



GENERAL COMPLAINTS POLICY (PARENTS & CARERS)

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BOA GROUP

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1. Introduction

The BOA Group is committed to working in partnership with parents, carers, students, staff and the wider community to provide high-quality education across all academies within the Trust. We recognise that, from time to time, concerns or complaints may arise. When this happens, it is important that issues are raised and addressed promptly, fairly and transparently.

This policy sets out a clear, consistent and proportionate approach for handling general complaints, with the aim of resolving issues as early and informally as possible, maintaining positive relationships, and ensuring that the focus remains on pupils’ education and wellbeing.

The BOA Group encourages open communication, mutual respect and good faith engagement from all parties throughout the complaints process.

2. Policy Scope

This policy applies to the BOA Group multi academy trust and all constituent academies within the Group. It applies only to general complaints, defined as expressions of dissatisfaction relating to the actions or decisions of the academy or a perceived failure to act.

This policy does not apply to the following matters, which are covered by separate statutory or Trust policies:

- Staffing matters, including grievances, capability or disciplinary issues
- Admissions
- Exclusions
- Complaints from members of the public or those not provided for in Section 6 of this policy.

Where a concern falls outside the scope of this policy, complainants will be signposted to the appropriate procedure.

3. Definitions

To support clarity and proportionality, the following definitions are used throughout this policy:

Feedback - Comments, opinions or suggestions shared with the academy, often to inform improvement. Feedback does not normally require a formal response, though it will be acknowledged and considered.

Concern - An expression of worry or doubt where reassurance, explanation or informal action is sought. Concerns are usually resolved quickly through discussion with the appropriate member of staff.

Complaint - An expression of dissatisfaction about an action taken, decision made, or perceived failure to act, where the complainant is seeking a response or action. Complaints under this policy relate to personal issues affecting the complainant or their child.

Whistleblowing - Concerns that are general, systemic, relate to wrongdoing, safeguarding, financial impropriety or risks to others are not personal complaints and must be raised through the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy, in line with statutory guidance.

4. Principles of Resolving Complaints

The BOA Group is committed to resolving complaints in a way that is fair, respectful and proportionate. The following principles underpin this policy:

- Good faith engagement: All parties are expected to engage honestly, respectfully and constructively.
- Early resolution: Concerns should be raised as soon as possible and addressed at the earliest appropriate stage.
- Willingness to engage: Resolution is most effective when both the complainant and the academy are open to dialogue and compromise.
- Respectful communication: Aggressive, threatening or abusive behaviour, including threats of escalation, is unacceptable.
- Focus on policy and practice, not individuals: Complaints should challenge decisions, actions or policies rather than targeting individual members of staff personally.
- Avoidance of public escalation: Public or derogatory statements (including on social media) can undermine trust and will not lead to quicker resolution.
- Use of AI-generated complaints: Artificial intelligence tools can produce inaccurate or misleading references to law or guidance. The use of AI-generated complaint letters is discouraged as it can complicate and delay resolution.

5. Unreasonable, Vexatious or Abusive Complaints

While the BOA Group is committed to listening carefully to all concerns, it is expected that complainants behave reasonably throughout the complaints process. A complaint may be considered unreasonable if the complainant:

- Repeats the same complaint despite a full and fair response;
- Refuses to follow the complaints procedure;
- Makes excessive or unreasonable demands on staff time;
- Changes the basis of the complaint as it is being investigated;
- Uses abusive, threatening, discriminatory or intimidating language;
- Publishes derogatory or misleading information about the school or staff; or
- Insists on escalation despite failing to engage with staff in an attempt to resolve these concerns.

Where behaviour is considered unreasonable, the Trust may:

- Set clear boundaries around communication;
- Require communication to take place in writing or another specific medium only;
- Pause the complaints process until behaviour improves or terminate the complaints process by providing an outcome in writing;
- In extreme cases, involve the Chair of Governors or take further action to protect staff wellbeing.

These actions will be proportionate and reviewed regularly.

6. Who Can Raise a Complaint

This policy applies to recognised stakeholders of BOA Group and its constituent academies, including parents, carers, students and former parents and carers (where the issue arose while the student was on roll). Members of the public and non-stakeholders cannot raise a complaint under this policy and should instead refer to the general complaints (non-stakeholders) policy.

Anonymous complaints will not normally be acknowledged or responded to. However, the Trust will consider whether the issues raised require internal investigation or action.

Generally, complaints should be raised within three calendar months of the issue which has given rise to a complaint. See Section 9 (Timescales).

