



Complaints Policy & Procedure

Hilltop Primary School

July 2026

Next Review: Summer 2027

Contents

Aims.....	3
Outcomes	3
Complaint Campaigns.....	4
Before making a complaint, we encourage parents to consider:	4
Definition of Feedback/Concern/Complaint (Appendix 4).....	4
Who Should You Contact?	5
Working Together Respectfully	5
Stage 1 Checklist - Concern	6
Stage 2 Checklist – Formal Complaint.....	6
How to raise a concern or make a complaint.....	6
Time Scales	7
Anonymous or Fictitious Complaints	8
Misconceived or Otherwise Unreasonable Complaints	8
Vexatious or Repeated Complaints	8
Complaints received outside of term time.....	8
Scope of this complaints procedure.....	8
Appendix 1 – Complaints Process	10
Stage 1 – Raising a Concern/Informal Complaint.....	10
Stage 2 – Formal Complaint to the Headteacher	11
Stage 3 – Review by the Chair of the Local Governing Body or Designated Executive Leader (Designate)	13
Stage 4 – Complaint Panel Hearing	14
Referral to the Department for Education (DfE)	16
Appendix 2 - Complaint Form	17
Appendix 3 - Serial and Unreasonable Complainants	20
Appendix 4 - Who Should I Contact?	22
We want to resolve concerns quickly and positively	22
If my concern is about.....	22
Not sure whether it is feedback, a concern or a complaint?	23
Feedback	23
Concern	23
Complaint	23
Before making a formal complaint.....	24
If I still wish to make a formal complaint	24

Aims

This policy aims to provide parents, students, and the public with an accessible and easily understood procedure for complaints.

Beyond Schools Trust values open communication and recognises that listening carefully to concerns at an early stage can prevent escalation and strengthen trust between schools and families.

The Trust therefore encourages parents, students and members of the public to raise issues as soon as they arise and through the appropriate channels.

Parents should be assured that raising a concern or making a complaint will not adversely affect their child. The school will seek to resolve concerns promptly, fairly and informally wherever possible before matters progress to a formal complaint.

The school will aim to resolve concerns, difficulties or complaints in a positive and proportionate manner, with the objective of:

- putting matters right where something has gone wrong;
- providing clear explanations where appropriate; and
- learning from feedback to improve practice and systems.

All parties involved in the complaints process are expected to act reasonably, respectfully and with courtesy. The Trust will not tolerate abusive, threatening or unacceptable behaviour and will take steps to protect staff where necessary.

The Trust's aim is to resolve concerns at the earliest appropriate stage. Entering the formal complaints procedure does not automatically lead to a better or different outcome

Outcomes

Examples of outcomes include:

- Complaint partially upheld - the complaint was substantiated in part or full. A description should be given of the remedial action being taken by the school as a consequence of the complaint;
- The matter has been fully investigated and, consequently, further confidential procedures are being pursued.
- Complaint not upheld - there was insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld; or the investigation did not substantiate the matters raised, so the complaint cannot be upheld, and is dismissed.
- An explanation is provided
- An apology is issued
- Corrective action, policy reviews and/or staff training may be needed

Please Note:

- Financial compensation is not a possible outcome at any stage of this policy.

- None of the above will constitute an admission of negligence or an acceptance of liability on behalf of the school and/or the Beyond Schools Trust.
- Details of any disciplinary action or sanctions to be taken against a member of staff are strictly confidential and cannot be disclosed. This is compliant with employment law.

There are four stages to the complaints policy. (**Appendix 1**)

Stage 1 – Raising a concern/informal complaint

Stage 2 – Formal complaint to the Headteacher

Stage 3 – Review by the Chair of the Local Governing Body or Designate Executive

Stage 4 – Complaint Panel Hearing

A concern or complaint can be made face-to-face, in writing or via a phone call with the appropriate person to resolve the initial complaint. A complaint may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant if they have appropriate consent to do so. The school will need to see this consent.

Complaint Campaigns

Occasionally, the school may become the focus of a campaign and receive a large volume of complaints. For example, all based on the same subject or from complainants unconnected with the school. In such cases, a separate procedure will be followed to manage these complaints effectively. This may include:

- Sending a template response to all complainants, or
- Publishing a single comprehensive response on the school's website.

