A bee and honeycombs in a circle

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**COMPLAINTS POLICY**

THE BEEHIVE SCHOOL and BEE-LEAF PROJECT

Implemented on; 07/03/3024, 11/02/2025

To be reviewed on: 11/02/2026

**1. PURPOSE & AIMS**

* 1. The purpose of this complaints policy is to set out the steps and expectations that need to be followed should any parent, carer, or any other person be unhappy or dissatisfied with any part of the service provided by any part of the company.

1.2 In specific relation to The Beehive School and line with the requirements of section 29 of the Education Act 2002, The Beehive School;

* has a complaints procedure that is easily accessible, simple to use and easy to understand.
* encourages resolution of concerns by informal means wherever possible.
* addresses all points at issue and provides an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary.
* resolves issues swiftly to established timescales, impartially and in a spirit of co-operation.
* provides a fair investigation by an independent person where necessary.
* respects, as appropriate, confidentiality.
* ensures that the board of trustees regularly monitors complaints received by the school.
* acts in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018

**2. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CONCERN AND A COMPLAINT**

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

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

2.3 The Beehive School is of the view that it is in everyone’s interest for any complaints or concerns to be resolved at the earliest stage. Many issues can be resolved informally without the need to use the formal complaints procedure. We take all complaints very seriously and endeavour to resolve the matter as quickly as possible

2.4 If there is reason that prevents you from speaking with particular members of staff regarding your complaint, the complaint may be discussed with a member of the Senior Leadership Team of the Head of School. The Head of school may ask a different member of staff to speak with you on their behalf about your complaint.

2.5 If any matters cannot be resolved informally, The Beehive School will follow this complaints procedure.

**3. WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT**

3.1 Anyone can make a complaint, including members of the public, regarding any provision of facilities that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

4. **HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN OR MAKE A COMPLAINT**

4.1 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 on a complainant, providing they have appropriate consent to do so.

4.2 Concerns should be raised with the class teacher or Head of School for The Beehive. For complaints concerning the school staff (except the Head of School) these should be made in the first instance to the Head of School.

4.3 Concerns about the Chair of Governors should be directed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Concerns about any individual governor should be raised with the Chair of Governors via the school office. Please mark this as Private and Confidential.

4.4 If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

4.5 Complainants related to The Bee-Hive school should not be directed to individual Governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may prevent them from considering complaints at stage 3 or 4 of the procedure.

*4.6* Some complaints fall outside the school’s complaints procedure, for example, staff grievances or staff conduct and/or competency. In these cases, if such an issue is brought to the Headteacher or chair of Governor’s attention, the school will follow its own internal personnel processes. The complainant will be informed that an issue is to be considered as part of the school’s personnel processes but will not be informed of the outcome of any such considerations.

4.7 In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting

complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

4.8We will not normally investigate anonymous concerns or complaints. However, the Head of School or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

4.9 You must raise the complaint 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 consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

4.10 We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

**5. TIMESCALES**

5.1 The Beehive School expects that complaints will be made as soon as possible after an incident arises and no later than three months afterwards. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident. We will consider complaints raised outside this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

5.2 If at any point we cannot meet the timescales 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. RESOLVING CONCERNS**

6.1 The person receiving the concern (SLT, class teacher, Head of School, Clerk to the Governing Body, or Chair of Governors) should firstly consider whether the concern can be addressed informally, or if it would require further investigation to address the issue raised. In this case, the concerned party should be asked to make formal complaint instead, preferably using the complaint form (Appendix 1).

6.2 Informal concerns can usually be resolved with reassurance, answering a query, or an informal discussion. If the person receiving the concern believes that it is necessary to involve any other person in resolving the concern, they should carefully consider whether the concern is a complaint that requires an investigation.

6.3 In the event that any other person needs to become involved to resolve the concern, the person who has raised the concern must be informed before details of their concern are shared.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-and-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

## 7. RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

7.1 At each stage in the procedure, The Beehive School 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 company policies in light of the complaint
* an apology

## 8. WITHDRAWAL OF A COMPLAINT

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

**9. COMPLAINTS PROCESS**

**Stage 1**

9.1 Formal complaints must be made to relevant person as specified in the section of this policy. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the company Complaint Form), or by telephone.

