COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

Approving Body	Trust
Date of Last Review	November 2026
Statutory (Y/N)	Y
Responsible Officer	BMAT CEO for and on behalf of the Trust

I. Introduction – Purpose and Scope:

1. This policy complies with the requirements of Schedule 1, Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

2. This policy does **not** apply to:

   a. Staff grievances;
   b. Internal disciplinary matters relating to staff, students or the curriculum;
   c. Admissions appeals;
   d. Staff dismissal appeals; and
   e. Concerns expressed by members of the public (i.e. persons who are not parents of BMAT students) about BMAT and its students.

3. This policy aims to ensure:

   a. That parents, guardians, carers and members of the public are able to voice their complaints through appropriate channels; and
   b. That complaints are dealt with fairly, consistently and with a view to swift, amicable resolution; and
   c. That, whenever possible, complaints are resolved directly and informally as a result of the everyday management of BMAT and its constituent schools.

4. This policy is not intended to replace everyday discussions of problems and concerns. It sets out the further steps to take if a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcomes of such discussions.

5. School Principals have responsibility for the oversight of this policy and procedure. However, they may nominate members of the Senior Leadership Team ['SLT'] to investigate individual complaints.

6. BMAT reserves the right not to consider complaints that:

   a. Are from non-parents i.e. persons who are not parents/carers/guardians of BMAT students (see Paragraph 11).
   b. Are malicious i.e. instituted without sufficient grounds and serving only to cause annoyance;
   c. Use obscenities, racist or homophobic language;
   d. Contain personally offensive remarks about members of BMAT staff;
   e. Are repeatedly submitted with only minor differences after the complaint has been fully addressed (guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) states that schools should not respond to persistent and/or serial complaints which have already exhausted the internal complaints procedure).
   f. Complaints about the exam board awarded grades for the current Summer Public Exam season are outside the scope of this Policy and will be considered under the separate Exams Appeal Process ("SEAP") only. This is save for where matters relate to the school but lie outside of the SEAP's remit and at the express discretion of a Beacon school e.g. 1. Any decision to withdraw an entry, or not to make an entry in the first place, 2. Any failure or delay in offering or following the SEAP, Any continuing concerns following completion of the Trust's complaints process may subsequently be raised through the awarding organisation's complaints process.

7. Confidentiality:

   a. If a complaint is against a member of BMAT staff, then s/he has the right to be informed and make representations about it.
   b. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will remain confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. The consent of existing parties to a complaint will be obtained before other parties are added.
      Other parties will only be added when necessary.
   c. Complainants will be updated on the handling of their complaint. However, if a complaint results in disciplinary action by BMAT against a member of staff, then this would be a confidential matter between BMAT and that member of staff.

8. Unacceptable Behaviour from complainants: Complaints which are designed to intimidate, threaten, harass or upset members of staff will be dealt with accordingly. BMAT may consider:

   a. Writing to the complainant, requiring a written guarantee of no repetition of the behaviour concerned and setting out conditions for further contact with BMAT employees;
   b. Temporarily banning the complainant from BMAT sites;
   c. Reporting the complainant to the police.

9. Right of Accompaniment: During the formal stages of a complaint, all parties may be accompanied in meetings by a trade union representative, a work colleague, a friend or a care-worker [a 'Companion'].

10. Time Limits: This Policy sets realistic time limits for each stage of a complaint. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits may be set. Complainants will be informed of the new deadline and reasons for the delay.

11. SEN Complaints: Complaints from parents of children with SEN, about the support provided to their children by BMAT and/or its constituent schools, are within the scope of this Policy. However, in line with the SEND Code of Practice, complaints that are specifically about Education Health and Care (EHC) plans or procedures should be referred to the Local Authority.

12. Complaints from non-parents:
   a. Academies must have a complaints procedure that ensures that complaints from parents of students or prospective students are processed in accordance with Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
   b. Academies may choose to handle complaints from persons who are not parents of students differently, and the DFE is unable to insist that academies follow the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 when complaints are received from non-parents.
   c. When a complaint is received from a non-parent, BMAT and/or the constituent BMAT school will use its discretion to decide if the complaint warrants investigation or further action. If a member of staff receives or learns of a complaint from a nonparent, and is unsure whether further action is required,

then s/he should consult with his or her performance manager and/or a member of SLT or the BMAT Trust Executive, if necessary.

d. The education and welfare of BMAT students consumes most, if not all, of the working time of BMAT staff, and takes priority over all else. As a result, BMAT may not have sufficient resource to respond to or act upon complaints received from nonparents.

e. Irrespective of this, many complaints from non-parents are inherently undeserving of further action or investigation, because they concern matters that BMAT is not responsible for, and/or because they appear to be baseless and/or because they appear to be vexatious. This may include complaints from members of the public who have 'something against' BMAT, a BMAT school or a BMAT member of staff. This may also include complaints concerning the alleged behaviour of BMAT students outside of school hours, off school business and off BMAT premises (this is a matter for parents and, potentially, the police).

f. If BMAT uses its discretion to investigate a complaint received from a non-parent, the statutory regulations which set out the requirement for parents dissatisfied with the outcome of an investigation into their complaint to be able to progress to a panel hearing on request, do not apply.

