

Bell's Brae Primary School

**Procedures for dealing with
parental concerns and
complaints**

February 2010

Introduction

Here at Bell's Brae Primary School we constantly strive to provide pupils with a positive experience, which allows them to meet their full potential. However it is recognised that, from time to time, concerns and complaints are raised and action needs to be taken. We strongly believe that local remedy is by far the best. Therefore we will endeavour to deal with any concerns/complaints raised in a prompt and courteous manner and to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Principles of the Complaints Procedures

These complaints procedures are built upon the following principles published by The Citizen's Charter Complaints Task Force and should:

- Encourage conciliation rather than confrontation.
- Recognise the benefits of positively receiving complaints.
- Be consistent with the legal rights of the person complaining.
- Be fair and impartial to all parties concerned.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Have a clearly defined scope.
- Be developed in consultation with parents and teacher representatives.
- Be well publicised.
- Be simple to understand and use.
- Be made up of three main stages: informal, formal and appeal.
- Provide for an independent appeal procedure.
- Facilitate outside support, such as advice agencies for special services.
- Set limits for handling complaints.
- Analyse the source or nature of the complaints.
- Have a system for monitoring complaints.

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1. The aims of the procedure

In this procedure we are trying to ensure that:

- Anyone wishing to raise a concern/complaint knows how to go about it.
- The school responds to concerns/complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and effective way.

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- Parents/carers are satisfied that we take their concerns/complaints seriously and will deal with them appropriately.
- Bell's Brae Primary School learns from complaints, and where complaints are found to be justified, takes appropriate action to secure improvements.

2. What is a concern/complaint?

A concern may be related to a child's progress, their schoolwork or an incident involving another pupil or a member of staff.

A complaint, however made, is an expression of dissatisfaction, when a parent/carer feels that the school has in some way failed to meet his or her expectations.

These procedures do not cover

- Members of the public making requests, seeking information, or explanation of Shetland Islands Council policy or practice
- Matters for which there is already a right of appeal e.g. a placing request to a school or an exclusion appeal
- Matters which are or are expected to be the subject of legal proceedings
- Staff matters which are covered under Grievance and Disciplinary procedures. These are referred to the Schools Service.

A concern/complaint may be raised by

- Anyone who receives or wishes to receive a service from the school

3. Procedure stages (Flowchart – Appendix 1)

Stage 1 The In-House Answer

The school and Schools Service expect that most concerns/complaints can be resolved locally.

How to raise a concern

Parents/Carers would arrange to communicate directly with the class teacher or a member of the school management. This may be by letter, by telephone or in person by appointment. Simple clarification or the provision of information can

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resolve many concerns and it is anticipated that most concerns will be resolved by this informal stage. Parents/carers need to be mindful that for most of the school day teachers are class committed. When calling to arrange to speak with a member of staff it would be extremely helpful if parents/carers could share the reason for their call.

For a concern that cannot be resolved by the class teacher, a formal meeting with the relevant Depute Head Teacher will be scheduled.

Stage 2 The In-House Answer

Making a complaint

In the case of serious concerns or complaints it may be appropriate to address them directly to the relevant Depute Head Teacher. We hope to settle most matters at this stage. A record of parental contact will be recorded on an incident form (appendix 2).

Staff will ask you to come to a meeting in school at a time that suits both you and the school. You will usually meet with a senior member of staff and where appropriate your child's class teacher. If there is no satisfactory outcome to this meeting a formal meeting involving the Head Teacher will be scheduled.

What will happen at the meeting? (Code of good practice - appendix 5)

Staff will try to make sure that the meeting is held in a calm and reasonable way.

We will listen to your concerns/complaints and treat you fairly. We will then work with you towards finding a solution, which is realistic and achievable.

Every attempt at this stage will be made to deal appropriately with your concern/complaint, to provide answers and resolve problems as soon as possible.

Every effort will be made to reach a solution. We will take a note of this meeting and its outcomes and give you a copy. (Appendix 3)

Your concern/complaint will be dealt with in a confidential manner and knowledge of it will be limited to those directly involved.

A confidential record will be kept of each complaint received in the school's complaints log (appendix 4) but will not be kept in the personal file of a member of staff or pupil's progress record. This log will be kept electronically and will be password protected.

Stage 3 The Schools Service (informal stage)

What happens if I am still not satisfied?

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, there should be full discussion at local level in the first instance as the Head Teacher and staff must be given the opportunity to deal with issues arising. Therefore, on most occasions, complaints made direct to the School Service will be referred back to the school.

