

Bullers Wood School Multi Academy Trust

Bullers Wood School & Bullers Wood School for Boys

Complaints Procedure



Policy created by: Executive Headteacher	Date of Adoption: September 2018	Date to be Reviewed: March 2020	To be reviewed by: BWMAT Board
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Complaints Procedure

Bullers Wood Multi-Academy Trust aims to provide a high quality educational experience for each and every student, which not only provides good teaching, leading to good examination results, but also a rounded school experience with particular emphasis on personal development. We also recognise that, despite these aspirations and a strong record of success in most areas of the school's life, occasionally things can go wrong and parents or members of the public may need to make a complaint or raise concerns.

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 generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

All formal complaints invoked under this policy will be recorded formally by the relevant school in a central log by the Headteacher's PA. It should be noted that each school in the Trust does not normally consider complaints made more than three months after incident or situation. If a complaint is made about an issue that is over three months old the school will write to the complainant explaining whether or not it will be considered and why.

Complaints from people who are not parents of students at the school (members of the public)

These complaints should be addressed in writing to the Headteacher of the relevant School. If the complainant is not satisfied by the response, which may be in writing directly, or may involve a meeting with the complainant before a written response, the complainant may refer it to the Chair of Governors of the Local Governing Body as set out below. The Headteacher will respond to complaints from members of the public within 10 working days of receipt.

Complaints from Parents

Stage 1 - Informal

Every effort will be made to resolve complaints or issues informally and quickly by discussion with the relevant member(s) of staff, as appropriate.

This discussion should make clear what the complaint(s) is/are, and what it is hoped that the preferred outcome should be. All complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days, and a record kept – through emails being saved, or file notes of conversations.

- Parents should make an appointment to discuss their complaint with the member of staff who knows about the issue or incident. If the complaint relates to a student, this would normally be the Head of Year, who is the principal channel of communication between the school and parents.
- If the complaint relates to the Head of Year, the complaint should be addressed to the Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for the year group, or in more serious cases, directly to the Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher.
- In some cases it may be appropriate to address an informal complaint to the Assistant or Deputy Headteacher with responsibility for that area (for example, school transport, or Options). The areas of responsibility of those senior staff are obtainable from the school.
- If in doubt, the Headteacher is always able to direct an informal complaint to the most appropriate recipient.
- When a meeting takes place, the member of staff will usually write notes during the meeting. Parents can ask for a copy of these notes. If the complaint involves the actions or decisions of another member of staff, it is not usually appropriate to have that person present at the initial meeting. It is for the Head of Year, or other senior manager, to address the issue with the member of staff about whom the complaint may

be being made.

Stage 2 – Headteacher

If a parent is still dissatisfied after the informal stage, they, or the member of staff dealing with it, can refer the matter to the Headteacher of the relevant school. A template (Appendix 1) has been created should complainants wish to use it.

- The Headteacher may consider that the complaint can be addressed in writing, or may contact the complainant by telephone or to arrange to meet with them to ascertain more details. The outcome of a telephone call will be documented.
- The Headteacher will clarify what the issues are. The hopes of what the parent is trying to achieve will also be discussed. Together all parties will agree an acceptable outcome, if possible. This should be to the satisfaction of all parties involved. These should be written down and agreed by all parties so there is no misunderstanding. This will normally be done in the form of a letter to the complainants following the meeting or other conversations.
- If the issue is complex the Headteacher may need to speak to other staff and pupils to investigate the concerns. This should happen within 10 school days. If this timescale cannot be met the Headteacher should inform the parent that this will take longer, explain the reasons for this and give a timescale for when the investigation will be completed. This will be documented.

Stage 3 – Chair of Governors

After speaking or meeting with the Headteacher, if the complaint is still not resolved to the parent's satisfaction, the complaint can be referred to the Chair of Governors. This can either be in writing to the chair at the school address, for the attention of the Clerk to the Governing Body, or alternatively the school can ask the Chair of Governors to contact the parent direct. The Headteacher can also refer the complaint to the Chair of Governors.