13. Recording and Monitoring: When a member of staff receives a complaint, s/he will record what action was taken (including notes and/or copies of any meetings or correspondence in relation to the complaint) and the final outcome, even if the complaint was not upheld. The Governing Body will monitor complaints using records kept by BMAT. Wherever possible, information shared with the Governing Body will not name individuals. The Governing Body will review the outcomes of the monitoring exercise on a regular basis to ensure that, where necessary, changes are made.

14. Use of Artificial Intelligence in Complaints:
BMAT recognises that complainants may use AI tools to help draft or structure their complaints. While we accept complaints prepared with AI assistance, we strongly encourage complainants to:

a. Review and personalise any AI-generated content to ensure it accurately reflects their specific concerns, circumstances and desired outcomes;
b. Include relevant details, dates, names and evidence that only they can provide;
c. Ensure the complaint genuinely represents their own views and experience rather than generic or hypothetical scenarios;
d. Be prepared to clarify or expand upon their complaint in their own words during any meetings or correspondence.

BMAT staff will focus on the substance of complaints rather than how they were drafted. However, complaints that appear entirely generic, lack specific details, or do not reflect the complainant's genuine concerns may require additional clarification before investigation can proceed. If BMAT has concerns about whether a complaint represents the complainant's authentic experience, we may request a meeting or additional written clarification before proceeding with the formal investigation process.

II. Stage One - Informal:

15. To enable matters to be resolved swiftly and effectively, parents should raise their concerns as soon as reasonably practicable after the event(s) concerned.

16. Where appropriate, concerns can and should be resolved informally, by way of everyday discussions with BMAT staff e.g. by communicating or meeting with class teachers, form tutors and heads of year. At this stage, there is no need for complaints to be put in writing.

17. When a member of staff receives an informal complaint, s/he should:

    a. Strive to resolve it swiftly, informally and amicably, wherever possible; and
    b. Communicate directly with the complainant, seeking to establish the nature of the complaint and what the complainant seeks as a remedy; and
    c. Consult with his/her performance manager, with the complainant's consent, if resolution is proving difficult; and
    d. Keep a written note of any steps taken to resolve the complaint; and
    e. Ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

18. If resolution proves difficult, or if a complaint is too serious to be dealt with informally, then the complainant or the relevant member of staff (with the complainant's consent) should arrange to meet with a member of SLT.

III. Stage Two – Formal Statement of Complaint

19. Complainants should only engage Stage Two if they are dissatisfied with an attempt at Informal resolution or if no response has been received within ten school days of raising the complaint informally.
20. Within five school days of receiving an informal response or of the Stage One time limit, complainants must complete the Complaint Form (Appendix A) and submit it to the Governance Professional to BMAT (clerk@beaconacademytrust.co.uk; Beacon Academy Trust, Woodford Bridge Road, Ilford, IG4 5LP). (reasonable adjustments will be made for complainants with a disability who are unable to complete a written form)
21. The Governance Professional to BMAT will forward the Complaint to the appropriate BMAT School Principal.
    S/he will investigate the complaint or appoint an appropriate member of SLT to do so.
22. If the complaint is about a BMAT School Principal, then the Complaint will be forwarded to the Chair of Governors. S/he will investigate the complaint or appoint an appropriate governor to do so.
23. The outcome will be communicated within 20 school days of the Complaint Form being received. This may be in writing or at a meeting, with written confirmation of the outcome.
24. If the Investigator is a member of SLT, then s/he will report their findings to the School Principal before they are communicated to the complainant. If the Investigator is a governor, then s/he will report their findings to the Chair of Governors before they are communicated to the complainant.
25. Complainants must be informed of their right to have the matter referred to the Governors' Complaints Panel if they wish to appeal the outcome of Stage Two.
26. The outcome will be communicated to the subject of the complaint, in person and/or in writing. Any disciplinary action is a confidential matter for BMAT.

IV. Stage Three – Governors' Complaints Panel

27. Complainants should only engage Stage Three if they are dissatisfied with the final outcome of Stage Two or if no response has been received within the time limits at Stage Two.

28. The purpose of Stage Three is not to reinvestigate an original complaint: it is to consider whether it was dealt with appropriately at Stage Two.

29. Complainants must complete the Appeal Request Form (Appendix B) and submit it to the BMAT Governance Professional, within five school days of receiving the final outcome of Stage Two (clerk@beaconacademytrust.co.uk; Beacon Academy Trust, Woodford Bridge Road, Ilford, IG4 5LP).

30. The Appeal Request Form will be referred to the Chair of Governors or another nominated Governor.

31. S/he will reconsider the original complaint and the response to it. This may involve individual or collective meetings with the parties involved and collecting further evidence.

