The Beacon
Pupil Referral Unit

COMPLAINTS POLICY

DATE:	**June 2025**
REVIEW DATE:	**June 2026**
PERSON RESPONSIBLE:	**Mrs L Hatton**

Introduction

This policy must be read in conjunction with other policies including those relating to Human Resources and any which relate to an area of complaint.

Concerns

It is natural that parents may, occasionally, be concerned about an aspect of their child's education or welfare at school. This could include issues concerning the school's approach to aspects of the curriculum, homework, behavioural problems or any other issue.

The school welcomes enquiries from parents about any matter. Teachers and staff will explain the school practices, policies, and how they affect the pupils. The vast majority of concerns will be handled by the class teacher. If in doubt, keep asking until you are completely satisfied as all staff are eager to help.

The usual format is to speak to the child's class teacher in the first instance, or to contact the school office to arrange an appointment to discuss your concern. At all times the staff will help to resolve a problem. If occasionally parents feel they must state their concern formally, this too is not a problem. The school has defined procedures for handling complaints so don't be embarrassed if you feel an issue warrants more attention.

Complaints

The procedure is again to speak to the child's class teacher in the first instance, or contact the school office to arrange an appointment to discuss your complaint.

The school's policy is to follow DfE guidelines when handling concerns and complaints. Just ask if you would like advice or a copy. It would be unusual to deviate from these procedures but the school always retains discretion in these matters.

In summary, the nationally accepted procedure is divided into three stages:

Stage 1 aims to resolve the concern through informal contact at the appropriate level in school.

Stage 2 is the first formal stage where written complaints are considered by the Head Teacher or a member of the School Leadership Team as determined by the Head Teacher, who has responsibility for dealing with complaints.

Stage 3 is the next step once Stage 2 is complete. It involves a complaints review panel of governors. Such a panel may be offered at the discretion of the Chair of Management Committee.

Beyond the governing body, the final recourse for a complainant is to the Department for education (DfE). This is a new arrangement and this policy will be updated to reflect the procedure in due course.

If you should need to refer to the full procedures, please ask at the school office. All staff are familiar with the guidelines and have a duty to help parents needing advice.

Our Procedures for Dealing with General Concerns

The majority of concerns from parents, carers and others are handled under the following general procedures. The procedure is divided into three stages:

Stage 1 aims to resolve the concern through informal contact at the appropriate level in school (as described on pages 2 and 3 of this guidance).

Stage 2 is the first formal stage at which written complaints are considered by the Head Teacher or the designated governor, who has special responsibility for dealing with complaints.

Stage 3 is the next stage once Stage 2 has been worked through. It involves a complaints review panel of governors. How each of these stages operates is explained next.

Stage 1 Your initial contact with the school

1. Many concerns will be dealt with informally when you make them known to us. The first point of contact should be your child's class teacher.
2. We will see you, or contact you by telephone or in writing, as soon as possible after your concern is made known to us. All members of staff know how to refer, if necessary, to the appropriate person with responsibility for particular issues raised by you. He or she will make a clear note of the details and will check later to make sure that the matter has been followed up.
3. We will ensure that you are clear what action or monitoring of the situation, if any, has been agreed. We will confirm this in writing to you or verbally to you in person.
4. We will ensure that we speak directly to all appropriate persons who may be able to assist us with our enquiries into your concern.
5. We will discuss with you (normally within ten working days) the progress of our enquiries. You will have the opportunity of asking for the matter to be considered further, once we have responded to your concern.
6. If you are still dissatisfied following this informal approach, your concern will become a formal complaint and we will deal with it at the next stage.

Stage 2 Formal consideration of your complaint

This stage in our procedures deals with written complaints. It applies where you are not satisfied with the informal approach to dealing with your concern, as outlined under Stage 1 above.
1. Normally, your written complaint should be addressed to the Head Teacher, see appendix a for our model complaints form. If, however, your complaint concerns the Head Teacher personally, it should be sent to the school marked "For the attention of the Chair of Management Committee".
2. We will acknowledge your complaint in writing as soon as possible after receiving it. This will usually be within three working days.
3. We will enclose a copy of these procedures with the acknowledgement.
4. Normally we would expect to respond in full within ten working days but if this is not possible we will write to explain the reason for the delay and let you know when we hope to be able to provide a full response.

5. As part of our consideration of your complaint, we may invite you to a meeting to discuss the complaint and fill in any details required. If you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you to help you explain the reasons for your complaint.
6. The Head Teacher, or chair of Management Committee may also be accompanied by a suitable person if they wish.
7. Following the meeting, the Head Teacher or chair of Management Committee will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, we will talk to the pupil concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question.
8. We will normally talk to pupils with a parent or carer present, unless this would delay the investigation of a serious or urgent complaint, or where a pupil has specifically said that he or she would prefer the parent or carer not to be involved. In such circumstances, we will ensure that another member of staff, with whom the pupil feels comfortable, is present.
9. If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the school's internal confidential procedures, as required by law.
10. The Head Teacher or chair of Management Committee will keep written/typed, signed and dated records of all meetings and telephone conversations, and other related documentation.
11. Once we have established all the relevant facts, we will send you a written response to your complaint. This will give a full explanation of the Head Teacher's/chair of Management Committee decision and the reasons for it. If follow-up action is needed, we will indicate what we are proposing to do. We may invite you to a meeting to discuss the outcome as part of our commitment to building and maintaining good relations with you.
12. The person investigating your complaint may decide that we have done all we can to resolve the complaint, in which case we may use our discretion to close the complaint at this point. Please see the next page for further information about this process.
13. If we do not close the complaint after Stage 2, you may wish to proceed to Stage 3, as described below.

