



COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE (Parents/Carers)

Blessed Edward Bamber Catholic Multi Academy Trust

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2.1	CEO	Autumn 2021	Add in Secretary of state retention – advised by ESFA
3.1	CEO	Spring 2024	Page 3 - Add overview table Redesign of policy using DfE model policy for MATs Add in new stage 3 – Trust review.
3.1	CEO	Autumn 24	Updated page 11 to reflect the flow chart on page 4 (increased from 5-10 schools days to request a review of the stage 2 written response).
3.2	CEO	Spring 25	Redefined complainant as ‘parent or carer’. A separate policy (Complaints Policy (non parent/carer) will deal with complaints from ‘others’.
3.3	CEO	Spring 25	Increased timescale for stage 3 process to 25 school days from 20 school days.
3.4	CEO	Spring 25	Added statement to section 4 to clarify that the complaint will be dealt with by the receiver or a nominated person. Stage 3 – Trust Review – reworded to clarify that the complaint will not be reinvestigated but that the investigation process will be reviewed.
4.4	CEO	Spring 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Restructuring of complaint procedure. ➤ New two-stage formal progression before Trust involvement. ➤ Revised timescales. ➤ Expanded expectations of engagement. ➤ Updated policy exclusions Appendix G

Colossians 3:13

Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

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**This is a Trust-Wide Policy which applies to all
academies within the Trust**

Complaints procedure overview - formal

In line with this policy, we expect that all complainants will have made reasonable attempts to resolve their concern informally before progressing to formal stages. It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis.

	Complainant's Actions	School's Actions
Formal – Stage 1	Complainant to put complaint in writing (within 10 days of receiving the informal outcome).	Complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school days and complaints policy provided.
	Use Complaints Form – Formal Stage 1 (appendix B) or put in writing the reason for the complaint and the actions you would like the school to take to resolve your complaint.	Formal investigation conducted.
		(Optional) Meeting with complainant.
		Listen, discuss and offer resolution.
		Confirm outcome in writing within 20 school days of receipt of complaint.
	If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision at Formal Stage 1 then the complainant can proceed to Formal Stage 2.	

	Complainant's Actions	School's Actions
Formal – Stage 2	Complainant to put complaint in writing (within 10 days of receiving the Stage 1 outcome).	Complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school days and complaints policy provided.
	Use Complaints Form – Formal Stage 2 (Appendix C) or put in writing the reason for the complaint and the actions you would like the school to take to resolve your complaint.	Formal investigation conducted.
		(Optional) Meeting with complainant.
		Listen, discuss and offer resolution.
		Confirm outcome in writing within 20 school days of receipt of complaint.
	If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision at Stage 2 or is unsatisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, then the complainant can proceed to Stage 3.	

	Complainant's Actions	Trust's Actions
Trust Review Formal -Stage 3	Complainant to put complaint in writing (within 10 days of receiving the Stage 2 outcome).	Complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school days.
	Use Complaints Form – Trust Review – Formal Stage 3 (Appendix D) or put in writing the reason for referring the complaint to the Trust and the actions you would like the Trust to take to resolve your complaint.	Independent review of complaint conducted.
		Confirm outcome in writing within 30 school days of receipt of review request.
	If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision at Stage 3 or unsatisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, then the complainant can proceed to Stage 4.	

	Complainant's Actions	School's Actions
Independent Panel Review Formal – Stage 4	Complainant to request hearing in writing (within 10 days of receiving the Stage 3 outcome).	Clerk will acknowledge request within 5 school days and set up a meeting within 20 school days.
	Use Complaints Form – Independent Panel Review – Formal Stage 4 (Appendix E) or tell us why you are dissatisfied by the procedure that has been followed.	Confirmation of date, time and place of the hearing and details of the panel members present sent at least 5 school days before the hearing.
	Hearing to take place if possible, within 20 school days of receipt of request.	Schools to submit evidence in support of their case to the Clerk at least 7 school days before the hearing.
	Complainant to submit evidence in support of their case to the Clerk at least 7 school days before the hearing.	Panel considers verbal and written submissions.
		The outcome from the Stage 4 panel meeting will be communicated within 10 school days.