- If the Headteacher is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should go straight to the Chair of Governors and miss out Stage 2. The Chair of Governors may ask for the complaint to be put in writing (if this has not already happened).
- The Chair of Governors will offer to meet with the parent or other complainant, at a mutually convenient time, if it is felt more information is required, or if the parent asks for a meeting.
- The Chair of Governors has 15 school days to investigate the complaint. If it cannot be resolved within this time, the chair will inform the complainant and explain why it is taking longer. Reasons for this may be that the complaint is complex and needs more time or someone involved is absent through sickness or holidays. The Chair of Governors should, however, give a realistic timescale for when the complaint should be resolved. The Chair should inform the complainant of when it is expected that the investigation should be completed.

Stage 4 – Trust Complaints Committee

If the parent/carer is not satisfied with the result from Stage 3, the parent/carer must write to the Clerk to Bullers Wood Multi-Academy Trust Board of their dissatisfaction within fifteen working days of the completion of Stage 3. A panel consisting of two Trustees, who have no detailed prior knowledge of the complaint or any connection with the parent/carer and one person independent of the management and running of the school, will be invited to meet to consider the complaint and make a final decision about it on behalf of the Trust Board. In deciding the make-up of the panel, trustees should be sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation. The meeting will normally take place within fifteen working days of the request and the panel will select its own Chair.

The parent/carer will have the opportunity to submit written evidence about the complaint prior to the meeting of the panel and also to attend, accompanied by a friend/partner if necessary, to put forward their case. The relevant Headteacher will be given the same opportunities.

The aim of the hearing, which will be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the academy and the complainant. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as informal as possible.

The panel will write to the parent/carer with its conclusion within ten working days of the meeting. The decision of the panel is final.

Stage 5

If the parent/carer is not satisfied with the way the panel has dealt with the matter they may wish to put their complaint to The Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/321851/Complain_about_an_academy.pdf

Unreasonably Persistent Complainants and Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour

There are rare circumstances where schools will deviate from the Complaints Procedure outlined.

These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- where the complainant's behaviour towards staff, governors or trustees is unacceptable, for example, is abusive, offensive or threatening
- where, because of the frequency of their contact with the relevant school/Trust the complainant is hindering the consideration of their or other people's complaints and/or the proper running of the relevant school/Trust
- where the complainant's complaint is vexatious and/ or has patently insufficient grounds
- where the complainant's complaint is the same, similar to or based on the same facts of a complaint which has already been considered by the school/Trust

In these circumstances the relevant school or Trust may:

- inform the complainant that their behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonably persistent and ask them to change it
- restrict the complainant's access to the relevant school/Trust e.g. requesting contact in a particular form (e.g. by letter only), requiring contact to take place with a named person only, restricting telephone calls to specified days and times banning the complainant from the relevant school's premises
- conduct the Review Panel on the papers only i.e. not hold a hearing
- refuse to consider the complaint and refer the complainant directly to Stage 5

In all cases the complainant will be written to explaining why the school/Trust believes his/her behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonably persistent, what action we are taking and the duration of that action.

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, governors and trustees, other options will be considered such as reporting the matter to the Police or taking legal action. In such cases, this action will be taken without giving the complainant prior warning.

What is not covered by this Complaints Policy

- Pupil admissions – contact the admissions team at the local authority.
- Pupil exclusions – appeals to be heard by a Governors' Panel.
- SEND appeals – contact the SEND team at the local authority.
- Employee grievances/disciplinary/dismissal – refer to the Staff Disciplinary and Grievance Policies.

References

Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/489056/Best_Practice_Advice_for_School_Complaints_2016.pdf

Complaint Form

Your name	
Student name	
Your relationship to pupil	
Address	
Day time telephone number	
Evening telephone number	
Please give details of the complaint	
<p>Have you taken any action to resolve this complaint? Yes/No If you have please give details, including the name of the person you spoke with and what response you received.</p>	
<p>Signed</p>	
<p>Date</p>	