If parents/carers feel that we have been unable to address their concerns they may wish to involve the local Education Officer (Quality Improvement Officer - QIO) with responsibility for the school. The QIO will try to resolve the issue by contacting the parent or carer and the school to investigate the cause for the concern. This approach means that concerns can be dealt with at a reasonably informal level, involving discussion with the QIO, parents/carers and the Head Teacher.

The Schools Service will provide further information on how to raise a complaint. Contact details can be found at appendix 6.

Stage 4 The Schools Service (formal stage)

What happens next?

If the above approach is unsuccessful, and the complaint remains unresolved, the complainant will be asked if they wish the complaint to become formal. A formal complaint needs to be in writing to the QIO and will only be accepted provided that the matter has firstly been raised with the relevant school but has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.

The QIO will write a short account of actions taken so far to the Schools Service Senior Management Team. This account, along with the complaint itself will be presented to the Schools Service Senior Management Team, who will discuss what options are available to achieve a resolution.

The Schools Service Senior Management Team may recommend the following options to be taken forwards:

- Further internal investigation
- Appoint a formal investigating officer
- Offer of mediation

This list is not exhaustive, as each case is different, and there may be different ways of seeking resolution.

Further steps

If the parent or carer continues to be unhappy with the Schools Service response, they can take the complaint to the Executive Director, Education and Social Care who will handle the concern within the Council's overall complaints procedure.

A parent or carer can choose at any stage of the procedure to take their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. This is an independent person who may investigate their concerns.

In the case of pre-school provision complaints can also be taken to the Care Commission. Contact details for the Care Commission can be found in Appendix 6.

If the complaint is of a serious nature and concerns a potential breach of a separate Council Policy, the Head of Schools may arrange for an investigating officer to be appointed. The outcome of the investigation and any action taken as a result would normally be explained to the parents at a meeting.

4. Confidentiality

Your complaint will be dealt with in a confidential manner and knowledge of it will be limited to those directly involved in dealing with it.

Should a complaint be made regarding a member of staff, it will be normal practice to share this promptly with the staff member.

In the case of an allegation of child abuse this would invoke 'Shetland Inter-agency Child Protection Procedures' and will be passed on immediately to Social Work.

5. Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints cannot be addressed although advice can be given to anonymous callers on how to raise their concerns.

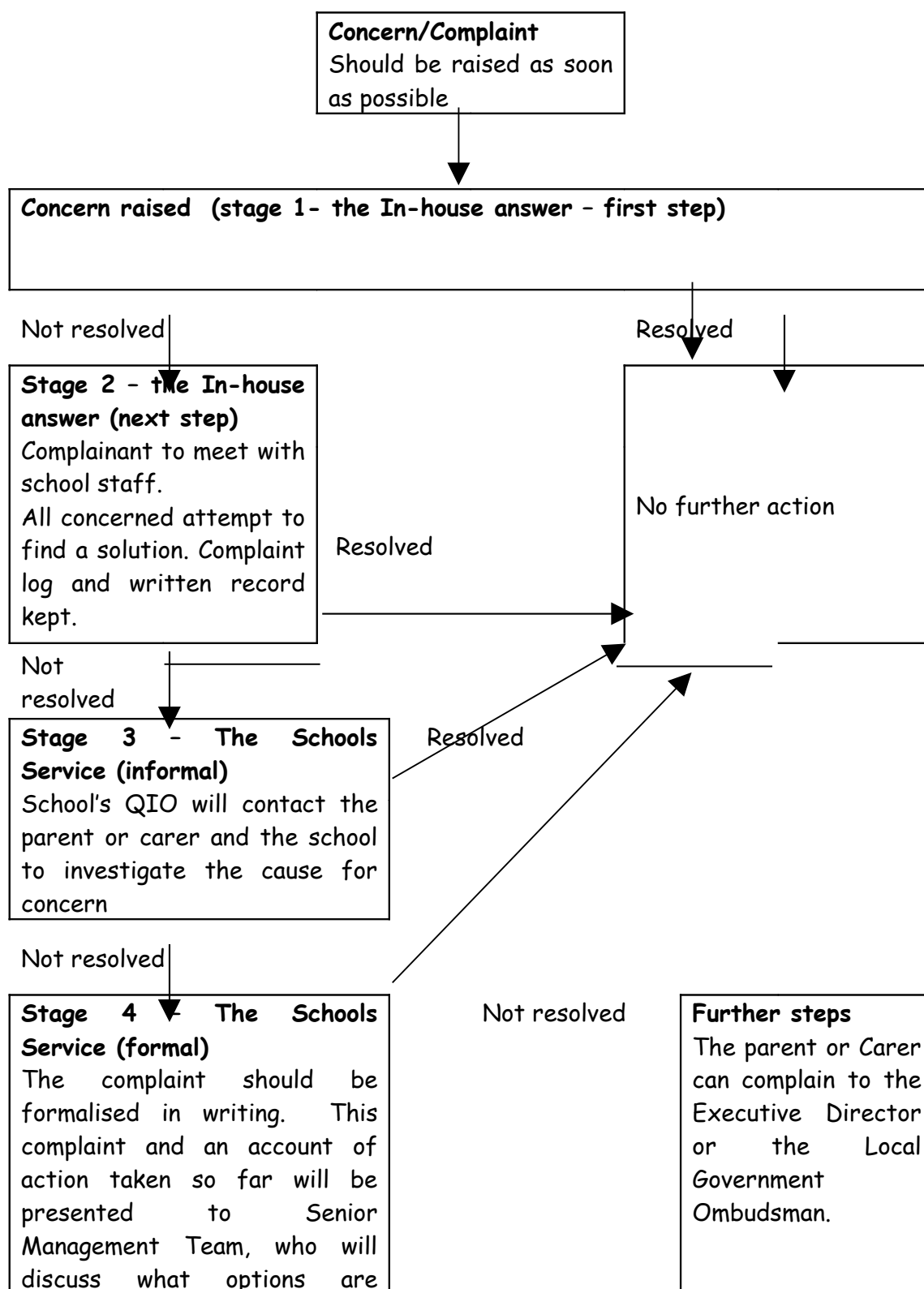
6. Monitoring of the Complaints Procedures