1. Introduction

The policy of the Trust and its school is to work in partnership with parents/carers. It is based on the belief that co-operation and a sense of joint purpose between staff, parents/carers and the Trust/school will assist in ensuring open and positive relationships. From time to time, however, parents or carers may express concern or make a complaint, either orally or in writing, about the conduct of a member of staff or Director of the Trust.

In dealing with complaints, we will ensure that they are dealt with effectively and with fairness to all parties.

This document provides advice and guidance on the process to follow when an external complaint has been made about the actions of the Trust's staff or Directors.

A copy of the Complaints Procedures can be found on the Trust's website and the website of each Trust school. A written copy may be obtained upon request from the Headteacher (throughout this policy the term Headteacher includes an Executive Headteacher) of the school.

2. Aims and scope

The aims of the procedure are to:

- Deal with any complaint against the Trust, individual school or any individual connected with the Trust by following the correct procedure to deal with all complaints thoroughly and in a timely manner and by being open, honest and fair when dealing with the complainant;
- Assist Headteachers, members, directors, governors, staff and parents/carers to strengthen their home-school links and to reaffirm the partnership between them and parents/carers as they work together for the good of the pupils in the school.

It is not intended that the complaints procedure replaces the normal discussion on day-to-day problems and concerns which take place in any school within the Trust as they arise. It is only where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of such discussions that further steps may need to be taken.

See [Appendix G](#) for matters which are not covered under this policy.

This complaints procedure is limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school.

All staff will be made aware of this complaints procedure and are expected to be familiar with our process of dealing with complaints and can be of assistance when an issue is brought to their attention. Appropriate training will be provided to staff to ensure that this policy is operated consistently.

3. The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

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

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. The school and Trust take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

From time to time, parents/carers will raise legitimate concerns about their child's education; these are dealt with as a matter of routine, without formal procedures, normally by the class teacher and are not generally regarded as 'complaints' in the formal sense.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Headteacher or senior leader will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, a senior leader will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when parents/carers would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the school will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

4. How To Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so. Please ensure all written complaints are marked 'Private and Confidential' and addressed to the appropriate person as below:

If your complaint is about:	Stage 1	Stage 2	Contact
A class-based concern	Headteacher	Governors	School office
A member of staff at the school (except the Headteacher)	Headteacher	Governors	School office
Headteacher	Governors	Additional Governors	Via school office or governance professional
Provision	Headteacher	Governors	School office
Chair of Governor/Governors	Chief Executive Officer	Directors	admin@bebcmat.co.uk

Please be aware that the complaint will be investigated by either the person to whom it was referred or a nominated person.

The Trust may engage an independent, external person to carry out the investigation into the Stage 2 complaint, or to review the investigation and response at Stage 3. This may be appropriate where the complaint is particularly complex or involves legal issues.

If your complaint is about:	Stage 1	Stage 2	Contact
The Trust	CEO	Complaint Panel	admin@bebcmat.co.uk
CEO/Director	Chair of the Trust Board	Complaint Panel	admin@bebcmat.co.uk
Chair of Directors (Chair of the Trust Board)	Vice-Chair of the Trust Board	Complaint Panel	admin@bebcmat.co.uk

Expectations of engagement

In line with this policy, we expect that all complainants will have made reasonable attempts to resolve their concern informally before progressing to formal stages.

Should a complaint regarding a member of staff employed by the Trust require management in accordance with any of the Trust's HR Policies or Procedures or referral to a separate body through legal compliance, such processes would run concurrently with this complaints policy.

Anonymous complaints

The Trust will not normally investigate anonymous complaints however the merits of investigating anonymous complaints will be determined by the appropriate person on receipt. If the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or CEO believes that the gravity of an anonymous complaint justifies investigation, the complaint will be investigated and the results will be recorded on file.

Timescales

All complaints must be raised as soon as possible and within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will only consider complaints made outside of this timeframe if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints will be dealt with in a prompt manner. Realistic time-limits are set for each stage of the process, but these may differ according to the complexity of the issue concerned. **Timescales are intended as best practice. Where these cannot be met, the complainant will be notified with a revised target date.** Timescales in this document refer to school working days i.e. excluding weekends, school holidays etc.