Before making a complaint, we encourage parents to consider:

- Is this feedback?
- Is this a concern that could be resolved through discussion?
- Have I spoken with the person closest to the issue?
- Have I allowed reasonable time for a response?
- What outcome am I seeking?

Definition of Feedback/Concern/Complaint (Appendix 4)

Type	What the person needs
Feedback	To be heard
Concern	An explanation or reassurance
Complaint	Investigation and action

Feedback may be defined as information, comments or observations provided about an aspect of the school's work or experience, including positive feedback, where no formal investigation or response is required.

A concern may be defined as an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important, for which reassurance, clarification or discussion is sought.

A complaint may be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.

The Trust's expectation is that feedback and concerns will normally be addressed informally and constructively at the earliest opportunity before progressing to a formal complaint. Most issues can be resolved quickly and positively through open communication.

The expectation is that all concerns and complaints should be dealt with informally in the first instance under Stage 1. Most staff have full teaching timetables and therefore may not be able to respond to queries immediately. However, if an acknowledgement is not received within **2 school days** the school should be contacted on the main telephone number.

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.

Who Should You Contact?

Most concerns can be resolved by speaking with the person closest to the issue. We encourage parents and carers to raise concerns as soon as possible so that we can work together to find a solution.

Before making a formal complaint, please use the guide below to identify the most appropriate person to contact, see **Appendix 4**.

Working Together Respectfully

This section sets out the expectations that all parties will:

- Treat each other courteously.
- Avoid abusive or threatening language.
- Allow investigations to proceed without undue interference.
- Avoid publishing allegations on social media while investigations are ongoing.

Stage 1 Checklist - Concern

A matter is normally Stage 1 where:

- ☐ The issue has only recently arisen.
- ☐ The school has not yet had a reasonable opportunity to investigate.
- ☐ The parent is seeking information, clarification or reassurance.
- ☐ No formal written complaint has been submitted.
- ☐ The complainant primarily wants dialogue and resolution.
- ☐ The matter can reasonably be resolved by a member of staff or line manager.

Stage 2 Checklist – Formal Complaint

A matter is normally Stage 2 where:

- ☐ The complainant states they wish to make a formal complaint.
- ☐ Attempts to resolve the concern informally have been unsuccessful.
- ☐ The complainant remains dissatisfied following Stage 1.
- ☐ The complaint identifies specific failings or actions.
- ☐ The complainant is requesting a formal investigation and written response.
- ☐ The complaint requires review by the Headteacher.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

Complaints about a general issue or against a member of school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher. To do this email **complaint-general@hilltopprimary.co.uk** or submit your complaint in writing in an envelope marked Private & Confidential for the attention of the Headteacher.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be forwarded to the Chair of Governors. To do this, email **complaint-headteacher@hilltopprimary.co.uk** or submit your complaint in writing in an envelope marked Private & Confidential for the attention of the Clerk to the Governors.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual Governor or Member or the whole Governing Body should be forwarded to the Clerk to the Trustees. To do this, email **complaint-governor@beyondschools.co.uk** or submit your complaint in writing in an envelope marked Private & Confidential for the attention of the Clerk to the Trustees.

Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), or a Head Office member of staff, or a Trustee should be forwarded to the Clerk to the Trustees. To do this, email **complaint@beyondschools.co.uk** or submit your complaint in writing in an envelope marked Private & Confidential for the attention of the Chair of Trustees.

Complainants should not approach individual Governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them considering complaints at a later stage in the procedure. Any complaints made about the school direct to the Beyond Schools Trust will be referred to be dealt with by the school under this policy. Below are details of who deals with each stage of the complaints process.