32. No later than 10 school days after receiving the Appeal Request, a written statement of findings must be submitted to the complainant.

33. Complainants must be informed of their right to request and attend a meeting of the Governors' Complaints Panel if s/he is not satisfied with the outcome of the Governor's Investigation. Requests must be made within 5 school days of receiving the statement of findings.

34. If a hearing is requested, then the BMAT Governance Professional must write to the complainant, the relevant School Principal and the Chair of Governors with details of the hearing and requesting copies of any documents to be considered and the names of any witnesses that either party may wish to attend. The complainant will be informed of the right to be accompanied.

35. The Hearing should be on reasonable notice and as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of the Appeal Request Form, but certainly within 20 school days.

36. The Panel will consist of at least three people who were not involved in the original investigation. One member of the Panel will be independent of the day to day running and management of the relevant school/academy. For Multi Academy Trusts (MAT), a Governor from another school/academy within the MAT, who has no prior knowledge of the complaint, may serve as the independent panel member.

37. The Panel is not permitted to reinvestigate the complaint and the Appeal Hearing is not an alternative to a disciplinary hearing.

38. The procedure at the Hearing (Appendix C – Checklist for Appeal Panel Hearings) will be appropriate to the circumstances and is at the discretion of the Chair of the Panel.

39. If necessary, the Panel will withdraw to consider whether or not to uphold the complaint, in full or in part.

40. As soon as reasonably practicable and within 10 school days of the Appeal Hearing, any findings and recommendations will be provided in writing to the complainant and, where relevant, the subject(s) of the Complaint.

41. The decision of the Panel is binding and concludes BMAT's Complaints Procedure.

42. The findings and recommendations of the panel will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Executive Principal/Principal/Headteacher.

43. If a complainant (except for complainants who are non-parents of BMAT students) remains dissatisfied, then s/he should contact the DfE. The DfE cannot overturn decisions or reinvestigate complaints; their role is to ensure that the complaints procedure has been followed correctly. The DfE will not investigate complaints that have been reported to the police.

COMPLAINTS POLICY
APPENDIX A FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM

Contact Details	
Name	
Address	
Telephone Number	
Email Address	
Name of Student (if applicable)	
Relationship to Student (if applicable)	
Complaint Information	
Today's Date	
Complaint Details State the details of your complaint, providing all relevant details (dates, times, locations, any step(s) taken to resolve your complaint and the names and contact details of any people involved e.g. witnesses. Attach additional sheets if required.	

Complaint Information	
Date of raising the complaint informally	
Member(s) of staff responsible for handling the complaint informally	
What steps were taken to resolve the complaint informally, if any?	
On what date were those steps taken?	
Outcome Requested – Specify what outcome you would like to see your complaint dealt with and why you believe this will resolve the issue(s) described above. Use additional sheets if required.	
Declaration	I confirm that the above statements are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. Signature: Date:

COMPLAINTS POLICY
APPENDIX B COMPLAINTS APPEAL FORM

Contact Details	
Complainant's Name	
Address	
Telephone Number	
Email Address	
Name of Student (if applicable)	
Relationship to Student (if applicable)	
Appeal Information	
Date	
Date of raising a formal complaint via Stage Two	
Who was responsible for investigating your formal complaint?	
Did you receive a final outcome from the Investigator within 20 school days of submitting your formal complaint?	Yes ☐ No ☐ If not, have you been informed of the reasons for the delay? Yes ☐ No ☐
Summary of Appeal – What aspects of the decision or decision making process do you disagree with and wish to appeal? Provide as much detail as possible. Attach additional sheets if required.	

Appeal Information	
Outcome Requested – if your appeal is successful, what steps would you like to be taken and why would be appropriate steps to take?	
Declaration	I hereby confirm that the above statements are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. Signature: Date:

COMPLAINTS POLICY

APPENDIX C APPEAL PLANNING HEARING

1. Checklist for a hearing with the complainant in attendance:

    a. The hearing is as informal as possible;

    b. Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they submit their evidence;

    c. After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint followed by their witnesses, if any;

    d. The School Principal may question the complainant and any witnesses, after they have spoken;

    e. The attending School Principal is then invited to explain the School/BMAT's view of the complaint and be followed by any witnesses in support;

    f. The complainant may question the School Principal and any witnesses, after they have spoken;

    g. The panel may ask questions at any point;

    h. The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint;

    i. The School Principal is then invited to sum up BMAT's position and its response to the complaint;

    j. Both parties leave together while the panel reaches a decision;

    k. The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set timescale;

2. Checklist for a hearing with written evidence only:

    a. The Chair will review the complaint;

    b. Evidence provided on behalf of the complainant will be considered;

    c. BMAT's actions and response to the complaint will be reviewed;

    d. A conclusion and course of action will be agreed;

    e. Both parties will be advised of the outcome in writing, within 10 school days of the hearing.

COMPLAINTS POLICY

APPENDIX D FLOW CHART