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. Complaints received in the evening or over a weekend will be considered to have been received on the next working day.

Complaints against members of staff

If the complaint relates to a member of staff, the individual will be fully informed of the nature and details of the complaint. Members of staff will be given an opportunity to explain their actions and be advised that they may have a work colleague or union representative present during any part of the process.

Pupils as witnesses

Only in exceptional circumstances should pupils be interviewed when investigating a complaint, i.e. where there are no adult witnesses, and the matter is sufficiently serious to warrant it. This will be down to the discretion of the Headteacher and/or Trust Lead depending on the nature of the complaint and who is investigating. The investigator is advised to seek parental consent before any interview with a child where they are being asked to clarify facts concerning a parental complaint. Where permission has been given for the interview, the child should be accompanied by either a responsible adult or the parent.

Audio or video evidence

Unless exceptional circumstances apply, we do not routinely permit recordings of meetings or conversations. We will definitely not accept as evidence, recordings of conversations or meetings that were obtained covertly or without informed consent of all parties being recorded. If CCTV is used as part of evidence, it will be viewed via an accompanied viewing, it will not be released.

Unauthorised filming/photos/voice recordings on school premises is not permitted.

Meetings with Complainants

Meetings with complainant will be conducted either fact to face or online. If either party wishes for a meeting to be documented, the school/Trust will make arrangements for minutes/transcription of the meeting to be taken.

Complaint forms

There are complaint forms which can be used by those wishing to register a complaint ([see Appendices A to D](#)). These may be helpful to complainants and enables each school and the Trust to be systematic in the way we handle and monitor complaints. However, the Trust will accept an email or letter of complaint and process accordingly.

Social media

In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, the Trust requests that complainants do not discuss complaints publicly via social media such as Facebook and X (formerly Twitter). Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved, and we also expect complainants to observe confidentiality.

Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Safeguarding of pupils

The Trust takes the safeguarding of its pupils very seriously and we recognise that it is extremely important that any allegation made against a member of staff is managed quickly and effectively. It is also important that low-level safeguarding concerns are recognised and reported so behaviour can be appropriately managed. In responding to safeguarding allegations, the Trust will follow the Managing Allegations against Staff policy and will refer to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) as appropriate.

5. Complaint Stages

Each stage in the complaints procedure should be completed before moving to the next stage. In very exceptional circumstances it may be decided, usually in consultation with the CEO, to omit a stage.

In order to investigate a complaint as fully as possible, we have implemented a staged approach. We anticipate that almost all complaints that arise will be resolved informally or at Stage 1.

- ❖ Informal
- ❖ Formal Stage 1
- ❖ Formal Stage 2
- ❖ Trust Review Stage 3
- ❖ Independent Panel Review Stage 4
- ❖ Further right of appeal

Informal

As soon as possible after the incident (within 3 months) about which you have concerns, you should ask to meet with the appropriate member of staff to discuss the matter.

Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information. Where a complaint relates to your child or a child attending the school, it is normally appropriate to communicate directly with the appropriate member of staff. Where the complaint is about a member of staff, it is normally appropriate to communicate directly with them in the first instance. This may be via email, by telephone or in person by appointment, requested via the school office. If you wish to hold a meeting to discuss your concern or complaint, it would be helpful if you could explain the nature of your concern or the complaint in advance. You may wish to use the Meeting Request Form ([Appendix A](#)) provided.

It is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved by this informal stage within 20 working days of being notified of the complaint.

There is no requirement for an informal complaint to be put in writing, but you may find it helpful to put in a meeting request form. Where appropriate, you may be invited to an informal meeting with the member of staff most appropriate for dealing with that concern. The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure that you are clear on what action (if any) has been agreed. This may be put in writing if appropriate.

Staff members should log all informal concerns on the school management information system and inform the headteacher of any serious concerns.