7. The Five Steps to Raising a Complaint

The BOA Group follows a clear five-step approach, aligned with national guidance, to support timely and effective resolution:

1. Feedback, concern or complaint? - Consider whether the issue is feedback (sharing views), a concern (seeking reassurance) or a complaint (seeking action). Most issues are resolved at the feedback or concern stage.
2. Contacting the correct person - In the first instance, contact the person closest to the issue, usually the form tutor, class teacher or Head of Department. Telephone calls or meetings are often the most effective way to resolve concerns. Reception staff can help signpost or arrange contact with the appropriate person.
3. Raising a complaint - If the issue cannot be resolved informally, it may be raised as a formal complaint in accordance with Section 8 of this policy.
4. Timelines - The academy will acknowledge and respond to concerns and complaints within the timescales set out in Section 9.
5. Escalation
 - Stage 1: Informal resolution
 - Stage 2: Formal investigation
 - Stage 3: Governor panel review (final decision)

Following completion of the Trust's process, complainants may escalate concerns to external bodies such as the Department for Education, Local Authority or Ofsted, where appropriate.

8. The Key Stages of the Formal Complaints Process

Initial Informal Resolution

Complainants are required, in the first instance, to raise concerns through an initial informal attempt to resolve the matter. This involves engaging in informal action, such as speaking with or meeting a form tutor, class teacher, or a member of the pastoral team, to discuss the concern and explore possible resolutions available to all parties.

This initial informal attempt to resolve concerns is separate from, and should not be confused with, the *Stage 1 - Informal Resolution* aspect of the process.

A formal complaint may only be submitted where an initial informal attempt to resolve the matter has been made, is evidenced, and has not resulted in a satisfactory outcome. Formal complaints submitted without evidence of such an earlier informal attempt to raise concerns, share feedback, and seek resolution at an early stage will not be accepted and will be rejected.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- Formal complaints should first be raised with the relevant form tutor, class teacher or Head of Department.
- The aim is to resolve the issue quickly through discussion and agreed actions - most complaints are expected to be resolved at this stage.
- A documented resolution, or evidence of an attempt to resolve the issue, must be recorded.

- The staff member handling the concern must report the outcome to the Office Manager or another designated member of staff for record-keeping purposes.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

A complaint cannot proceed to Stage 2 unless all avenues of remediation have been exhausted at Stage 1.

- If informal resolution is unsuccessful, the complainant must complete a Formal Complaint Form (Appendix A). A complaint will not be heard at Stage 2 without a complete Formal Complaint Form.
- The form must include:
 - Complainant's name and contact details
 - A clear description of the complaint
 - Steps taken to resolve the matter so far and why this has not worked
 - The staff member(s) previously involved
 - The preferred outcome or remedy sought
- An investigating officer will be appointed to conduct a fair and proportionate investigation.
- A written outcome letter will be issued at the conclusion of Stage 2.

Stage 3 – Governor Panel Review

- Stage 3 is only available once a Stage 2 investigation has concluded and an outcome letter has been issued.
- Requests for a panel review must be submitted via the Clerk to the Academy Governing Body, as detailed in the Stage 2 outcome letter.
- The complaint will be reviewed by a Governor Complaints Panel, overseen by the Chair of the Academy Governing Body (NB: the Chair of Governors may appoint another governor or trustees to chair the complaint panel).
- The panel will consist of at least three people, including:
 - Governors from any BOA Group academy and/or Trustees of the BOA Group; and
 - At least one independent member who is not connected with the running or management of the BOA Group and who has suitable experience and/or qualifications.
- The panel will review whether the complaint was handled appropriately and whether the conclusions were reasonable. The panel can seek further evidence to support their review but will not conduct a further investigation. Their primary purpose is to review whether the process and outcome at Stage 2 was fair, proportionate and appropriate.
- The decision of the panel is final, and no further internal process is available.

9. Timescales

Complaints must be submitted within three calendar months of the incident or matter giving rise to the complaint. Any informal efforts to resolve the concern will pause this three-month timeframe and will not prevent the complainant from later escalating the issue through the formal complaints

process. In exceptional circumstances, the deadline may be extended where it was not reasonably practicable to raise the issue sooner.

For the purposes of all stages, working days are defined as weekdays during term time. Periods of school closure do not count towards these timescales. However, the Trust will endeavour to progress complaints during closures where reasonable and practicable.