If the Complaint is about....	Stage 1	Stage 2 *	Stage 3 **	Stage 4
A general issue, or a member of staff (below Headteacher level) Email: complaint-general@hilltopprimary.co.uk	Relevant member of staff/middle/senior leader	Headteacher	Chair of Governors	Panel of CEO/Governors/Trustees with one independent member
The Headteacher Email: complaint-headteacher@hilltopprimary.co.uk	Headteacher	Chair of Governors	CEO/Executive Director	Panel of Governors/Trustees with one independent member
An Individual Governor Email: complaint-governor@beyondschools.co.uk	Headteacher	Chair of Governors	CEO/Executive Director	Panel of Governors/Trustees with one independent member
The Chair of Governors Email: complaint-governor@beyondschools.co.uk	Chair of Governors	Vice Chair of Governors	CEO/Executive Director	Panel of Governors/Trustees with one independent member
The Local Governing Body as a whole Email: complaint-governor@beyondschools.co.uk	N/A	CEO/Executive Director	Chair of Trustees	Independent Panel **

* - in all cases, with the exception of the Headteacher dealing with a Stage 2, a designate may be appointed

** - where the complainant is about all or most of the LGB, the panel will consist of 2 independent Governors (can be from Beyond Schools Trust) and 1 independent of the management and running of the Academy.

Time Scales

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. Where a complaint is submitted more than 3 months after the incident or event (or where the complaint relates to a series of incidents or events, more than 3 months from the date of the latest incident or event) may be regarded as unreasonable by the Academy. Requests received outside of this timeframe will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

Anonymous or Fictitious Complaints

The school will not investigate anonymous complaints, or those found to be fictitious, under the procedure in this Complaints Policy. Anonymous or fictitious complaints will be referred to the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors to determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Misconceived or Otherwise Unreasonable Complaints

The school reserves the right (in exceptional cases only) to write to the Complainant informing them that their complaint is regarded as misconceived or otherwise unreasonable and that the school's complaints procedure will not be followed. **Appendix 3** defines what will be considered as unreasonable behaviour by complainants.

Vexatious or Repeated Complaints

A complaint which has been considered under all stages of this procedure and is raised again, may be defined as a repeated complaint by the school Unreasonable persistent complaints, trivial complaints, and/or complaints that do not affect the Complainant may be regarded as vexatious by the school.

Complaints received outside 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.

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: <u>Behaviour in schools: sanctions and exclusions:</u> <u>Exclusions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</u> <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. 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.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the Police, Local Authority (LA) Safeguarding Teams or Tribunals, this may impact on 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 the school in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Appendix 1 – Complaints Process

Stage 1 – Raising a Concern/Informal Complaint

Stage 1 provides an opportunity for schools to listen carefully to concerns, clarify any misunderstandings and seek early resolution without the need for formal investigation.

Staff responding to concerns should aim to understand both the facts raised and the impact the matter has had on the complainant, and respond in a calm, respectful and proportionate manner.

1.1 On many occasions, minor concerns can be resolved through the appropriate member of staff. Except in minor matters, the concern and any action taken will be logged in the student file. Where a concern is raised by a member of the public, records of the concern and any action taken will be held with the relevant manager.

1.2 If the person first contacted cannot deal with the concern immediately or is not the most appropriate person to deal with it, they will refer the matter to the appropriate member of the middle or Senior Leadership Team available at the time. The Complainant can also request that their concern is referred to a specific member of staff (as above) whilst still keeping the matter at this informal stage.

1.3 In certain circumstances, the Headteacher may personally decide to deal with concerns informally under this stage.

1.4 If the complaint relates to the Headteacher, the Complainant can contact the Headteacher to enable the complaint to be resolved informally. If this is not possible or the complaint cannot be resolved informally, the Complainant should contact the Chair of Governors, who will investigate the complaint under Stage 2 of this policy instead of the Headteacher.

1.5 Where appropriate, responses at this stage may include reassurance, explanation, agreed follow-up actions, monitoring arrangements, or an apology where it is accepted that the school could have handled matters better.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal response within 5 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. The response must make clear to the Complainant what action or monitoring of the situation will take place. Where appropriate, this will include what action will be taken in response to the concern and could include an explanation, a specific outcome, an apology, or a revision of procedure. Where a verbal response is made, a summary of the response and any actions agreed will be recorded on the School's Management Information System.