There is no suggested timescale for resolution at this stage, given the importance of informal discussion, although it would be expected that most issues will be resolved within 20 school days. Where no satisfactory solution has been found, you will be advised that if you wish your concerns to be considered further you should write to school under the formal Stage 1 of this procedure, within 10 school days.

Formal - Stage 1

If the complaint has not been resolved informally the following procedure will apply:

Within 10 school days of being notified of the outcome of the informal complaint - you must put your complaint in writing. A Complaint Form is provided to assist with this ([Appendix B](#)).

You should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents. **It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions that you would like the school to take to resolve your concern.** Without this, it is much more difficult to proceed. The appropriate body will then ensure that it is investigated appropriately.

Responsibility for handling the complaint at this stage should be determined by referring to the table in [Section 4](#), which outlines the appropriate escalation route.

If a formal complaint is not made within 10 days the school will assume that no further action is required.

On receipt of the complaint form or email we will acknowledge the complaint (within 5 school days) and may invite you to a meeting to discuss the issue.

Where you decline the invitation to a meeting the complaint will continue to be formally investigated in line with the policy.

Once all the relevant facts have been established, as far as possible, you will be provided with a written response to the complaint, including a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. This will include what action will be taken to resolve the complaint (if any).

You will be advised that if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint, you may request that your complaint be moved to Stage 2.

Formal - Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 investigation the following will apply:

Within 10 school days of being notified of the outcome of the Stage 1 investigation you must put your complaint in writing. A complaint form is provided to assist with this ([Appendix C](#)).

You should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents. **It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions that you would like the school to take to resolve your concern.** Without this, it is much more difficult to proceed. The appropriate body will then ensure that it is investigated appropriately.

Responsibility for handling the complaint at this stage should be determined by referring to the table in [Section 4](#), which outlines the appropriate escalation route.

If a formal complaint is not made within 10 days the school will assume that no further action is required.

On receipt of the complaint form or email we will acknowledge the complaint (within 5 school days) and may invite you to a meeting to discuss the issue. Where you decline the invitation to a meeting the complaint will continue to be formally investigated in line with the policy.

Once all the relevant facts have been established, as far as possible, you will be provided with a written response to the complaint, including a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. This will include what action will be taken to resolve the complaint (if any). Where possible, this will be within 20 school days of receiving your complaint.

You will be advised that if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint, you may request that your complaint be moved to Stage 3.

Trust Review – Formal Stage 3

If you are not satisfied with the way in which the complaint has been handled the case can be referred for a Trust Review. You should contact the admin mailbox on admin@bebcmat.co.uk clearly stating your reasons for requesting a review within 10 working days of the date of the Stage 2 written response.

You may wish to use the [Complaint Review Request Form \(Appendix D\)](#) provided to assist you and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure.

In all cases your written complaint must include:

- The nature of the complaint.
- Details of how the matter has been dealt with so far.
- the aspects of the procedure you are unhappy with and/or the outcome you are dissatisfied with
- A clear statement of the actions that you would like us to take to resolve your complaint.

The Trust will acknowledge your request in writing within 5 school days of receiving this information.

The Trust will carry out an impartial review of the investigation process. This stage does not involve a reinvestigation of the original complaint.

The Trust may contact you if they need any clarification or further information to assist with their review.

The Trust may direct the school to carry out further investigations into areas of the complaint and will make recommendations regarding suitable resolution if they find that issues have been overlooked or not fully considered or addressed at Stage 2.

The review will aim to be concluded within 30 working days of receipt of your request for a Trust review. This timeframe will include you and the school receiving a written response confirming the outcome of the review.

Independent Panel Review – Formal Stage 4

If you are not satisfied with the decision at Stage 3 or if you are not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, then the following will apply:

- Within 10 school days of receiving the response from the Stage 3 complaint, you must submit a written request for further review of the complaint to the CEO or Governance Professional of the Trust at admin@bebcmat.co.uk.

You may wish to use the [Complaint Review Request Form \(Appendix E\)](#) provided to assist you and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure.

In all cases your written complaint must include:

- The nature of the complaint.
- Details of how the matter has been dealt with so far.
- The aspects of the procedure you are unhappy with and/or the outcome you are dissatisfied with
- A clear statement of the actions that you would like us to take to resolve your complaint.

