



The Beeches Independent School

Complaints Procedures Policy

Signed by:

Headteacher

Date: 29.09.2025

COO

Date: 29.09.2025

Contents

Statement of intent

1. [Legal framework](#)
2. [Definitions](#)
3. [Roles and responsibilities](#)
4. [Making a complaint](#)
5. [Complaints procedure](#)
6. [Interviewing witnesses](#)
7. [Recording a complaint](#)
8. [Complaints not covered by this procedure](#)
9. [Exceptional circumstances](#)
10. [Managing unreasonable requests](#)
11. [Complaints campaigns](#)
12. [Barring from the premises](#)
13. [Standard of fluency complaints](#)
14. [Role of the school complaints unit \(SCU\)](#)
15. [Transferring data](#)
16. [Availability](#)
17. [Monitoring and review](#)

Appendices

- A. [Complaints Procedure Form](#)
- B. [Example Letter to Complaints for a Stage Three Complaint](#)
- C. [Example Letter for Complaints Against the Headteacher](#)

Statement of intent

The Beeches Independent Special School aims to resolve all complaints at the earliest possible stage, and where possible, informally, and is dedicated to continuing to provide the highest quality of education possible throughout the procedure.

This policy has been created to deal with any complaint against a member of staff or the school as a whole, relating to any aspects of the school or the provision of facilities or services. It is designed to ensure that the school's complaints procedure is straightforward, impartial, non-adversarial, allows a full and fair investigation, respects confidentiality and delivers an effective response and appropriate redress.

Any person, including a member of the public, is able to make a complaint about the provision of facilities or services that the school provides. This policy outlines the procedure that the complainant and school must follow. Once a complaint has been made, it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

The headteacher will be the first point of contact when following the complaints procedure.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 2002
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005
- Immigration Act 2016
- Equality Act 2010
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

This policy has also due regard to guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2021) 'Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2020'
- HM Government (2016) 'Code of Practice on the English language requirement for public sector workers'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Records Management Policy
- Data protection policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Positive behaviour Policy
- Exclusion Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

2. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, a **"complaint"** can be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction' towards the actions taken or a perceived lack of action taken.

A **"concern"** can be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt' where reassurance is required. For the purpose of this policy, concerns will be classed and addressed as complaints.

Complaints can be resolved formally, through this procedure, or informally dependent on the complainant's choice. Any complaint or concern will be taken seriously, whether formally or informally, and the appropriate procedures will be implemented.

A **"grievance"** is an issue raised by a member of staff where they feel the school has not implemented a policy or process fairly or properly. Grievances will be dealt with in line with the school's Grievance Policy.

For the purpose of this policy, **"unreasonable complaints"** include:

- Vexatious complaints, which:
 - Are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious.
 - Insist upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason.

- Insist upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner.
- Are designed to cause disruption or annoyance.
- Demand for redress which lacks any serious purpose or value.
- Serial or persistent complaints, which:
 - Are duplicated, sent by the same complainant once the initial complaint has been closed.
 - Are new complaints that are submitted additionally, as part of an existing open complaint, by the same complainant.

Serial or persistent complaints will only be marked as 'serial' once the complainant has completed the complaints procedure. It is the complaint that will be marked as 'serial', meaning the complainant can complain about a separate issue if necessary.

For the purpose of this policy, “**duplicate complaints**” are identical complaints received from a complainant’s spouse, partner, grandparent or child. These complaints will not be addressed again, the individual making the second complaint will be informed that the complaint has been dealt with on a local level and if they are dissatisfied with the result, they can appeal to the DfE.

Any new details provided by a complainant’s spouse, partner, grandparent or child, will be investigated and dealt with in line with the complaint’s procedure.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The complainant will:

- Cooperate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint.
- Express the complaint and their concerns in full at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Promptly respond to any requests for information or meetings.
- Ask for assistance as needed.
- Treat any person(s) involved in the complaint with respect.
- Refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

The complaint investigator will:

- Ensure that all parties involved in the complaint are fully updated throughout each stage of the procedure.
- Guarantee that all parties involved in the procedure are aware of any relevant legislation, including the Equality Act 2010, UK GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018 and Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- Keep up-to-date records throughout the procedure – these records will be kept securely on the school’s ICT system and retained in line with the school’s Records Management Policy.
- Liaise with all parties involved to ensure the complaints procedure runs smoothly, including the headteacher, clerk, and proprietor body.

