



BEACONSFIELD HIGH SCHOOL
A remarkable grammar school

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE POLICY

Beaconsfield High School
Complaints Procedure Policy



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1. Introduction

Our governing body has adopted this procedure to deal with all concerns or complaints brought to the attention of the school or the Governing Board.

Throughout this policy the term “working days” refers to the 190 days the Academy is open to pupils.

2. Who can make a Complaint?

This complaints procedure is for use of parents or carers of children that are registered at the school.

Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (see Scope below, such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

3. The Difference between a Concern and a Complaint

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’*.

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 this Complaints Procedure. Beaconsfield High School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member to talk to. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will also refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the school will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this Complaints Procedure.

4. Aims and Objectives

Our school aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint and to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

Careful consideration will be given to all complaints and we will deal with them as swiftly as possible. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed. In all cases, we will put the interests of the student above all other issues.

The following framework of principles underpins our procedure:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- Encourages resolution through open communication and dialogue with the school
- be easily accessible and publicised;
- be simple to use and understand;
- be impartial;
- be non-adversarial;
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respect people’s desire for confidentiality, wherever possible (some information sharing may be necessary to carry out a thorough investigation);
- address all points of issue, providing an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
- provide information to the school’s senior management team so that services can be improved.

5. How to Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. In exceptional circumstances, where a complainant requires support, the school will accept a concern or a complaint raised on their behalf by a third party, as long as the complainant is named and has given appropriate consent.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Board via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask a third-party organisation for example like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

The responsibilities of everyone involved in the Complaints Procedure is set out in Appendix 2 below.

6. Anonymous Complaints

Schools will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation. If an anonymous complaint contains quantifiable or verifiable evidence, an investigation may be carried out following this procedure. The school will not engage with anonymous complaints through intermediaries.

The school will record that an anonymous complaint has been received and the determination, i.e. it either is not quantifiable and no further action is required, or it contains quantifiable or verifiable accusations, and will be investigated.

7. Timescales

Department for Education guidance states that you must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. However, we will consider complaints made outside of this period if exceptional circumstances apply. For example, if you have a valid and plausible reason for delaying raising a complaint. In the case of such historic complaints, we will ask you to put in writing the reasons why you believe your complaint remains valid. The school will record that an historic complaint has been received and our determination, i.e. it either is no longer valid and no further action is required, or it contains valid concerns, and should be investigated.

The final decision on whether to investigate will be made by the Headteacher, unless they are in regard to the Headteacher upon which the decision will rest with the Chair of Governors. The decision will take into consideration whether there are sufficient people and documentation available to enable a fair enquiry. Historic complaints that the school considers should be investigated will proceed to stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure below. Appendix 3 provides a checklist for investigators examining an historic complaint.

8. Complaints Received out of Term Time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

9. Scope of this Complaints 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	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via 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 (MASH).
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions . <i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's Complaints Procedure.</i>
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors we also have a designated Governor with a responsibility for whistleblowing. They can be contacted at whistleblowing@beaconsfieldhigh.school The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at www.education.gov.uk/contactus . Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
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. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may affect 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 this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action against Beaconsfield High School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend this complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

10. Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the school wishes to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint;
- an apology.

11. Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint at any stage, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

12. Stage 1 - Informal Complaints

It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis through communication with the school.

If you have any concerns about the school, or the education we are providing at any time, where the matter relates to a student, we would expect that it would be raised with the student's relevant Head of Learning.

It is a precondition to the operation of this policy that the complainant shall have made reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution and shall have acted in this matter in a reasonable and measured way consistent with the School's Behaviour for Learning code adopted from time to time. The Chair of Governors shall have a discretion, which will be exercised reasonably, not to allow a complaint to be pursued where this precondition has not been met.

Informal concerns should be discussed at the earliest opportunity. Rather than telephone, we would prefer that you do this via letter or by email addressed to enquiries@beaconsfieldhigh.school marked for the attention of the relevant Head of Learning.

Please do not publicise any concerns you have on social networking sites or with other people in the community; please speak to someone at the school as soon as possible. By addressing your concerns directly with the school, we can ensure a timely and appropriate resolution while maintaining a positive and constructive environment for everyone involved. Your cooperation in handling such matters discreetly and through the proper channels is crucial in fostering a supportive and effective school community.

The school considers and takes any concerns very seriously and experience shows that most problems can be resolved following discussion and a shared understanding of the issues. All members of staff work very hard to ensure that each student is happy at school and is making good progress and they always want to know if there is a problem so they can help to resolve it.