The Governance Professional will acknowledge your request in writing within 5 school days of receiving this information.

- Within 20 school days of receipt of the notification in writing the Governance Professional of the Trust will set up a meeting of the complaints panel which you will be invited to attend. At least 5 school days' notice of the meeting will be given to those attending the meeting, who will also receive the following:
 - An invitation to attend the meeting including details of date, time, place of meeting;
 - A request for copies of any written papers which you or the school may wish to be considered to be supplied at least 7 school days before the meeting.
 - An enquiry as to whether or not any reasonable adjustments to the procedure should be considered to support you in attending the meeting.
 - Confirmation that you may have someone accompany you at the meeting. This person will not normally speak on your behalf at the meeting but will be there for support. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring a legal representative to the panel meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

The procedure for the meeting is in [Appendix F](#).

Within 10 school days after the meeting, the decision, findings and recommendations of the complaints panel will be sent to all parties.

The decision of the panel is final.

Further right of appeal

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the complaints committee, you are entitled to refer your complaint to the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE will only investigate the complaint in limited circumstances.

For more information on the DfE's remit in relation to academy complaints, visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy/complain-about-an-academy>

6. Complaints that Result in Staff Capability or Disciplinary

If at any stage of the complaint it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are necessary in order to resolve the issue, the details of this action will remain confidential to the person dealing with the complaint and/or the individual's line manager and Headteacher. The complainant is entitled to be informed that the matter is being dealt with appropriately, but they are not entitled to participate in the proceedings and will not receive any detail about them or the outcome.

7. Serious Allegations or Complaints

If the complaint refers to criminal activity which may require the involvement of the Police, the Chair of Governors and CEO will be notified.

If the allegations relate to financial or accounting irregularities involving misuse of public funds, the Chair of Governors and CEO will be informed. The CEO will seek the advice from the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of the Trust.

8. Persistent or Vexatious Complaints or Harassment

The majority of complaints are handled in an informal manner and are resolved quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the complainant. However, there are occasions when complainants behave in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing concerns. The consequences are that the actions of the complainants begin to impact negatively on the day-to-day running of the Trust/school and directly or indirectly the overall wellbeing of the children or staff. In these exceptional circumstances the school or Trust may take action in accordance with the Managing Vexatious or Persistent Complaints policy.

9. Complaints Recording Procedure

A written record will be kept of all complaints made in accordance with this policy when they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing. In addition, written records will be kept of the action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

Records of all conversations and meetings with parents to resolve complaints will be kept. At a Stage 4 Independent Panel Review meeting, minutes will be taken. To help monitor recurring complaints, copies of correspondence and notes will be kept on file in the school's records but will be held separate from individual pupil records.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with Data Protection law, our Privacy Notices and Records Management and Retention Policy.

10. Monitoring of Complaints

The CEO and Directors of the Trust will monitor complaints to ensure that the procedure is effective in dealing with concerns. Some of the areas related to monitoring of complaints are:

- The number and nature of complaints;
- Whether the complaints were dealt with within agreed time limits;
- The stage at which complaints were ended satisfactorily.

Under the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, academy trusts and academies (schools) are required to log the number of complaints lodged under their formal procedures each year and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stages or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

11. Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the Trust wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- An explanation;
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- An assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur;
- An explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made;
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint;
- An apology.

12. Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- Explain the complaint in full as early as possible;
- Co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint;
- Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint;
- Ask for assistance as needed;
- Treat all those involved in the complaint with respect;
- Refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Where the complainant does not act in line with the above responsibilities the school/Trust reserves the right to refer to the Managing Vexatious or Persistent Complaints policy.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- Providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - Sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
 - Interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint

- Consideration of records and other relevant information
 - Analysing information.
- Liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- The investigator should:
- Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
 - Keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note-taker to record minutes of the meeting;
 - Ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal;
 - Be mindful of the timescales to respond;
 - Prepare a comprehensive report that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

Governance professional

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- Ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR);
- Set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- Collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example, stage 3 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale;
- Record the proceedings;
- Circulate the minutes of the meeting;
- Notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Review panel chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- Both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting;
- The meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy;
- Complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person;
- The remit of the committee is explained to the complainant;
- Written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR;
- If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting;
- Both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself;
- The issues are addressed;

- Key findings of fact are made;
- The committee is open-minded and acts independently;
- No member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- The meeting is minuted;
- They liaise with the Governance Professional.