- Provide 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.
- Liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would remedy the situation.
- Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in questioning.
- Keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting.
- Provide a comprehensive report for the headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- Ensure, where the complainant is dissatisfied with the response, they are allowed to escalate it to the next formal stage and are provided the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.
- Be aware of issues with regard to sharing third party information.
- Understand the complainant's need for additional support, including interpretation support, and be aware of any issues concerning this.

The complaints coordinator will:

- Ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure.
- Liaise with staff members, headteacher, proprietor body, clerk and, where appropriate, the LA to ensure the smooth running of the complaint's procedure.
- Be aware of issues regarding sharing third party information and additional support which may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person.
- Maintain accurate records relating to complaints.

The headteacher, or where the complaint is against the headteacher, the advisory board chair and proprietor body is responsible for:

- Providing a sensitive and thorough interviewing process of the complainant to establish what has happened and who is involved.
- Considering all records, evidence and relevant information provided.
- Interviewing all parties that are involved in the complaint, including staff and pupils.
- Analysing all information in a comprehensive and fair manner.
- Liaising with the complainant and complaint investigator to clarify an appropriate resolution to the problem.
- Identifying and recommending solutions and courses of actions to take.
- Being mindful of timescales and ensuring all parties involved are aware of these timescales.
- Responding to the complainant in a clear and understandable manner.

The panel chair will:

- 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.
- Ensure that minutes of the meetings are taken on every occasion.
- Explain the remit of the panel to the complainant.

- Ensure that all issues are addressed and that outcomes are reached based on facts and evidence.
- Help to put at ease and console individuals involved who are not used to speaking at such hearings, particularly any pupils involved.
- Conduct the hearing in an informal manner, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect and courtesy and is not adversarial.
- Ensure that the room's layout and setting is informal and non-adversarial while still setting the appropriate tone.
- Confirm that no member of the panel has previously been involved in the earlier stages of the procedure or has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings.
- Give both the complainant and the school the opportunity to state their case and seek clarity without undue interruption.
- Provide copies of any written material or evidence to everyone in attendance of the meeting, ensuring that everyone has seen the necessary material.
- Organise a short adjournment of the hearing if required.
- Continuously liaise with the panel clerk and complaint investigator to ensure the procedure runs smoothly.
- Help to provide the support necessary where the complainant is a child.

All panel members will be aware that:

- The review panel meeting is independent and impartial.
- No individual with prior involvement in the complaint, or the circumstances surrounding it, is permitted to sit on the panel.
- The aim of the panel is to achieve a reasonable resolution and, ultimately, attain a harmonious reconciliation between the parties involved.
- Reconciliation between the school and complainant is not always achievable, and that it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations to reassure the complainant that their case has been taken seriously.
- The panel can:
 - Dismiss or uphold the complaint, in whole or in part.
 - Decide on appropriate action to be taken.
 - Recommend changes that the school can make to prevent reoccurrence of the problem.
- Complainants may feel nervous or inhibited in a formal setting and, therefore, the proceedings should be as welcoming as possible.

Panel members will also be aware that when a child is present at the hearing, extra care needs to be taken to ensure that the child does not feel intimidated, as well as ensuring the child's view is represented equally. It will be considered 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 will give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child needs to attend. The parent, however, will be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child to attend a part of the meeting that the panel considers is not in the child's best interests.

The proprietor body will:

- 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 UK GDPR.

- Continuously liaise with the complaint investigator.
- Record the proceedings.
- Set the date, time and venue of all hearings, ensuring that this is appropriate, convenient and accessible to all parties involved.
- Collate all written material or evidence involved and send it to the parties involved in timely advance of the hearing.
- Greet all parties as they arrive at the hearing.
- Ensure that the minutes of the panel hearing are circulated.
- Notify the relevant parties of the panel's decision and any other actions to be taken.