1.6 Where no satisfactory solution has been found, or if the member of staff considers the concerns raised should be dealt with as a formal complaint immediately, the Complainant will be advised that they should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher under Stage 2 of this policy.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint to the Headteacher

2.1 Formal complaints under Stage 2 should be made in writing to the Headteacher. The Complainant should clearly set out the nature of the complaint and, if appropriate, explain how they would like to see the matter resolved. This can be submitted via letter, email, or by using the complaints form in Appendix 2. Where the complaint is about the Headteacher, the complaint should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, who will investigate the complaint or appoint a designate to investigate it on their behalf.

2.2 At this stage a central record will be kept of the complaint.

2.3 The Headteacher will acknowledge the complaint in writing within **5 school days** of receiving the written complaint. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the procedure for dealing with complaints as outlined in this policy and confirm a date for providing a response. This will normally be within **15 school days**. If it is not possible to comply with this time limit, a letter will be sent to the Complainant explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date. Where the complaint is received during a school holiday or within 15 school days from the end of a term or half term, the Headteacher will endeavour to expedite the investigation but this can be when the new term begins.

2.4 The Headteacher (or Investigating Officer) may (but does not have to) provide an opportunity for the Complainant to meet with them to supplement any information provided. The Complainant may, if he or she wishes, be accompanied at any meeting by a friend or relative, who can speak on his or her behalf, and he or she will be asked if he or she has any special requirements that the Academy need to be aware of. This meeting may result in an agreed outcome, which the Academy will confirm in writing and the complaint would then be considered resolved.

2.5 The Headteacher (or Investigating Officer) will be provided with any documentation from Stage 1 (if applicable) and will then proceed to investigate the complaint. The Headteacher (or Investigating Officer) will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres on a student, the student may also be interviewed, if it is appropriate. Students will be interviewed in the presence of another member of staff with whom they feel comfortable. Parents or carers may be asked if they wish to be present, except in cases where the student has expressly stated that they would prefer that their parents or carers were not involved. If a member of staff is the subject of the complaint, that member of staff will be given the option of having another member of staff or union representative present when they are interviewed.

2.6 The Headteacher (or Investigating Officer) must keep a written record of any meetings or telephone conversations and must retain any other relevant documentation. Students or members of staff interviewed will be asked to read, sign and date the written record to confirm that it is accurate. In the case of students, the adult present at the meeting will also be asked to sign and date the record of the conversation.

2.7 If the investigation has been carried out by an Investigating Officer, they will summarise their findings in a report for the Headteacher. Appendices to this report will include notes from meetings and all other relevant documentation.

2.8 Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Headteacher will provide a written response to the Complainant and may (but does not have to) meet with the Complainant to discuss

or resolve the matter directly. Again, the Complainant can be accompanied at any such meeting, as outlined above.

2.9 The written response will set out the individual matters raised by the Complainant, the findings made by the Headteacher during the course of the investigation, and the conclusion reached. Where appropriate, this will include what action will be taken in response to the complaint and could include an explanation, a specific outcome, an apology, or a revision of procedure. The letter will inform the Complainant that, if they are unsatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation, they should write to the Clerk to the Local Governing Body within **10 school days** of receipt of the letter to request that his or her complaint and the Stage 2 investigation be reviewed by the Chair of Local Governing Body under Stage 3 of this Complaints Policy. Requests received outside of this timeframe will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

Stage 3 – Review by the Chair of the Local Governing Body or Designated Executive Leader (Designate)

(The Chair of Governors may refer a Stage 3 complaint to the CEO who may designate somebody to review the complaint on behalf of the Chair of Governors)

3.1 The request for a review of the Stage 2 decision by the Chair of the Local Governing Body or designate should be made in writing within **10 school days** of receipt of the outcome letter. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors or the LGB, please refer to the grid on page 5.

3.2 The Complainant should not repeat the matters raised in their original letter or attach documentation already provided, but **should clearly set out how and why the Complainant does not accept the findings made under Stage 2**, and how the Complainant feels this matter could be resolved.

3.3 The Chair of the Local Governing Body or designate will acknowledge the request in writing within **5 school days** of receipt. The letter will give a brief explanation of the review procedure as outlined in this policy and confirm a date for providing a response. This will normally be within **20 school days**. If it is not possible to comply with this time limit, a letter will be sent to the Complainant explaining the reason for the delay and giving a revised target date.