Review panel member

Committee members should be aware that:

- The meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so;
- No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it;
- The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant;

We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

- Many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting;
- Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child;
- Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated. The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults;
- If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend. However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.
- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

Appendix A – meeting request form (informal)

Please complete and return to school/Trust who will acknowledge receipt.

I wish to meet a member of staff to discuss the following matter.

Brief details of the topic to be discussed:

Dates/times when it would be convenient to meet:

Your Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Email address:

Relationship to school: (e.g. parent of pupil) – please give name of pupil

Signature:

Date:

Appendix B – complaints form (formal - stage 1)

Please complete and return to school/Trust who will acknowledge receipt. Please refer to the table section 3 - How To Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint

Name:

Contact information:

Please give concise details of your complaint, (including dates, names of witnesses etc.) to allow the matter to be fully investigated.

You may continue on separate paper or attach additional documents if you wish.

Number of additional pages attached =

What action, if any have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint?
(Who have you spoken with or written to and what was the outcome?)

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

School/Trust use: **Stage 1**

Date form received:		Received by:	
Date acknowledgement sent:		Sent by:	
Issue referred to:		Date:	
Date response sent:		Sent by:	

Official use: Stage 1

Record of action taken:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix C – complaints form (formal - stage 2)

Please complete and return to school/Trust who will acknowledge receipt. Please refer to the table section 3 - How To Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint

Name:

Contact information:

Please give concise details of your complaint, (including dates, names of witnesses etc.) to allow the matter to be fully investigated.

You may continue on separate paper or attach additional documents if you wish.

Number of additional pages attached =

What action, if any have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint?
(Who have you spoken with or written to and what was the outcome?)

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

School/Trust use: **Stage 2**

Date form received:		Received by:	
Date acknowledgement sent:		Sent by:	
Issue referred to:		Date:	
Date response sent:		Sent by:	

Official use: Stage 2

Record of action taken:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix D – trust review request form (formal - stage 3)

Please complete and return for to the Trust via admin@bebcmat.co.uk or 154 Highcross Road, Poulton-le-Fylde, FY6 8DA.

Name:

Contact information:

Reason for request:

- I submitted a formal complaint on (date) and I am dissatisfied by the procedure that has been followed.

Or

- I received the outcome of stage 2 of my complaint on (date) and I am not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint. I am requesting further review of this issue.

Please detail the aspects of the procedure you are unhappy with and/or the outcome you are dissatisfied with:

You may continue on separate paper or attach additional documents if you wish.

Number of additional pages attached =

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Appendix E – independent panel review request form (formal – stage 4)

Please complete and return for the attention of the Governance Professional of the Trust at admin@bebcmat.co.uk or 154 Highcross Road, Poulton-le-Fylde, FY6 8DA.

Name:

Contact information:

Reason for request:

- I submitted a formal complaint on (date) and I am dissatisfied by the procedure that has been followed.

Or

- I received the outcome of stage 3 of my complaint on (date) and I am not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint. I am requesting further review of this issue.

Please detail the aspects of the procedure you are unhappy with and/or the outcome you are dissatisfied with:

You may continue on separate paper or attach additional documents if you wish.

Number of additional pages attached =

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Appendix F - procedure for a complaints panel hearing

The panel members should be aware of the following:

- BEBCMAT complaints policy;
- The appeal hearing is independent and impartial;
- No member of the panel should take part if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or the circumstances surrounding it;
- Panel members should include one independent member of the panel, nominated by the Diocese of Lancaster;
- The hearing is held in private;
- The aim of the hearing is to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the complainant and the school;
- It may not be possible to resolve matters to the complainant's satisfaction, it may only be possible to establish facts and satisfy the complainant that the matter has been taken seriously;
- Some parents may feel nervous, the panel chair will make efforts to ensure proceedings are as informal as possible commensurate with the fact that it is part of a formal procedure.