The number of complaints received annually will be passed on to the Schools Service for statistical purposes.


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Our complaints system is intended to provide information to improve services, identify training needs and increase levels of public satisfaction with the school.

Appendix 1



available to achieve a resolution.



QIO –Quality Improvement Officer

Appendix 2

Incident form

Name of pupil Date.....

Issue: bullying / Additional support needed / inappropriate behaviour / phone call / visit / other (please specify).....

Details:

Action taken:

Staff signature.....

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FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY

Complaints/concerns report**Bell's Brae Primary School**

Pupil Name _____ Class _____ Ref. No. _____

Date	Details of concern/complaint
	<i>(to be completed by member of staff receiving the complaint/concern)</i>
	Facts ascertained
	<i>(to be completed by Depute Head Teacher or Head Teacher)</i>
	Explanation/Remedy
Complainant informed	

Signature of member of staff investigating concern/complaint.....

Signature of Head Teacher

COMPLAINTS LOG

Appendix 4

CONCERNS RAISED Session 2009-10

No	Date	Name	Concern	Response
09/10(1)				

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Code of good practice for Bell's Brae Primary School on dealing with concerns

When concerns arise, staff and parents/carers will hopefully work together, in the best interests of children, to find a solution. Most concerns can hopefully be resolved at an early stage.

Staff and parents/carers believe that the best way to do this is to follow the 'code of good practice'.

- Talk about your concern
- Respect each other
- Remember the rights and responsibilities of everyone involved
- Work hard to find a solution

Talk about the concern

- Parents/carers should contact the school early with any concern or complaint
- Parents/carers and staff should share information in order to learn more about the situation.

Respect each other

- Parents/carers should respect the professional role of teachers, and teachers should respect parents as primary educators.

Remember the rights and responsibilities of everyone involved

- All families and teachers are part of a school community and they have responsibilities as well as rights.
- Parents/carers have the right to expect, and staff have responsibility to provide, a high standard of education, care and guidance to children and young people.
- Staff have the right to set rules, policies and procedures. Parents have responsibility to support these by working with the school.
- Parents/carers and staff have to find a balance between the rights and responsibilities of everyone involved.

Work hard to find a solution

- Parents/carers and staff deal with each other in a polite, calm and reasonable way
- Parents/carers and staff work together to move matters forward as quickly and sensibly as possible
- Parents/carers and staff have realistic expectations and be reasonable in their dealings with each other
- Parents/carers and staff look forward and search for solutions without blaming each other
- All involved work towards a solution which is in the best interests of the child

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