The school expects that most concerns can be resolved at this stage, however, if after speaking to the respective Head of Learning, you are still concerned, the issue may be taken up with a member of the Leadership Team and ultimately by the Headteacher.

In that instance, an informal meeting will be arranged with a member of the Leadership Team or the Headteacher at the earliest opportunity in order for you to discuss the matter. To ensure transparency, notes of this meeting will be taken and shared.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the informal complaint will provide an informal written response within 30 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Stage 1 - Informal Complaints about the Headteacher or Governors

If the complaint is made about the Headteacher, or a member of the Governing Board (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), the complaint will progress to stage 2.

13. Stage 2 - Raising a Formal Complaint

If the complaint is still unresolved at the informal stage (stage 1) and you wish to take the matter further, we ask that you put the formal complaint in writing. Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher – see below), via the school office.

They can be sent electronically to Turner-A@beaconsfieldhigh.school or in paper form in a sealed envelope marked 'Confidential - For the attention of the Headteacher's Office', sent by post or handed in at Reception.

It is recommended, but not mandatory, that you complete a complaint form (Appendix 1). Whether or not you choose to use the complaint form, the formal complaint should set out briefly the facts of your concern, complaint, stating what it is that you consider should have been done, or where the school has not met reasonable expectations.

The aim of the complaint form is to ensure each party has a clear and common understanding of the complaint and includes a section on what actions might resolve the problem at this stage. We are happy to provide the assistance of someone unconnected with the complaint if you would like support in completing the form.

The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (by either letter or email) within 5 school days. Within this response, the Headteacher may seek further clarification on the nature of the complaint; ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting at this point is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's Senior Leadership Team, unless it relates to a member of the SLT, but the decision to be taken at the conclusion of the investigation remains with the Headteacher.

During the investigation, the Headteacher (or delegated investigator) will:

- review any relevant documentation and information and seek the views of relevant people, where necessary;
- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- if appropriate, offer a meeting with the complainant. Wherever reasonably possible, any meeting with the complainant will take place within 15 school days of the written complaint being received;
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within 15 school days of any meeting with the complainant where reasonably possible. If no meeting is arranged, it will be done within 15 school days of the written complaint being received.

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

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2. The complainant will be asked to formally submit evidence as to why they were dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2. This must indicate an issue of substance and ensure it is not merely a reiteration of the initial complaint, for example (non-exhaustive) the Stage 2 was improperly held, due process was not followed or relevant material was not considered.

This must be done in writing or by email to the Chair of Governors, within 10 school days of the complainant receiving the findings of Stage 2 in writing. Once the complaint is escalated to this level, there will be no further involvement of the Headteacher or any of the Leadership team in the resolution of the complaint.

Stage 2 Complaints about the Headteacher or Governors

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the Governing Board (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2 above. Complaints about the Headteacher or member of the Governing Board must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair, or about the entire Governing Board or the majority of the Governing Board, an independent investigator appointed by the Governing Board will undertake stage 2. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

The investigator will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2. The complainant will be asked to formally submit evidence as to why they were dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2. This must indicate an issue of substance and ensure it is not merely a reiteration of the initial complaint, for example (non-exhaustive) the Stage 2 was improperly held, due process was not followed or relevant material was not considered.

This **must** be done in writing or by email to the Clerk, stating where the complainant remains dissatisfied, within 10 school days of the complainant receiving the findings of Stage 2 in writing.

14. Stage 3 – Complaints Panel

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 following the process as described above – a Complaints Panel consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. Beaconsfield High School Governors may only form a part of the panel if they are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, or connected in any way with the complainant. At least one panel member must be a person who is not a Governor and is independent of the management and running of the school.

This is the final stage of the Complaints Procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk to the Governors (this role is not that of a Governor themselves), via the school office, within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response. The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (by either letter or email) within 5 school days. Requests received outside of this period will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

Unless the complaint relates to the Chair of Governors, or the whole Governing Board, the Panel will be arranged by the Chair of Governors. The Chair may alternatively appoint another governor, who has not previously been involved in the complaint, to take ownership for the complaint and chair the Complaints Panel to investigate the complaint on behalf of the Governing Board. The Clerk of the Complaints Panel will invite the school to put in writing to the Panel its response to the complainant's concerns. The school will provide this within 15 school days. At the end of this period, whether or not the school has responded, the Clerk will convene a meeting of the Complaints Panel.

The panel **may** decide to invite the following to attend the review meeting:

- the complainant;
- the headteacher (or chair of the governing board as appropriate) who investigated the complaint and made the decision at stage 1;
- relevant persons involved the complaint;
- persons whom, in the view of the panel, can provide relevant advice and information relating to the subject of the complaint and the review process at stage 2.

