



## Beths Grammar School Complaints Policy

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### Introduction

1. This document sets out Beths Grammar School's policy and procedure for addressing complaints. It should be used only when informal attempts to resolve problems have been unsuccessful. If, for instance, you have any concerns about the school or the education provided, please discuss the matter with your child's class teacher at the earliest opportunity. The policy was reviewed in Spring 2026 and replaces the old policy and is active from Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026

2. Beths Grammar School will make every effort to provide a high quality service to students, parents/carers and community users. We welcome suggestions as to how to improve. Where concerns are raised, every effort will be made to resolve them informally and, where complaints are made, they will be treated seriously and according to the procedure set out below. However, where a complainant attempts to bring the school into disrepute, or to undermine individuals or the school's work in general, the school reserves the right to question the validity of the complaint and may seek further clarity or dismiss the complaint.

### 1. Aims

We aim to meet our statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of students currently at the school. Beths Grammar School will give careful consideration to all complaints from such parents and deal with them fairly and honestly. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and aim to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

When responding to such complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Ensure decisions are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principle of administrative law

- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaint through the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes.

We will try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed. The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete all stages of the complaints procedure.

To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

In applying this policy rigorously, Beths Grammar School aims to meet and uphold its core values of Community, Excellence and Respect.

Complaints received from parties not parents of current students will be investigated and resolved at the informal first stage and will not follow on to Stage 2.

## **2. Legislation and Guidance**

This document meets the requirements set out in Part 7 of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of students at the school.

It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations, and refers to good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures from the Department for Education (DfE).

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

## **3. Definitions and scope**

### **3.1 Definitions**

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”. The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.
- A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”.

### **3.2 Scope**

The school intends to resolve complaints informally at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when a complainant would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy **does not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEND)
- Exclusion
- GDPR
- Staff grievances
- Whistle-blowing

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

Link to GDPR policy : <GDPR-Policy-Spring-2022.259420936.pdf>

Arrangements for handling complaints from parents of children with protected characteristics are within the scope of this policy. Such complaints should first be made to the SENDCO or the Headteacher; the complaint will then be dealt with in accordance with this Complaints Policy.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

#### **4. Roles and responsibilities**

##### **4.1 The Complainant**

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Follow these procedures
- Co-operate with the school throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communications promptly
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Not publish details about the complaint on social media nor involve other parties who contact the School on the Complainant's behalf.

#### **5. Principles for investigation**

When investigating a complaint, the investigator will try to clarify and consider:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right.

The person investigating a complaint (at the appropriate stage in the process) will look at the issues raised and establish the facts. They will:

- Interview all relevant parties and keep notes
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- Prepare a comprehensive report

##### **5.1 Time scales**

The complainant must raise the complaint within 12 school weeks of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents that have not already been addressed by this policy, they must raise the complaint within 12 school weeks of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the next school day.

If, at any point we cannot meet the time scales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay.

## **6. Stages of Complaint (not complaints against the Headteacher or Trustees – see Sections 7 or 8)**

### **6.1 Stage 1: Informal**

The complainant should raise their complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff, Assistant Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher either in person or by letter, telephone or email clearly stating the desired outcomes from the resulting meeting. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact, the Complaints Officer at the School using the email: [mrneylan@beths.bexley.sch.uk](mailto:mrneylan@beths.bexley.sch.uk)

The school will acknowledge the complaint within three school days, investigate (in accordance with the procedures at Section 5) and provide a response within fifteen school days from the named member of staff.

Most complaints will be effectively dealt with at the Informal Stage. Every effort should be made to resolve the complaint informally in discussion with either the class teacher, Head of Department (HoD), Head of Year (HoY) or member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The school encourages parents/carers to approach staff and aims to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding.

It is expected that anyone who seeks to take a complaint beyond the Informal stage shall have made reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution to the concern and shall have acted in relation to the matter in a reasonable and measured way.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint

### **6.2 Stage 2: Formal**

If you feel that a concern has not been addressed through informal discussion with the class teacher, HoD or HoY or member of the SLT and you wish to have the matter formally investigated by an appropriate person from the school, please complete the Complaints Form found in Appendix 1 of this policy and email this to [mrneylan@beths.bexley.sch.uk](mailto:mrneylan@beths.bexley.sch.uk)

The Complaints Form will be acknowledged within three school days of receiving it. The matter will be formally investigated by the Headteacher or a senior member of staff nominated by the Headteacher. The Investigation will be conducted in accordance with the procedures at Section 5. Depending upon the nature of the complaint he/she will normally write to you with the outcome of this process within twenty school days of acknowledgement of the Complaints Form. If circumstances arise that mean that the person investigating the complaint is unable to complete the process within twenty school days, he/she will write to you explaining why and indicating a new date by which it is hoped he/she will write with the outcome of the process.

Decisions at Stage 2 will be final and will be confirmed in writing. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the handling of the complaint, they have recourse to the ESFA via

[Complaints procedure - Education and Skills Funding Agency - GOV.UK](http://Complaints%20procedure%20-%20Education%20and%20Skills%20Funding%20Agency%20-%20GOV.UK)

## **7. Complaints against the Headteacher, an Individual Trustee or the Trustee Board**

Complaints should be directed to the clerk to the Board of Trustees in the first instance.