The Chair of the panel:

- Welcomes those present and introduces each person by name;
- Stresses that the meeting is strictly confidential to those present;
- Checks that all parties have received and read all previously distributed submissions;
- Outlines the procedures to be followed;
- Ensures that key findings of fact are made, and the issues addressed;
- Ensures that each party is able to state their case and ask questions without undue interruption;
- Ensures that all written material is seen by all parties;
- Conducts the hearing in an informal manner and ensures each party treats the other with respect and courtesy.

Order of hearing:

- a) The complainant is invited to present their case and explain their desired outcome and any possible redress sought.
 - The Headteacher or other nominated member of staff representing the school may ask questions of the Complainant;
 - Panel members may ask questions of the complainant.
- b) The Headteacher or other nominated member of staff representing the school is invited to explain the school's actions.
 - The complainant may ask questions of the Headteacher or member of staff representing the school;
 - Panel members may ask questions of the Headteacher or member of staff representing the school.
- c) Both parties are invited to summarise their point of view (School/Trust followed by the complainant).

After the parties have withdrawn, the Panel decides on its recommendations, including any redress.

The Panel may:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

The panel will deliberate and reach a decision which, if a vote is needed, will be determined by a simple majority. Any independent member will have the same voting rights as the Trust Board members of the panel. If the voting is tied, the Chair will have the casting vote.

The decision and recommendations of the Complaints Panel will be sent to all parties in writing within 10 working days of the panel being held.

The Panel's decision is final.

Appendix G – exclusions to the complaints policy

The following concerns and complaints cannot be considered under this policy. There are separate agencies, policies and procedures that deal with them.

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. Please see the admissions policy on the school’s website.
Child protection matters	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our safeguarding and child protection policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding</p> <p>Blackpool LADO: lado@blackpool.gov.uk</p> <p>Lancashire LADO: LADO.Admin@lancashire.gov.uk</p>
Complaints about services provided by other suppliers who may use school premises or facilities	Complaints about external providers should be addressed through the providers’ complaints procedures. Please contact them directly.
Complaints (non-parent/carer)	Complaints made by individuals who are not parents/carers of pupils in the Trust, or if the complainant is a parent but the complaint does not relate their child(ren) are directed to the Complaints Policy (Non Parent/Carer).
Data protection matters	Complaints about data protection matters are handled under our data protection policy and in accordance with relevant guidance from the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO). If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the ICO directly, but the ICO will usually expect you to have raised your concerns with our Data Protection Officer in the first instance.
Exclusions*	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions .</p> <p>*Complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school’s complaints procedure which can be found on individual school websites.</p>
Freedom of information matters	Complaints about our compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 are handled under our freedom of information policy and in accordance with relevant guidance from the ICO. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the ICO directly, but the ICO will usually expect you to have raised your concerns with us in the first instance.
National Curriculum content	Please contact the Department for Education at www.education.gov.uk/contactus

Staff conduct	<p>Complaints about staff conduct will be dealt with under the school’s internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>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.</p>
Staff grievances	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school’s internal grievance procedures.</p>
Statutory assessment of special educational needs	<p>Concerns about statutory assessments of special educational needs should be raised directly with local authorities</p>
Whistleblowing	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>A whistle-blower is deemed to be someone with privileged knowledge. These may be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Members of staff (e.g. teachers, Headteachers, administration support employees) 2. Volunteers (eg Trustees, governors) <p>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 directly with their employer. Concerns can be raised with the ESFA using their contact form: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>You can read further how the ESFA handles whistleblowing disclosures here: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-esfa-handles-whistleblowing-disclosures</p>

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 BEBMCAT or one of its academies in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

If the complaint falls outside the remit of this policy the complainant will be advised of this in writing within 10 school days following receipt of the complaint with an explanation as to why. In some circumstances, it may be decided that the concern(s) fall within the remit of another policy or procedure.