4. Making a complaint

The school is aware that any member of the public, including the parents of past and present pupils, can make a complaint about the provision of facilities or services that a school provides.

The school will consider all complaints, providing they are not anonymous, and ensure that the complaints procedure is:

- Easily accessible and publicised on the school's website.
- Simple to understand and put into practice.
- Impartial, non-adversarial and fair to all parties involved.
- Respectful of confidentiality duties.
- Continuously under improvement, using information gathered during the procedure to inform the school's SLT.
- Fairly investigated, by an independent person when necessary.
- Used to address all issues to provide appropriate and effective responses where necessary.

Complaints are expected to be made as soon as possible after an incident arises to amend the issue in an appropriate timescale. The school upholds a three-month time limit in which a complaint can be lodged regarding an incident. Complaints made outside this time limit will not be automatically refused and exceptions will be considered. In the case of any timescales changing, all parties involved will be informed of the changes in a timely manner.

Complaints should be made using the appropriate channels of communication, including the use of the [Complaints Procedure Form](#). All complaints shall be considered, whether they are made in person, by telephone, in writing, electronically via email, or via a third party (such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau), providing they are not anonymous.

A complaint can progress to the next stage of the procedure even if it is not viewed as "justified". All complainants are given the opportunity to fully complete the complaints procedure.

Any complaint made against a member of staff will be initially dealt with by the headteacher, and then by the chair of the advisory board if not resolved.

Any complaint made against the headteacher shall be initially dealt with by the chair of advisory board and then by a panel hearing if necessary.

Any complaint made against the chair of advisory board, or any other member of the advisory board should be made in writing to the proprietor body. Any complaint made against the entire advisory board, or complaints involving the chair of advisory board, should be made in writing to the proprietor body. Proprietor body will then determine the most appropriate course of action, depending on the nature of the complaint. This action may involve sourcing an independent investigator to initially deal with the complaint and then getting the complaint to be heard.

Under some circumstances, it may be necessary to deviate from the complaints procedure. Any deviation will be documented, along with the reasons for this.

Information about a complaint will not be disclosed to a third party without written consent from the complainant.

5. Complaints procedure

Stage 1 – informal – complaint heard by a staff member.

- 1.0 As a matter of staff development, all staff members receive training in handling complaints. A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. In this stage, the investigator, ie the class teacher/head of education/deputy head (but not the subject of the complaint or a senior member), will deal with the complaint. Most parents' concerns can be adequately resolved by discussion with the class teacher/deputy head or with other members of staff. There may be no need for the complaint to be put in writing, which would formalise matters and may lead parents to feel less prepared to articulate concerns, perhaps because of a fear that such action may prejudice the interests of their child. At the end of a meeting or telephone call, the member of staff will ensure that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. A brief note of meetings and telephone calls will be kept, and a copy of any written response added to the record.
- 1.1 The complaint should be resolved within **five** school days. However, if the complainant wishes to take the matter further, they are requested to complete the complaints form and return it to the school within **five** school days.
- 1.2 The head of education is informed, and stage 2 is implemented.

Stage 2 – formal – complaint heard by the head of education or senior staff member.

- 2.0 The complainant puts the complaint in writing.
- 2.1 The initial recipient of the complaint will refer the matter to the investigator e.g., the head of education or to a designated member of the senior management team.
- 2.2 The head of education, or a designated member of the senior management team, will investigate the circumstances of the complaint and may find it appropriate to ask for written statements from staff or pupils and to call for any relevant documentation. If the complaint is against a member of staff, that member of staff has a right to be

given details of the complaint and the opportunity to make a representation about it. The person investigating the incident will take these details into account.

- 2.3 The head of education or designated member of staff will consider the complaint, but it will be the head of education who will decide what action is required and respond to the complainant with the outcome of the investigation, normally within **ten** school days of receipt of the substance of the complaint. The response may be in writing or at a meeting with the complainant followed by written confirmation of the outcome.
- 2.4 Complaints against the head of education will be dealt with by the chair of Governance, the school reserves the right to refer the matter to an external body.
- 2.5 The time frame in which any appeal must be lodged in writing is **five** school days.