3.4 The Chair of the Local Governing Body or designate will be provided with all relevant paperwork relating to the complaint. The Chair should focus on deciding whether the findings and conclusion under Stage 2 were reasonable, making specific reference to any points raised by the Complainant. Should the Chair require further clarification, he/she may (but does not have to) speak to the Complainant, students (who will be accompanied, as outlined above), or members of staff during the course of his or her review.

3.5 The Chair of the Local Governing Body or designate must keep a written record of any meetings or telephone conversations and must retain any other relevant documentation. Students or members of staff interviewed will be asked to read, sign and date the written record to confirm that it is accurate. In the case of students, the adult present at the meeting will also be asked to sign and date the record of the conversation.

3.6 Once the review has been completed, the Chair of the Local Governing Body or designate may (but does not have to) meet with the Complainant to discuss or resolve the matter directly. The Complainant can be accompanied at any such meeting, as outlined above. This meeting may result in an agreed outcome, which the Chair or designate will confirm in writing and the complaint would then be considered resolved.

3.7 The Chair of the Local Governing Body or designate will provide a written response which will set out whether he/she agrees with the findings and conclusion under Stage 2, and give reasons, as well as responding to any concerns about the Stage 2 investigation. Where appropriate, this will include what action will be taken to resolve the complaint and could include an explanation, a specific outcome, an apology, or a revision of procedure. The letter will inform the Complainant that, if they are unsatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 3 review, he or she should write to the Clerk to the Local Governing Body within **10 school days** of receiving the outcome letter to request a Complaint Panel Hearing.

Stage 4 – Complaint Panel Hearing

The aim of the Complaint Panel is to review and interrogate the findings made in Stages 2 & 3, ensure that the investigation was thorough, seek reconciliation between the parties involved and to make findings and recommendations which are shared with the complainant and, where relevant, with the person complained about.

The complainant cannot introduce a new complaint or new evidence about matters that may have happened since the Stage 3 review.

Upon receiving a request for a Complaint Panel, the request will be initially reviewed and assessed by the nominated Stage 4 Chair to determine whether it meets the requirements for a Panel Hearing (i.e. the complainant has identified how and why they do not accept the findings under Stages 2 & 3). If it is decided that a Panel is not warranted, the complainant will be advised in writing of the reasons for this decision.

Please Note: The Trust reserves the right to hold a Panel in the complainant's absence, if necessary (per 4.7).

4.1 If the Complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the review under Stage 3 of this Complaints Policy, the Complainant may write to the Clerk requesting a Complaint Panel Hearing. The Complainant should write to the Clerk within **10 school days** of receiving the letter confirming the outcome following Stage 3. Requests received outside of this timeframe will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

4.2 The Complainant should not repeat the matters raised in their earlier letters or attach documentation already provided but **should clearly set out how and why they do not accept the findings made under Stages 2 and 3.**

4.3 The Clerk will write to the Complainant to acknowledge receipt of the request within **5 school days** of receiving the letter. The letter will inform the Complainant that the complaint will be heard by the Complaint Panel within **20 school days** of receiving the request. The letter will also confirm that the Complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint and request the attendance of witnesses on their behalf. The letter will ask for any such documents and/or information about witnesses to be sent to the Clerk within **5 school days** of receipt of the acknowledgement letter.

4.4 If the Complainant wishes to rely on the account of a witness, they should ask the witness to write down, sign and date their account. This should be included in the documentation forwarded to the Clerk. Any written accounts provided by the Complainant from witnesses under the age of eighteen must be signed and dated by the witness **and** one of the witness' parents or carers. The Complainant should also provide, within **5 school days** as above, the names of any witnesses they would like to attend the hearing to give a verbal statement, stating why their attendance is required. The Chair of the Complaint Panel reserves the right to make the final decision about who may or may not attend the panel hearing. Where a witness has previously given a written account which is largely undisputed, the Chair may decide in advance that they do not need to attend the Complaint Panel Hearing to give a verbal statement.

