



**GENERAL COMPLAINTS POLICY (NON STAKEHOLDERS)**

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## BOA GROUP

### GENERAL COMPLAINTS POLICY (NON STAKEHOLDERS)

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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 parents, carers, students and other recognised stakeholders.

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 non-stakeholders, members of the public, and other complainants not provided for in the General Complaints (Parents & Carers) 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.

## **7. How to Raise a Complaint**

Complaints must be submitted using the General Complaints Form (Appendix A) attached to this process. Complaints not raised using this form will not be considered.

Completed forms should be sent to the Principal. The school will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within two working days. All complaints will be recorded on the school's complaints log.

The Principal will appoint an appropriate Investigating Officer to investigate the complaint, who will provide a written response within 20 working days.

## 8. Escalating a Complaint

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the Investigating Officer's response, they may request escalation within five working days of receiving the outcome letter.

Where the Principal was not the Investigating Officer, the complaint will be escalated to the Principal for review and a final written response.

Where the Principal was the Investigating Officer, the complaint will be escalated to the Chief Executive of BOA Group for review and a final written response.

If a complaint concerns the Principal, it will be escalated directly to the Chief Executive. If a complaint concerns the Chief Executive, it will be escalated directly to the Chair of the Trust.

Once these escalation routes have been exhausted, there is no further right of internal appeal or escalation.

## 9. Timescales

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.

Complaints submitted on a completed Complaint Form will be **acknowledged** within 2 working days and a written response provided to the complainant following investigation within 20 working days

Complainants have **5 working days** from the date of the outcome letter to escalate the complaint in accordance with Section 8 of this policy.

Where it is not possible to meet these timescales, the school will inform the complainant and provide a revised timeframe and estimated deadline by which an outcome will be provided.

## 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 – General Complaint Form (NON STAKEHOLDERS)**

Failure to complete the form correctly will result in a complaint not being heard.

**1. Complainant Details**

Complainant's Full Name:	
Address	
Telephone Number	
Email Address	
Connection to BOA Group  <i>E.G. neighbour, bus passenger, parent of a child registered at another school or academy.</i>	

**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. 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 (Non Stakeholders) Policy.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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

*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:**

<b>Date Received</b>	<b>Date Acknowledged</b>
<b>Recorded on Complaints Log</b>	<b>Responsible Staff Member</b>