### **7.1 Stage 1: Informal**

If the complaint is about the Headteacher or an individual member of the Board of Trustees (including the Chair or Vice Chair), a suitably-skilled and impartial Trustee will carry out the informal review (following the procedures set out in section 6.1 above). The school will acknowledge the complaint within three school days, investigate (in accordance with the procedures at Section 5) and provide a response within fifteen school days from the investigator.

The person carrying out the Stage 1 process will follow the procedures at Sections 5 and 6.2 and will write a formal response at the end of their investigation.

### **7.2 Stage 2: Formal**

A person who is independent of the management and running of the school will be appointed by the Trustee Board carry out the steps in stage 2.

The person carrying out the Stage 2 process will follow the procedures at Sections 5 and 6.2 and will write a formal response at the end of their investigation within twenty school days. Their decision will be final.

If circumstances arise that mean that the person investigating the complaint is unable to complete the process within twenty school days, he/she will write to you explaining why and indicating a new date by which it is hoped he/she will write with the outcome of the process.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the handling of the complaint, they have recourse to the ESFA via

[\*\*Complaints procedure - Education and Skills Funding Agency - GOV.UK\*\*](#)

## **8. Complaints that are jointly about a Trustee, the Chair and Vice Chair, the entire Board of Trustees, or the majority of the Board of Trustees**

Complaints should be directed to the Clerk to the Board of Trustees in the first instance. Complaints of this nature will proceed automatically to Stage 2.

### **8.1 Stage 2 : Review**

The person carrying out the Stage 2 process will follow the procedures at Section 6.2 and will write a formal response at the end of their investigation. Their decision will be final.

Depending upon the nature of the complaint he/she will normally write to you with the outcome of this process within twenty school days of acknowledgement of the Complaints Form. If circumstances arise that mean that the person investigating the complaint is unable to complete the process within twenty school days, he/she will write to you explaining why and indicating a new date by which it is hoped he/she will write with the outcome of the process.

## **9. Referring complaints on, after completion of the school's procedure**

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the ESFA via

### **[Complaints procedure - Education and Skills Funding Agency - GOV.UK](#)**

The ESFA will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the school. The ESFA will look into:

- Whether there was undue delay, or the school did not comply with its own complaints procedure
- Whether the school was in breach of its funding agreement with the Secretary of State
- Whether the school has failed to comply with any other legal obligation.

If the school did not deal with the complaint properly, it will be asked to re-investigate the complaint. If the school's complaints procedure is found to not meet regulations, the school will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

We will include this information in the outcome letter to the complainant.

## **10. Persistent complaints**

### **10.1 Unreasonably persistent complaints**

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure.
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive.
- Knowingly provides false information.
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refused to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on.
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time.
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value.

### ***Steps we will take***

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant or their representatives continue to contact the school in a disruptive way, we will put communications strategies in place. We will:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as Citizens Advice
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary.

### ***Stopping responding***

We will stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met if:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience.

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

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 our school site.

### **10.2 Duplicate complaints**

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint
- If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

### **10.3 Complaint campaigns**

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school will respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants
- If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the procedures at Section 9 will apply.

### **11. Record keeping**

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

This is except where the Secretary of State (or someone acting on their behalf), or the complainant requests access to records of the complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law/GDPR and our privacy notices.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole Board of Trustees in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

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## **12. Learning lessons**

The Board of Trustees will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Headteacher/Senior Leadership Team, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

## **13. Monitoring arrangements**

The Headteacher and the Board of Trustees will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher and the Board of Trustees will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in Section 11.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the Senior Deputy Headteacher.

This policy will be reviewed and approved by the Headteacher and Chair of the Board of Trustees every three years.

## **14. Links with other policies**

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

|                             |                                   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Accessibility               | Admissions                        |
| Anti-Bullying               | Appraisal                         |
| Behaviour & Rewards         | Child Protection and Safeguarding |
| Fair Treatment at Work      | GDPR & Privacy notices            |
| SEND information report     |                                   |
| Staff Conditions of Service |                                   |

Reviewed : Spring 2026

Next Scheduled Review : Spring 2029



## Complaints Form – Stage 2 Formal

**To assist with any investigation into your complaint and to help avoid any delay to the process, please complete this form with as much detail as possible.**

**When complete please return to [mrneylan@beths.bexley.sch.uk](mailto:mrneylan@beths.bexley.sch.uk)**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Name of the person making the complaint:  |  |
| Contact details for the person making the complaint   |  |
| Phone number:   |  |
| Email address:  |  |
| Date the incident about the complaint occurred:   | Date the Complaints Form was sent to school: |
| Approximate time of day the incident occurred:  |  |
| If the complaint is raised by a parent/carer relating to a student, please give               |  |
| Student name:   | Tutor Group:                                 |
| Please clearly state the nature of the complaint <b>and how you would like this resolved:</b> |  |
| <b>For internal purposes only</b>   |  |
| Date received:  |  |
| Investigated by:  |  |
| Date complaint resolved:  |  |