Stage 3 – formal – complaints appeal hearing

- 3.0 Complaints appeal panel will be assembled comprising three or five members, none of whom have any previous connection to the complaint, and one of whom will act as chair for the meeting. The meeting will additionally have HR in attendance.
- 3.1 HR will write to the complainant, and appeal panel members giving details of the meeting, requesting copies of any documents to be put before the meeting and the names of any witnesses that either party may wish to attend.
- 3.2 HR will inform the complainant of the right to be accompanied by a friend.
- 3.3 The hearing will be on reasonable notice and be held as soon as practicable after receipt of the referral. The procedure at the hearing will be sensitive and appropriate for the circumstances and is at the discretion of the chair of the appeal panel.
- 3.4 After the hearing, HR will offer copies of the minutes of the meeting to all parties involved in the panel hearing and provide an opportunity for the minutes to be agreed and, if necessary, challenged within **five** school days so that no additional complaints will arise because of the record of the meeting.
- 3.5 The panel can:
 - 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 procedures to ensure that similar problems do not recur.
 - Adjourn for further investigations to take place.
- 3.6 The appeal panel's decision is final.
- 3.7 A copy of the findings and recommendations of the panel will be sent by letter (electronic mail is acceptable) to the complainant.

6. Interviewing witnesses

When interviewing pupils to gather information regarding a complaint, the interview should be conducted in the presence of another member of staff or, in the case of serious complaints, e.g. where the possibility of criminal investigation exists, in the presence of their parents.

The school will ensure that the conduction of interviews does not prejudice a police or LA designated officer's (LADO) investigation.

The school understands the importance of ensuring a friendly and relaxed area which is free from intimidation. All pupils interviewed will be made fully aware of what the interview concerns and their right to have someone with them. Staff are allowed a colleague and/or trade union representative to support them at their interview. The colleague must not be anyone likely to be interviewed themselves, including their line manager.

The interviewer will not express opinions in words or attitude, so as to not influence the interviewee.

The interviewee will sign a copy of the transcription of the interview.

7. Recording a complaint

A written record shall be kept of any complaint made, whether made via phone, in person or in writing, detailing:

- The main issues raised, the findings and any recommendations.
- Whether the complaint was resolved following an informal route, formal route or panel hearing.
- Actions taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld).

Recording devices will be used where necessary to review discussions of complaints at a later date. Where there are communication difficulties or disabilities, recording devices may be used for the purposes of reasonable adjustments. The school will consult with the LA before using recording devices.

Where the school allows complainants to record meetings, the following will be considered:

- How any decision to allow recordings may affect any third parties called to act as witnesses
- The impact and consequences on the individuals involved in the complaint in the event that recordings are lost or leaked.

The school will not accept, as evidence, any recordings that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

Details of any complaint made shall not be shared with the advisory board. The exception to this is when a complaint is made against the whole advisory board and they need to be aware of the allegations made against them, to respond to any independent investigation. Complainants have a right to access copies of these records under the UK GDPR and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The school will hold all records of complaints centrally. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection request to access them.

8. Complaints not covered by this procedure

Complaints regarding the following topics should be directed to the LA:

- Statutory assessments of SEND
- School re-organisation proposals
- Admissions to schools

Complaints about child protection matters will be handled in line with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. Any child protection complaints should be directed to the LADO or the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH).

Complaints concerning admissions will be directed to the appropriate admissions authority.

Complaints regarding exclusions will be dealt with in accordance with procedure outlined in the Exclusion Policy.

The school has an internal whistleblowing procedure for all employees, including contractors and temporary staff outlined in the Whistleblowing Policy. Any whistle-blowers not wishing to raise the issue with their employer will direct their complaint to the DfE.

Volunteers who have concerns about the school or a member of staff should make their complaint in line with this policy. Volunteers may also be able to complain to the LA or DfE, depending on what the complaint is about.

Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures will be dealt with in line with the Grievance Policy. In these cases, complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigations; however, they will be notified that the matter is being addressed.

This complaints procedure is not to be used when addressing any complaints made about services provided by a third party who may use the school premises or facilities. The headteacher will ensure all third-party suppliers have their own complaints procedures in place, and all complaints concerning this should be directed to the service provider.

Complaints about the content of national curriculum should be made to the DfE. Complaints about how the school delivers the curriculum, including RE and RSE, will be dealt with using this complaints procedure.

9. Exceptional circumstances

The DfE expects complainants to have completed the school's complaints procedure before directing a complaint to them. The exceptions to this include when:

- Pupils are at risk of harm.
- Pupils are missing education.
- A complainant is being prevented from having their complaint progress through the school's complaints procedure.
- The DfE has evidence that the school is proposing to act or is acting unlawfully or unreasonably.

If a social services authority decides to investigate a situation, the headteacher or governing board may postpone the complaints procedure.

Where a matter can be resolved through a legal appeal, it will not be considered as a formal complaint. The key areas are- admissions decisions, certain decisions relating to formal assessment of SEND, and decisions to permanently exclude a child.

If a complainant commences legal action against the school in relation to their complaint, the school will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure, until those legal proceedings have concluded.

10. Managing unreasonable requests

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school; however, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeks to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the DfE.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone, in writing or electronically:

- Maliciously.
- Aggressively.
- Using threats, intimidation, or violence.
- Using abusive, offensive, or discriminatory language.
- Knowing it to be false.
- Using falsified information.
- By publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media, e.g., social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or chair of advisory board will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, the school may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after six months.

A decision to stop responding will only be considered in circumstances where the following statements are true:

- Every reasonable step has been taken to address the complainant's concerns.
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options.
- The complainant contacts the school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time.

If the above criteria are met, in making a decision to stop responding the school will also consider if the complainant is often abusive or aggressive in their communication, makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff, and if the school believes their intent is to disrupt or inconvenience the school.

The school will not stop responding to a complainant on the basis that they are difficult to deal with or they ask complex questions.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from the premises.

11. Complaints campaigns

For the purposes of this policy, "**complaints campaigns**" are where the school receives large volumes of complaints that are all based on the same subject.

Where the school becomes the subject of a complaints campaign from complainants who are not connected with the school, a standard, single response will be published on the school's

website. If the school receives a large number of complaints about the same subject from complainants who are connected to the school, e.g., parents/carers, each complainant will receive an individual response.

If complainants remain dissatisfied with the school's response, they will be directed to the DfE.

12. Barring from the premises

School premises are private property and therefore any individual may be barred from entering the premises.

If an individual's behaviour is cause for concern, the headteacher or proprietor body will ask the individual to leave the premises.

The headteacher will notify the parties involved in writing, explaining that their implied licence for access to the premises has been temporarily revoked and why, subject to any representations that the individual may wish to make.

The individual involved will be given the opportunity to formally express their views regarding the decision to bar them. This decision to bar will be reviewed by the proprietor body, taking into account any discussions following the incident. If the decision is made to continue the bar, the individual will be contacted in writing, informing them of how long the bar will be in place, and when the decision will be reviewed.

Anyone wishing to make a complaint regarding a barring order can do so in writing, including email, to the headteacher, chair of advisory board or proprietor body.

Once the school's complaints procedure is completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts.

13. Standard of fluency complaints

As members of a public authority, all staff are subject to the fluency duty imposed by the Immigration Act 2016, which requires staff members to have an appropriate level of fluency in English in order to teach pupils.

The school is free to determine the level of spoken communication necessary in order for staff members to develop effective performance, but it will be matched to the demands of the role in question.

The school will be satisfied that an individual has the necessary level of fluency appropriate for the role they will be undertaking, whether this is an existing or potential new member of staff. If a member of the school community feels that a staff member has insufficient proficiency in spoken English for the performance of their role, they are required to follow the complaints procedure outlined in the [complaints procedure](#) section of this policy.