Wherever possible, the meeting will be held within 15 school days of the end of the school's response time. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed. Where the complainant, headteacher and/or relevant person involved in the complaint have been invited to attend the review meeting, the Clerk and Panel will try to find a date that is reasonably convenient for the complainant, the school and the Panel members. If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence based on written submissions from both parties.

Where the complainant, headteacher and/or relevant person involved in the complaint have been invited to attend the review meeting, they may bring someone along to the Panel meeting to provide support. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the Panel hearing. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 10 school days before the Panel meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the attendees of the date, time and venue, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the Panel at least 5 school days before the hearing.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The Panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The Panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private and will be as informal as circumstances allow. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought in this circumstance and consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The Panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The Panel can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the Panel will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Complaints Panel will provide the complainant and the school with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days. The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the school (see Next Steps below).

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Beaconsfield High School will take to resolve the complaint.

The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Governing Board and the Headteacher.

Stage 3 Complaints about Governors

If the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or about the entire governing body or the majority of the governing body, an independent panel consisting of governors co-opted from another school or other suitably qualified people will hear stage 3. No Beaconsfield High School staff or governors will be involved.

15. Staff Disciplinary or Capability Issues

If, at any time, it becomes apparent that the complaint is a disciplinary or capability issue, the matter will then be dealt with by following the appropriate procedure rather than the Complaints Procedure. You will be notified if this is the case with your complaint. However, if this is the case you are not entitled to know which procedure, or the outcome, because of the right to confidentiality of the member of staff involved.

16. Review of Multiple Complaints

Occasionally, the school may become the focus of a campaign and receive large volumes of complaints, all based on the same subject, from complainants unconnected with the school. Government guidance advises that in such circumstances, the actions the Board can take may include:

- sending a template response to all complainants;
- reviewing the complaints collectively through one panel;
- publishing a single response on the school's website.

Complaints that fall into this category will be noted as such on the school complaints log.

17. Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published Complaints Procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the ESFA after they have completed Stage 3.

The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Beaconsfield High School. They will consider whether the school has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed [Part 7 of the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

The complainant can refer their complaint to the ESFA online at www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
5 Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

18. Record Keeping and Monitoring

A written record will be maintained by the Headteacher's office of all complaints that were resolved at stages 2 or 3 of the Complaints Procedure. A summary of the resolution and actions taken by the school because of a complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld) will also be recorded. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Anonymous complaints or complaints considered as forming part of a campaign of multiple similar complaints will be noted as such in the record.

An annual review of complaints will form an agenda item at a Full Governing Board meeting at least annually, the Headteacher will present a summary of complaints received and their outcome together with an update on progress with any recommendations arising. The Governing Board shall review this and consider whether any changes to procedure are required.

19. Unreasonably Persistent Complainants and Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour

Beaconsfield High School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The school defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the Complaints investigation process;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the Complaints Procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the Complaints Procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on;
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with;
- uses threats to intimidate;
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence;
- knowingly provides falsified information;
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

If at any level a complainant attempts to reopen an issue or a closely related issue that has already been dealt with under this complaints procedure, the Chair of Governors may write to the complainant to inform them that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter closed, unless they can provide further new evidence. The school will not accept new evidence from another complainant that this complainant wishes to use within their complaint. Each complainant will be considered separately and confidentially. The complainant will be offered 15 school days to provide this. Thereafter, if nothing more is forthcoming, the Chair of Governors will inform the complainant that the school will not respond to any further correspondence on this issue or a closely related issue.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school.

Date last reviewed:	January 2025
Next review date:	January 2026
For review by:	FGB

Appendix 1 - Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Headteacher's Office who will acknowledge receipt of your complaint.

Complaint Form
<p>Your Name:</p> <p>Student's Name (if relevant):</p> <p>Your relationship to the student (if relevant):</p> <p>Address:</p> <p>Postcode:</p> <p>Day time telephone number:</p> <p>Evening telephone number:</p>
<p>To allow the matter to be fully investigated please give concise details of your complaint, including dates, names of those involved etc.</p>

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint. (Whom did you speak to/write to and what was the response)?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix 2 - Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible;
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint;
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint;
- ask for assistance as needed;
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect;
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Stage 2 Headteacher or Delegated Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved;
 - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint;
 - consideration of records and other relevant information or analysing information;
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting;
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal;
- be mindful of the timescales to respond;
- prepare a comprehensive report for the head teacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems;
- The head teacher will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Stage 3 – Clerk to the Complaints Panel

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the Panel and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR);
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example: stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale;
- record the proceedings;
- circulate the minutes of the meeting;
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Stage 3 Complaints Panel Chair

The Panel chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint hearing, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the hearing;
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy;
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person;
- the remit of the Panel is explained to the complainant;
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting;
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the hearing or verbally in the hearing itself;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are made;
- the panel is open-minded and acts independently;
- no member of the panel has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- the panel hearing is minuted;
- they liaise with the Clerk.