4.5 The Clerk will make arrangements to convene the Complaint Panel within **20 school days** of receiving the request. The panel will consist of three people who will have had no involvement in the subject matter of the complaint, no involvement in dealing with the complaint in the previous stages, and no detailed knowledge of the complaint (please refer to the grid on page 5).

One of the members of the Complaint Panel will be independent of the running and management of the school (i.e. they will not be a Governor of the Local Governing Body, a Director of Beyond Schools Trust, or an employee of either the school or senior leadership team of the Beyond Schools Trust). The Clerk will ask the members of the panel to decide who will act as Chair of the panel.

4.6 The Clerk will write to the Complainant, the school representative, any relevant witnesses, and the Complaint Panel informing them of the date, time and venue of the Complaint Panel Hearing as soon as possible, but at least **5 school days** in advance. The letter to the Complainant will inform him/her of the names of the complaint panel members and their roles and confirm that they have the right to be accompanied by a friend or relative for support, and an interpreter or signer if necessary. The letter will also explain how the Complaint Panel Hearing will be conducted and will include the details of the procedure to be followed at the meeting.

4.7 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 on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

4.8 All relevant correspondence and documentation regarding the complaint will be provided to the Complainant and the Complaint Panel at least **5 school days** prior to the Complaint Panel Hearing. This should include all letters and relevant documentation/witness statements from Stage 2 onwards. Hard copies of all the paperwork will be made available to those attending the Complaint Panel Hearing. The Trust reserves the right to ask for a contribution from the Complainant towards printing costs, if the amount of additional paperwork submitted by the Complainant is deemed excessive.

4.9 The school will usually be represented at the Complaint Panel Hearing by the people who dealt with the complaint at Stages 2 and 3, the subject of the complaint would not be expected to attend the hearing. Please refer to the grid on page 5.

4.10 Members of staff involved in the matters which gave rise to the complaint will usually have provided a signed written account or have signed a note of a meeting during the previous stages. These will be forwarded to all parties with the other complaint documentation in the usual way and members of staff will not usually be required to attend the Complaint Panel Hearing to give a verbal statement. Witnesses under the age of eighteen will only be allowed to attend the Complaint Panel Hearing at the discretion of the Chair of the Complaint Panel, and then only if they are accompanied by one of their parents or carers.

4.11 The Complainant's and the school's witnesses will only attend the Complaint Panel Hearing for that part of it where they give their verbal statements and answer questions. They will be asked to remain outside at all other times.

4.12 The Clerk to the Complaint Panel will record minutes of the Complaint Panel Hearing, however the proceedings will be kept as informal as possible with the main aim being to achieve reconciliation between the Complainant and the school. More detailed information about the Complaint Panel Hearing can be made available on request.

4.13 After the Complaint Panel Hearing has closed, the Complaint Panel will meet in private to discuss the complaint, assisted by the Clerk. The Complaint Panel's decision will be confirmed in writing within **10 school days**.

4.14 The Complaint Panel will make **findings of fact**, namely they will decide on a balance of probabilities (i.e. more likely than not) which facts they accept and which they reject. The Complaint Panel will then decide what **recommendations** to make, if any. These may include recommendations aimed at achieving reconciliation between the Complainant and the academy, or recommendations for the school to follow aimed at improving the school's procedures or preventing a recurrence of the events which led to the complaint. The Complaint Panel will make a written record of their findings of fact and recommendations, if any. If no recommendations are made, this will also be recorded.

4.15 The Clerk to the Complaint Panel will write to the Complainant, the Headteacher (in all cases, whether or not the Headteacher represented the school), the Chair of the Local Governing Body (if they represented the Academy) and, where relevant, any persons complained about, confirming their **findings of fact** and **recommendations** within **10 school days** of the Complaint Panel Hearing. The letter will identify each of the issues complained about, summarise how the Complaint Panel Hearing proceeded, and confirm each of the Complaint Panel's findings of fact and recommendations, if any, with reasons. The letter will confirm that the decision of the panel is final but that if the Complainant believes that this Complaints Policy does not comply with the Regulations, or that the school has not followed the procedure outlined in this Complaints Policy, the Complainant may refer their complaint to the Education Funding Agency for further consideration.