For the purpose of this policy, a **"legitimate complaint"** is one which is about the standard of spoken English of a member of staff; complaints regarding an individual's accent, dialect, manner or tone of communication are not considered legitimate complaints.

All legitimate complaints regarding the fluency duty will be handled in line with the processes outlined in this policy.

In addition to the processes outlined in this policy, the school will assess the merits of a legitimate complaint against the necessary standard of spoken English fluency required for the role in question. To assess the merits, the school will undertake an objective assessment against clear criteria set out in the role specification or, against the level of fluency descriptors relevant to the role in question. If the complaint is upheld, the school will consider what action is necessary to meet the fluency duty; this may include:

- Specific training
- Specific re-training
- Assessment
- Re-deployment
- Dismissal

Appropriate support will be provided to staff to ensure that they are protected from vexatious complaints and are not subjected to unnecessary fluency testing.

Records of complaints regarding fluency will be kept in accordance with the processes outlined in the [recording a complaint](#) section of this policy.

14. Role of the school complaints unit (SCU)

If a complainant remains dissatisfied once the complaint procedure has been completed, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State.

If a complainant wishes to escalate a complaint of bias, the DfE will require evidence to be submitted with the complaint. The Secretary of State will only intervene when they believe that the proprietor body has acted unlawfully or unreasonably.

The SCU will not overturn a school's decision about a complaint except in exceptional circumstances, such as the school acting unlawfully.

When making a final decision about a complaint, the school reserves the right to seek advice from the SCU on whether they are acting reasonably and lawfully; however, they will not be able to advise on how to resolve the complaint.

15. Transferring data

When a pupil changes school, the pupil's educational record will be transferred to the new school and no copies will be kept.

The school will hold records of complaints separate to pupil records while a complaint is ongoing, so that access to these records can be maintained.

Information that the school retains relating to a complaint will be stored securely and in line with the school's Records Management Policy.

16. Availability

A copy of this policy will be published on the school website in accordance with the School Information (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016.

17. Monitoring and review

The complaints procedure will be reviewed annually, taking into account any legislative changes and the latest guidance issued by the DfE.

Responsibility for reviewing the procedure belongs headteacher and proprietor body. All projected review dates will be adhered to.

Information gathered through reviewing the complaints procedure will be used to continuously improve and develop the process.

The monitoring and reviewing of complaints will be used to help evaluate the school's performance.

Complaints Procedure Form

If you have tried unsuccessfully to resolve your complaint and wish to take the matter further, please complete this form and send it to the headteacher. (If your complaint is against the headteacher, you will need to send the form to the chair of the governing board.)

Name:	Address:
Daytime telephone number:	
Evening telephone number:	
Email:	Postcode:
What is your complaint concerning, and what action would you like the headteacher to take?	
When did you discuss your concern/complaint with the appropriate member of staff?	
What was the result of the discussion?	
Signed:	Date:

Example Letter to Complainant for a Stage Three Complaint

Address line one

Address line two

Town

County

Postcode

Date

RE: Stage three complaint

Dear addressee's name,

Thank you for your letter dated date setting out the reasons why you are not satisfied with the headteacher's response to your complaint about details of the complaint.

I am writing to let you know that I will be arranging for a complaints appeal panel (CAP) to consider your complaint, in accordance with our school's complaints procedure.

As explained in the procedure, the chair of the CAP will advise, in writing, how the CAP intends to consider your complaint.

Yours sincerely,

Proprietor Body representative

Example Letter for Complaints Against the Headteacher

Address line one

Address line two

Town

County

Postcode

Date

RE: Complaint against the headteacher

Dear addressee's name,

I have received your complaint against the headteacher of name of school.

I write to let you know that I have forwarded a copy of your complaint to the headteacher, with a request that they respond to the issues raised in the complaint within 10 school days.

A copy of the headteacher's response will be sent to you as soon as possible.

If you are not satisfied with the headteacher's response, I will arrange for a complaints appeal panel (CAP) to consider your complaint in accordance with stage two of the attached complaints procedure.

As explained in the procedure, the chair of the CAP will advise you, in writing, how the complaint will proceed.

Yours sincerely,

Proprietor Body representative