9.2 The complaint handler will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days. Within this response, the complaint handler will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The complaint handler can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this. Note: If the complaint is being dealt with by the Head of School, they may delegate the investigation to another member of the school’s senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

9.3 During the investigation, investigator will:

* if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
* keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

9.4 At the conclusion of their investigation, the complaint handler will provide a formal written response within 25 working days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the complaint handler is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

9.5 The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions The Beehive School will take to resolve the complaint. The complaint handler will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

9.6 If the complaint is about the Head of School, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1. Complaints about the Head of School or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office. If the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair, the entire governing body or the majority of the governing body, Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

**Stage 2**

9.7 If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – a meeting with members of the governing body’s complaints committee or the Senior Leadership Team, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors/members available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

9.8 A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Beehive School Clerk, via the school office, within 10 working days of receipt of the Stage 1 response. The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 25 working days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

9.9 If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant’s absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

9.10 The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors and/or members of the Bee-Leaf Project Senior Leadership Team (if required) with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from The Beehive available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA’s Governor Services team, to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

9.11 The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant’s needs. If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

*Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.*

9.12 At least 15 working days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

* confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
* request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 7 working days before the meeting.

9.13 Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 working days before the date of the meeting.

9.14 The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded. The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

9.15 The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant’s own disability or special needs require it.

9.16 Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

9.17 The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

* uphold the complaint in whole or in part
* dismiss the complaint in whole or in part. If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:
* decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
* where appropriate, recommend changes to the school’s systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

9.18 The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and The Beehive School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 working days. The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the school.

9.19 If the complaint is:

* jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
* the entire governing body or
* the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors. The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Bee-Leaf Project will take to resolve the complaint. The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

**10. Next Steps**

10.1 If the complainant believes the company did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact

the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2 in respect of complaints related to The Beehive School.

10.2 The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by The Beehive. They will consider whether the school has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint. The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on 0370 000 2288 or by writing to: Department for Education Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD

**11. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Complainant**

**11.1** 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

**Investigator**

11.2 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 for the headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems

The Head of School, SLT member or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

**Complaints Co-ordinator** *(this could be the headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)*

**11.3** The complaints co-ordinator should:

* Ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
* Liaise with staff members, headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
* Be aware of issues regarding sharing third party information
* Keep records.

**Clerk to the Governing Body**

11.4 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 under 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 1 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.

## Chair of Governors

## 11.5 The 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 16 proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure

## The meeting is minuted

## They liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

## Member of the Board of Governors

## 11.6 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 1

### COMPLAINT FORM

Complaint Form Please complete and return to (either headteacher / Clerk / complaints co-ordinator / designated governor – school to delete as appropriate) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

|  |
| --- |
| Your Name: |
| Pupils Name (If relevant): |
| Your relationship to Pupil (if relevant): |
| Address:  Telephone Number: |

|  |
| --- |
| **Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it** (please continue on a separate sheet of necessary) |
| **What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?** |
| **Are you attaching any evidence / paperwork? If yes, please give details;** |
| Signature:  Date: |
| Official Use |
| Date acknowledgement sent: |
| By Who: |
| Complaint referred to: |
| Date: |

**APPENDIX 2**

**SCOPE OF THIS COMPLAINTS PROCEEDURE**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Complaints outside the scope** | **Who to contact** |
| * Admissions to schools * Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) * School re-organisation proposals | Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with East Sussex County Council. |
| * Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation | Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.  If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).  **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): 01323 747373 /** **07825 782793** |
| * Exclusion of children from school | Further information about raising concerns about exclusions is available in the School’s Exclusion policy.  Complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school’s complaints procedure. |
| * Whistleblowing | We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. |
| * Staff grievances | These matters will be addressed under Trust’s grievance policy. |
| * Staff Conduct and/or Competency Complaints | Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school’s internal personnel procedures, if appropriate.  Complainants will not be informed of any outcomes of the complaint or action taken in relation to a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed. |
| * Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities. | Schools should direct complainants to follow the external provider’s own complaints procedure. |
| * Complaints about the curriculum | Complaints about the curriculum at SABDEN school will be dealt with by the Headteacher in the first instance. If the complainant is not satisfied they should refer their complaint to the Board of Governors |
| * Complaints about collective worship | Complaints about the curriculum at SABDEN school will be dealt with by the Headteacher in the first instance. If the complainant is not satisfied they should refer their complaint to the Board of Governors. |
| * Withdrawal from the curriculum | Parents and carers can withdraw their child from any aspect of Religious Education (RE). They do not have to explain why.  If parents or carers are not satisfied with the handling of a request to withdraw their child from RE, schools should advise them to follow their complaints procedure.  The right of withdrawal does not apply to other areas of the curriculum where religious matters may be spontaneously raised by pupils or arise in other subjects such as history or citizenship.  Should parents wish to withdraw their child from sex and relationship education they should refer to the schools PHSE policy. |