Stage 1 – Informal

- Acknowledgement within 2 working days.
- Phone call or meeting arranged within 5 working days.
- Documented attempt to resolve within 10 working days.
- Where a resolution within this timescale is not possible, written notification of delay will be provided with a revised deadline for response.

Stage 2 – Formal

- Acknowledgement within 2 working days.
- Investigating officer appointed within 5 working days.
- Timescales and scope agreed with the complainant. A thorough Stage 2 investigation is unlikely to be completed in less than 10 working days, but should be completed within 20 working days. Where an investigation may take longer than 20 days, the investigating officer will notify the complainant and provide an estimated completion date.
- Following the outcome letter, the complainant has 5 working days to request a Stage 3 review.

Stage 3 – Panel Review

- Acknowledgement of escalation within 2 working days.
- Panel convened within 15 working days of acknowledgement.
- Where this is not possible, a mutually convenient date will be agreed as soon as practicable.

The Trust reserves the right to hear a Stage 3 complaint appeal in the complainant's absence where reasonable notice is given and/or where attempts made to secure engagement have been unsuccessful.

10. Recording Complaints

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that an accurate and up-to-date complaints log is maintained. This responsibility may be delegated to an appropriate member of staff, such as the Office Manager or PA to the Principal.

The complaints log will include:

- The nature and stage of each complaint
- Key dates and correspondence

- Outcomes and actions taken
- Any escalation within or beyond the Trust

All complaint records will be managed confidentially and retained in accordance with data protection and record retention requirements.

11. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Chief Executive and subject to Trust Board approval. Changes in technology, legislation or other external factors may result in this policy being reviewed earlier.

Appendix A – Formal Complaint Form

BOA Group – Formal Complaint Form

This form should be completed only after attempts to resolve the matter informally (Stage 1) have been unsuccessful.

1. Complainant Details

Complainant’s Full Name:	
Student’s Name (if applicable):	
Relationship to Student:	
Student’s Year Group/Form Group:	
Address	
Telephone Number	
Email Address	

2. Details of the Complaint

Please provide a clear and concise description of your complaint, including relevant dates, events and people involved. Where there are multiple elements of your complaint, please clearly number each element. *Continue overleaf if necessary.*

3. Steps Taken So Far

Please explain what steps you have already taken to resolve this matter and why you remain dissatisfied. Please include details of any staff member(s) previously contacted and dates of contact. *Continue overleaf if necessary.*

4. Preferred Outcome

Please explain what outcome or resolution you are seeking. *Continue overleaf if necessary.*

5. Supporting Evidence

Please list and attach any supporting documents (if applicable). *Continue overleaf if necessary.*

Declaration

I confirm that the information provided is accurate and that I am raising this complaint in good faith. I agree to engage with the complaints process, as detailed in the BOA Group General Complaints Policy.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return this form by email or in a sealed envelope addressed to the Principal.

This form should be completed by the complainant. If you require this form in large print, hard copy or require support to complete it, please contact the academy.

All functions of the complaint's procedure must adhere to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

OFFICE USE ONLY:

Date Received	Date Acknowledged
Recorded on Complaints Log	Responsible Staff Member

Appendix B – Complaints Handling Flowchart

1

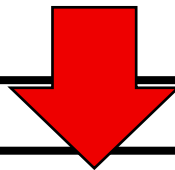
Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Handled by: Teacher / Tutor / Head of Department

- Listen carefully and acknowledge the concern
- Aim to resolve quickly and professionally
- Keep brief written notes (date, issue, actions, outcome)
- Inform line manager and Office Manager / designated lead

If resolved – record and close.

If unresolved, escalate to Stage 2.



2

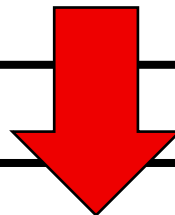
Stage 2: Formal Complaint – only available on submission of a Formal Complaint Form

Handled by: Principal / Appointed Investigating Officer

- Complaint received via Formal Complaint Form
- Acknowledge within 2 working days
- Appoint investigating officer within 5 working days
- Agree scope and timescales with complainant
- Gather evidence and speak to relevant staff
- Issue written outcome letter

If resolved – record and close.

If unresolved, escalate to Stage 3.



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Stage 3: Governor Panel Review

Handled by: Chair of Academy Governing Body / Clerk

- Convene panel (minimum 3 members, including independent)
- Review handling and decision-making
- Panel decision issued in writing
- Decision is final

Appendix C – Vexatious and Unreasonable Complaints

Quick Guide: Parental Complaints and How to Handle Vexatious & Unreasonable Complaints

From time to time, each academy within the BOA Group receives complaints. Whilst receiving complaints is never something we would like this is a normal part of our operations and an issue for every school. Our priority is to always address concerns promptly, maintain constructive relationships, and safeguard staff from unacceptable behaviour.