Stage 3 Panel Members

Members should be aware that:

- The panel hearing must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so No Governor may sit on the Panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- The aim of the hearing should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the Panel hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- Many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the hearing. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated. The Panel should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child/young person is the complainant, the Panel should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the Panel should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the hearing that the Panel considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

Appendix 3 – Checklist for Investigating Historic Complaints

Complaint details

Received (date):	
From:	
Concerning: (brief description)	
Status of complainant (e.g. former parent, former staff member or other):	
Approximate timeframe of alleged events:	
Checklist completed by:	

Checklist

Question		Comments	Assessor observations
1.	Does the historic complaint concern child protection issues?	This checklist does not apply. The Safeguarding procedure applies.	
2.	Does the complaint link historic events to the way the school operates today?	If no, then the complaint is invalid due to lapse of time and does not need to be considered further except for your recommendations on communication with the Complainant.	
3.	Does the complaint make allegations of a breach of the school’s Code of Conduct or policies?	<p>If yes, detail the specific breaches. If no, then the complaint does not need to be considered further except for your recommendations on communication with the complainant.</p> <p>If a serious breach of the school’s Code of Conduct or policies is reported then the Discipline Policy applies and the complaint should not be considered further under this complaints procedure.</p>	
4.	Were the events subject to a complaint’s procedure (complaints, grievance or whistleblowing) at the time?	Where events have already been subject to a complaints procedure, we should only investigate them if significant new evidence either in respect of the events themselves, or of the way in which the complaints procedure was carried out, is provided in the complaint, and there is a valid reason why the complainant did not present this new evidence during the complaints process at the time.	
5.	If the events were not subject to a complaint’s procedure at the time, were they raised in some other form at the time?	If so, with whom and what were the actions (if any) taken? If the events appear to have been satisfactorily resolved at the time, we should consider to what extent we should, and can, properly re-examine it now.	

Question	Comments	Assessor observations
6. If the events were not subject to a complaint's procedure at the time, is justification provided for why not?	<p>Where no complaints procedure was invoked at the time, has the complainant provided a valid rationale for not doing so?</p> <p>The passage of time since the events should be considered, as a long passage of time since the events may make any investigation at this point impossible due to the lack of evidence, change in personnel, and reliance on memories of distant events.</p> <p>However, where the complainant has provided a rationale for not raising a complaint at the time, you should confirm its validity before deciding whether to enquire further.</p>	
7. If the complainant is a former staff member, were the events subject to a disciplinary procedure?	<p>Where the complaints were subject to a disciplinary procedure at the time, this complaint should not be considered further under this complaint's procedure.</p>	
8. If the complainant is a former staff member, have they signed a settlement agreement?	<p>Where the complainant has signed a settlement agreement, this remains confidential between themselves and the school; we should only consider allegations and events that fall outside of the matters covered in the settlement agreement.</p> <p>We may need to take advice from the school as to the matters covered in the settlement agreement if this is not clear.</p>	

Question	Comments	Assessor observations	
9.	Is the complainant able to provide quantifiable evidence to support the allegations?	<p>We will only consider allegations under this complaints procedure where the complainant provides verifiable evidence to support their allegations, i.e. something that validates/lends weight to their version of events.</p> <p>Without this, allegations may be characterized as ‘he said, she said’ or ‘hearsay’ and, consequently not capable of being substantiated.</p> <p>This is especially the case where the allegations relate to behaviours and attitudes, which may be matters of personal opinion rather than breaches of the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>The passage of time since the alleged events is also a factor in this consideration, i.e. if a considerable period has passed since the alleged events, this may make any investigation at this point impossible due to the lack of evidence, change in personnel, and reliance on memories of distant events.</p>	
10.	Are there any other factors that the reviewer has taken into account?		

Conclusion and Recommendations:

Write here your conclusions. This should summarise whether, in your opinion and based on your assessments above, the complaint contains valid accusations and should be investigated in accordance with this complaints procedure, or it is not valid and no further action is required. In the case of the latter, you should also include your recommendations for correspondence with the complainant, which could be a phone call, a letter or the offer of a meeting.