for the complaint to be taken to the next stage, the Chair of Governors will write to the complainant within five working days to inform them of the date and time of the hearing and of the composition of the panel who will hear the complaint.

The hearing will take one of two forms at the discretion of the Governing Body.

Hearing 1:

The complainant may be invited to attend the meeting in order that they can inform the Governing Body of the details of their concerns. The Governors may question the complainant to seek further clarification of the detail of the concern. The complainant will be offered the opportunity to bring a friend to the hearing. After the complainant has been heard they will be asked to leave and then the Governors will meet with the Headteacher/Children's Centre Manager and Chair of Governors to seek their views about the issue. The Headteacher/Children's Centre Manager may also be accompanied by a friend or representative. Once the Governors have clarified any issues, the Headteacher/Children's Centre Manager and the Chair of Governors will be asked to leave whilst they consider their response to the complaint.

Hearing 2:

The meeting may follow the same course described above with both parties in attendance for the duration of the hearing. In this case, after both parties have stated their case and responded to questions, the complainant and the Headteacher/Children's Centre Manager and/or the Chair of Governors will be requested to sum up their positions before being asked to leave. No further questioning will be allowed at this point. The Governors will then consider their response.

The Governing Body will write to the complainant and the Headteacher/Children's Centre Manager or the Chair of Governors, as appropriate, within forty-eight hours of the hearing with their findings. The complainant will not be informed of any disciplinary or capability action which might follow. However, if the investigation does result in a change to the school's policies, then the complainant will be informed of this in detail. This will bring the involvement of the Governing Body to a close and further correspondence will not, and cannot, be entered into.

If a complainant believes that the Governing Body has acted illegally or arbitrarily in the handling of the complaint, then the complainant may make representation to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. Where a complaint is judged by the Governing Body to be vexatious, the complainant will be informed that their complaint will not be accepted and will not be investigated.

Complaints related to the following are not included in this document:

- Admissions
- National Curriculum
- Safeguarding children
- School exclusions
- Complaints about Governors
- Some aspects of special educational needs have specialised, statutory complaints procedures which do not fall within the remit of the school's general complaints policy. For further guidance on these matters, parents/carers are advised to contact the Local Authority.

Mr J Hughes (Headteacher/Children's Centre Manager)
Autumn 2016