Your professionalism and support in the complaints process are crucial in preventing issues from escalating. This benefits both the complainant and the BOA Group, while also reducing the time, effort, and resources required to resolve matters.

1. Your Role in Complaints Handling

- **First Line of Response:** Most complaints should be resolved informally by the teacher or relevant staff member in the first instance (Stage 1).
- **Aim for De-escalation:** Listen, acknowledge concerns, and try to resolve quickly and professionally.
- **Keep Records:** Even at informal stage, note the date, nature of concern, actions taken, and any agreed outcomes. Share with your line manager.
- **Know When to Escalate:** If a complaint cannot be resolved or becomes unreasonable, escalate to your Head of Department or Assistant Principal.

2. Process Overview

Stage	Who Handles It	Teacher Responsibilities
Stage 1 (Informal)	Relevant teacher/ tutor / HoD	Attempt resolution; keep notes; inform line manager. Aim to acknowledge within 2 working days and respond within 10 working days.
Stage 2 (Formal)	Principal or appointed investigating officer	Provide any requested information to support investigation.
Stage 3 (Panel Hearing)	Chair of Governors & independent panel	Only involved if asked to provide evidence or attend.

3. Recognising Vexatious or Unreasonable Complaints

Behaviour may be unreasonable if it includes:

- Repeating the same complaint despite a full response.
- Changing the basis of the complaint mid-process.
- Making excessive demands on staff time.
- Using threats, intimidation, or offensive language.
- Refusing to follow the proper procedure.
- Publishing unacceptable material about the school online.

4. Responding to Unreasonable Behaviour

- **Stay professional and calm** – avoid personalising the interaction.
- **Focus on the issue, not the individual** – separate the complaint from the complainant's behaviour.
- **Follow communication boundaries** – if behaviour escalates, inform senior staff who may implement restrictions (e.g. communication plan).
- **In serious cases** – the Principal may involve the Chair of Governors, limit contact, or inform police.

5. De-Escalation Tips

- **Listen actively** – show you understand the concern before explaining next steps.
- **Be clear about timelines** – set realistic expectations for a response.
- **Involve senior staff early** if you sense the situation may escalate.
- **Avoid responding in haste** – take time to gather facts before replying.
- **Maintain confidentiality** – never discuss complaints with other parents or on social media.

6. Key Responsibilities for Teachers

1. **Handle first contact professionally** – many complaints can be resolved here.
2. **Document everything** – your notes may be crucial if the complaint escalates.
3. **Refer promptly** if behaviour is abusive, discriminatory, or threatening.
4. **Support investigations** at later stages by providing factual information.
5. **Protect your wellbeing** – report any personal abuse to your line manager immediately.
6. **Escalate** as appropriate, firstly to your Head of Department and then to the Senior Leadership Team.

Appendix D – Parent Guide to the Complaint’s Process

Quick Guide: Raising a Parental Complaint

We value positive partnerships with parents, carers and the community. Most issues can be resolved quickly when raised with the right person and approached constructively.

Step 1: Is it feedback, a concern or a complaint?

- **Feedback** – Sharing views or suggestions.
- **Concern** – Seeking reassurance or clarification.
- **Complaint** – Dissatisfaction requiring action or a formal response.

Most issues are resolved as feedback or concerns.

Step 2: Contact the right person first

Start with the person closest to the issue:

- Form tutor or class teacher
- Head of Department or middle leader

A phone call or meeting is often the quickest way to resolve matters. School reception can help signpost you.

Step 3: Try informal resolution (Stage 1)

Schools aim to resolve concerns quickly and fairly through discussion. Most complaints do not need to go further.

Step 4: Make a formal complaint (Stage 2)

If informal resolution does not work, you can submit a **Formal Complaint Form**. Your complaint will be investigated and you will receive a written outcome.

Step 5: Request a review (Stage 3)

If you remain dissatisfied, you may request a review by a **Governor Complaints Panel**. This is the final stage of the Trust’s process.

What helps complaints get resolved

- Be factual and focused
- Challenge decisions or processes, not individuals
- Be clear about the outcome you are seeking
- Communicate respectfully

Aggressive behaviour, social media campaigns or AI-generated complaints can delay resolution.