



## **Birchwood High School Complaints Policy & Procedure (Parents)**

### **How to comment or complain - we care about what you think**

If you are dissatisfied about the way your child is being treated, or any actions or lack of action by us, please feel free to contact us using the details listed below.

Birchwood High School, Parsonage Lane, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 5BD

Telephone: 01279 655936

Website: [www.birchwoodonline.co.uk](http://www.birchwoodonline.co.uk)

Email: [admin@birchwood.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@birchwood.herts.sch.uk)

You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of this school, though not actually make a complaint - you just want to get something 'off your chest'. Feedback – whether this is positive or negative – is important to us.

### **Our aims:**

- Your complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.
- Your complaint will be looked into thoroughly and fairly.
- If your complaint is urgent we will deal with it more quickly.
- We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage.
- You will get an apology if we have made a mistake.
- You will be told what we are going to do to put things right.
- If you are dissatisfied with the response, you have the option to progress to a formal complaint.
- In this instance, you will need to contact the Principal
- If you remain dissatisfied with the Principal's response or action, you have the right to contact the Chair of Governors, who will independently review your case.

A written record will be kept of all complaints and actions taken as a result, along with details of the stage which they were resolved. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential.

### **How to make a complaint**

#### **In the first instance – informal stage**

If you have a concern about anything we do and would like to make a complaint, you can do this by telephone, in person or in writing (by letter or email). We hope that most complaints can be settled quickly and informally, either by putting matters right or by giving you an explanation. If there is something you are not happy about, or you don't understand why we are doing something in a particular way, please come in and discuss it with the class teacher or another appropriate member of staff, such as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) if it is about Special Needs.

We know that it can feel uncomfortable to question or challenge something, but if you don't tell us what is worrying you we cannot explain what we are doing or try to put it right. At this informal stage, if the member(s) of staff you speak to in the first instance is unable to attempt to resolve the matter, or if you are not satisfied with the outcome, you can make a formal complaint (see guidance below).

### **First - formal stage 1**

Please contact the Principal either by phone / letter or email outlining your concerns. The Principal will investigate your complaint and aim to inform you of the outcome **within 10 school days (2 weeks)**. If it is a safeguarding concern, this will of course be prioritised. If your complaint is about the Principal, you should **write to the Chair of Governors**.

If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) you might find it helpful to talk to our Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) or your child's named Special Needs Officer at the Local Authority. The SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS – formerly Parent Partnership) may also be able to help you.

### **Second - formal stage 2**

If you remain dissatisfied following Stage 1 and wish to take your complaint further, you will be asked to write to the Chair of Governors. In the letter or email you should:

- Make it clear why you are complaining.
- Say who you have spoken to already.
- Explain what you want to happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair of Governors will then arrange to either meet you or contact you by phone to discuss your concern. The Chair of Governors will also liaise with the Principal to discuss actions taken by the school and any further actions required.

If the matter is still unable to be resolved, the Chair of Governors will arrange for your complaint to be investigated and considered by a Complaints Panel at a hearing which the complainant and the respondent are invited to attend. The Panel should consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, two of whom will be governors. The Chair of Governors should not sit on the Panel themselves and they should instead ensure that a Panel is convened in line with the timeframes and guidance set out in the school's complaints procedure. The Governor in charge of investigating the complaint may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. It is not advisable for a Panel to investigate and conclude matters without giving the Complainant and Respondent the opportunity to respond. Therefore, a formal hearing with all in attendance is most preferable.

You should make sure that the Complaint Panel is provided with any written information or evidence you intend to use in a formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. The Chair of the Panel may invite any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. The Chair should tell you who this person is before the meeting. If any member of staff is required by the Governing Body to attend a meeting they will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named in a complaint may also choose to attend a meeting, even if not required to do so by the Governors. They may be represented. If this happens, we will inform you in advance.

When the Panel has fully investigated your complaint, the Chair of the Panel will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the Governing Body. The Chair of Governors will then write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. Our Governing Body will aim to deal with your complaint **within 28 school days (5½ weeks)**.

### **Further recourse**

Most complaints are resolved by this process. Should your complaint not be resolved, your further options are as follows: You can complain to the **Secretary of State at the Department for Education**:

Website: [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0370 000 2288

In the case of complaints about **Special Educational Needs provision**, you may complain further to the Local Authority. This should be done by writing to the Children's Services Complaints Manager.

It should be noted however that if you wish to pursue this route, you must do so within **20 working days (4 weeks)** of receiving the written outcome of the hearing into your complaint.

After **20 working days (4 weeks)**, neither the school nor the Local Authority is under any obligation to investigate or progress your complaint any further.