4.16 The Clerk to the Complaint Panel will ensure that a record of the Complaint Panel's **findings of fact** and **recommendations** is kept on the school's premises and is available for inspection by the Beyond Schools Trust, the Local Governing Body and the Headteacher.

Referral to the Department for Education (DfE)

5.1 If you have followed all the steps in the school's complaints procedure including the panel hearing and believe your complaint was not dealt with correctly, you can escalate the complaint to the Department for Education (DfE).

5.2 The DfE can review the school's handling of the complaint to ensure they followed their policies and relevant legislation, but they will not reinvestigate the substance of the complaint. The DfE will generally focus on whether the school followed its procedures rather than re-evaluating the original issue.

5.3 The link below explains how to refer the complaint to the DfE.

[Complain about a school to the Department for Education - GOV.UK](#)

Appendix 2 - Complaint Form

Please access the downloaded version of this form, complete and return using the relevant email address (see page 5) or hand it into the school main office marked for the attention of either the Headteacher /Clerk to the LGB/Clerk to Trustees/CEO delete according to what stage your complaint is) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your Name:
Student's Name (if applicable):
Your Relationship to the Student (if applicable):
Address:
Postcode:
Daytime Telephone Number:
Evening Telephone Number:
Email address:
Full details of the complaint (including the names of all persons involved and the dates of incidents referred to):

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (for example, who did you speak 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:

For Official Use

Date Acknowledgement Sent:

Name of Person Acknowledging the Complaint:

Name of Person Complaint Referred To:

Signature:

Date:

Action Taken:

Appendix 3 - Serial and Unreasonable Complainants

The 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.

Unreasonable behaviour is defined 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 complaint 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 Academy 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.

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 premises.

Appendix 4 - Who Should I Contact?

We want to resolve concerns quickly and positively

Most concerns can be resolved by speaking with the person closest to the issue. We encourage parents and carers to raise concerns as soon as possible so that we can work together to find a solution.

Before making a formal complaint, please use the guide below to identify the most appropriate person to contact.

If my concern is about...

Concern	Who should I contact first?
My child's learning, homework, classroom experience or progress in a particular subject	Class Teacher / Subject Teacher
An issue that has happened during a lesson	Class Teacher / Subject Teacher
A friendship issue, behaviour matter or pastoral concern	Form Tutor / Head of Year / Pastoral Lead
Attendance or punctuality	Attendance Team
Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND)	SENDCo
Safeguarding or welfare concerns	Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
School transport arrangements	School Office
Catering or school meals	School Office
School communication or administration	School Office
Concerns affecting several subjects or lessons	Head of Year / Key Stage Leader
Concerns about a member of staff	A Senior Leader or the Headteacher
A whole-school issue or concern	Headteacher
A concern that has not been resolved through discussion	Headteacher (Formal Complaint)

Not sure whether it is feedback, a concern or a complaint?

Feedback

You would like the school to be aware of something or to consider a suggestion.

You need to be heard.

Examples:

- A suggestion for improving communication.
- Positive feedback about an event.
- An idea for improving school provision.

Concern

You are worried about something and would like an explanation, clarification or reassurance.

You need an answer.

Examples:

- A misunderstanding.
- A one-off incident.
- A query about a decision or process.

Complaint

You remain dissatisfied with actions taken, or you believe the school has failed to take appropriate action.

You need the matter to be formally investigated.

Examples:

- Previous attempts to resolve the matter have been unsuccessful.
- You believe procedures have not been followed.
- You wish to make a formal complaint.

Before making a formal complaint

Please consider the following questions:

- ✓ Have I spoken to the person closest to the issue?
- ✓ Have I allowed reasonable time for a response?
- ✓ Am I looking for information, reassurance or a formal investigation?
- ✓ Do I understand the outcome I am seeking?

Many concerns can be resolved quickly through open and respectful communication without the need to enter the formal complaints process.

If I still wish to make a formal complaint

Where a concern has not been resolved, or where you wish to make a formal complaint, please follow the school's Complaints Policy and complete the Complaints Form available on the school website.

Further details of each stage of the process can be found in the Complaints Policy.

Date of Trustee approval:

July 2026

Review arrangements including date of review:

Summer 2027