Closure of Complaints

Very occasionally, a school will feel that it needs, regretfully, to close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied.

We will do all we can to help to resolve a complaint against the school but sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all of the complainant's wishes. Sometimes it is simply a case of "agreeing to disagree".

If a complainant persists in making representations to the school – to the Head Teacher, designated governor, chair of Management Committee or anyone else - this can be extremely time-consuming and can detract from our responsibility to look after the interests of all the children in our care.

For this reason, we are entitled to close correspondence (including personal approaches, as well as letters and telephone calls) on a complaint where we feel that we have taken all reasonable action to resolve the complaint.

In exceptional circumstances, closure may occur before a complaint has reached Stage 3 of the procedures described in this document. This is because a complaints panel takes considerable time and effort to set up and we must be confident that it is likely to assist the process of investigating the complaint.

The Chair of Management Committee may decide, therefore, that every reasonable action has been undertaken to resolve the complaint and that a complaints review panel would not help to move things forward.

This does not, of course, prevent you from referring your complaint to the DfE.

Stage 3– Consideration by a complaints Review Panel

If your concern has already been through Stages 1 and 2 and you are not satisfied with the outcome, we may agree to set up a complaints review panel to consider it. This is a formal process, and your ultimate recourse at school level. The Chair of Management Committee [the Designated Governor] has discretion to agree to this form of meeting where he or she feels it would be helpful in resolving the complaint.
The purpose of this arrangement is to give your complaint a hearing in front of a panel of governors who have no prior knowledge of the details of the complaint and who can, therefore, consider it without prejudice.

The aim of a complaints review panel is to resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the parent. We recognise, however, that it may sometimes only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations which will reassure you that we have taken your complaint seriously.

The complaints review panel operates according to the following formal procedures:

- The clerk to the Management Committee will aim to arrange for the panel meeting to take place within 20 working days.
- The clerk will ask you whether you wish to provide any further written documentation in support of your complaint. You can include witness statements, or ask witnesses to give evidence in person, if you wish.
- The Head Teacher will be asked to prepare a written report for the panel. Other members of staff directly involved in matters raised in your complaint will also be asked to prepare reports or statements.
- The clerk will inform you, the Head Teacher, any relevant witnesses and members of the panel by letter, at least five working days in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting. We hope that you will feel comfortable with the meeting taking place in the school; but we will do what we can to make alternative arrangements if you prefer.
- With the letter, the clerk will send you all relevant correspondence, reports and documentation about the complaint and ask whether you wish to submit further written evidence to the panel.
- The letter will explain what will happen at the panel meeting and the clerk will also inform you that you are entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. The choice of person to accompany you is your own, but it is usually best to involve someone in whom you have confidence but who is not directly connected with the school. They are there to give you support but also to witness the proceedings and to speak on your behalf if you wish.
- With the agreement of the chair of the panel, the Head Teacher may invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by you to attend the meeting,
- The chair of the panel will bear in mind that the formal nature of the meeting can be intimidating for you and will do his or her best to put you at your ease.
- As a general rule, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants. If either party wishes to do so, the meeting will be

adjourned so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence.

- The chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted. Please understand that any decision to share the minutes with you, the complainant, is a matter for the panel's discretion and you do not have an automatic right to see or receive a copy. Since such minutes usually name individuals, they are understandably of a sensitive and, therefore, confidential nature.
- Normally, the written outcome of the panel meeting, which will be sent to you, should give you all the information you require. If, however, you feel that you would like to have a copy of the minutes it would be helpful if you could indicate this in advance. If the panel is happy for the minutes to be copied to you, the clerk can then be asked maintain confidentiality in the minutes.
- During the meeting, you can expect there to be opportunities for: you to explain your complaint; you to hear the school's response from the Head Teacher; you to question the Head Teacher about the complaint; you to be questioned by the Head Teacher about the complaint; the panel members to be able to question you and the Head Teacher; any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the chair's approval) and all parties to have the right to question all witnesses; you and the Head Teacher to make a final statement.
- In closing the meeting, the chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to the Head Teacher and yourself within two weeks. All participants other than the panel and the clerk will then leave.
- The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to: reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint; decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint; recommend, where appropriate, to the Management Committee changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again.
- The clerk will send you and the Head Teacher a written statement outlining the decision of the panel within two weeks. The letter will explain what further recourse, beyond the governing body, is available to you.
- We will keep a copy of all correspondence and notes on file in the school's records but separate from pupils' personal records.

THE BEACON PRU COMPLAINTS FORM

Please complete and return to (Head Teacher/Chair of Management Committee)

Name:

Pupil's name (if relevant):

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Daytime telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint?

Who have you spoken to and what was the response?

What action 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: Final Action agreed/taken:

Signature: Head Teacher / Chair of Management Committee