



THE BISHOP'S STORTFORD HIGH SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Date of last review:	June 2026	Review period:	2 years
Date of next review:	Summer 2028	Owner:	Student Welfare
		Approval:	

Telephone: 01279 868686
Email: office@tbshs.org
Website: www.tbshs.org

TBSHS: A truly all-round education
"Pupils achieve highly at this stunning school." -
Ofsted



The Bishop's Stortford High School
Beaumont Avenue
Bishop's Stortford
Hertfordshire
CM23 4SH
Telephone: 01279 868686
Email: office@tbshs.org
Website: www.tbshs.org

HOW TO COMMENT OR COMPLAIN

We care about what you think

Each day this school makes many decisions and tries hard to do the best for all the children. Your comments - either positive or negative - are helpful for future planning.

You might want to raise an issue about some aspect of the school without making a formal complaint — simply to express a concern or share how you're feeling.

If you are dissatisfied about the way your child is being treated, or any actions or lack of action by us, please feel free to contact us using the details listed above.

Our Aims

- Your complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.
- Your complaint will be looked into thoroughly, fairly and without prejudice, reflecting our equality policy.
- If your complaint is urgent, we will deal with it more quickly.
- We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage.
- You will get an apology if we have made a mistake.
- You will be told what we are going to do to put things right.
- You will be informed of the outcome of an investigation into a **formal complaint** (at the **first** formal stage) **within 10 term time school days (2 weeks)**
- You will get a full and clear written response to a **formal complaint** which progresses to the **third** formal stage, within **28 term time school days (5½ weeks)**

Our Values

At The Bishop's Stortford High School we provide a truly all-round education incorporating

- Commitment
- Aspiration
- Respect
- Integrity
- Community

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

You may find the following useful: [Parent/Carer guide to School Complaints](#)

In the first instance – Informal stage

If you have a concern about anything we do, or if you wish to make a complaint, you can do this by telephone, in person or in writing (by letter or email). We hope that most complaints can be settled quickly and informally, either by putting matters right or by giving you an explanation. If there is something you are not happy about, or you don't understand why we are doing something in a particular way, please come in and discuss it with the class teacher or another appropriate member of staff, such as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) if it is about Special Needs.

We know that it can feel uncomfortable to question or challenge something, but if you don't tell us what is worrying you, we cannot explain what we are doing or try to put it right. If the member of staff you speak to in the first instance is unable to attempt to resolve the matter, you should make an appointment with the Headteacher. You should be able to sort out your worries but sometimes this is not possible. In this case there is a next step.

First - Formal stage

Formal complaints should be sent to office@tbshs.org with – 'Please forward to (name/title)' in the subject line.

Make a request, in writing, to meet with the Headteacher who will investigate your complaint and aim to inform you of the outcome **within 10 term-time school days (2 weeks)**.

If your first contact is with individual Governors, they will advise you to take up your concerns with the appropriate member of staff or Headteacher. A Governor should not be made aware of a potential complaint as they may be required to sit on a Panel in the event of a formal hearing (Stage Two) and should be impartial.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should **write to the Chair of Governors**. If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) you might find it helpful to talk to our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) or your child's named Special Needs Officer at the Local Authority. The SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS – formerly Parent Partnership) may also be able to help you.

Second - Formal Stage

If you are dissatisfied following Stage 1 and wish to take your complaint further, the Governor designated by the Governing Body to deal with complaints receives notice of the complaint, he/she will decide whether it appears appropriate to seek an informal resolution to the issue.

If so, the **Designated Governor** will:

- either telephone and/or meet with the parent/carers to hear his/her side of the story and ascertain what they would like to happen as a result of the complaint;
- talk to the Headteacher to hear the other side of the story;
- discuss with the Headteacher how the issue might be resolved;
- agree with the Headteacher whether it would be helpful for the Governor to act as facilitator/mediator between the Headteacher and the parent;
- seek to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of both the Headteacher and the parent;

- (keep the Chair of Governors informed of the fact that he/she is handling a complaint, without disclosing any details.

If the Designated Governor decides that actions above are not appropriate in the circumstances, or, having tried this approach, the matter is still not resolved, then he/she must write to the parent/carer to let him/her know that the complainant should pursue the issue under the procedure outlined below. The letter should also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint.

Third - Formal Stage

If you remain dissatisfied following Stage 2 and wish to take your complaint further, you will be asked to complete a form or write a letter addressed to the Chair of Governors **within 14 days** of receipt of the letter from the Designated Governor in the previous stage. In the letter you should:

- Make it clear why you are complaining.
- Say who you have spoken to already.
- Explain what you want to happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair of Governors will arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated under the arrangements approved by the Governing Body. This should involve a Panel of Governors at a hearing where the complainant and the respondent are invited to attend. It is not advisable for a Panel to investigate and conclude matters without giving both the Complainant and the Respondent the opportunity to respond, therefore a formal hearing with all in attendance is most preferable. Any Governor who has previously been involved in attempting to resolve the complaint should not be part of the panel. The Chair of Governors should ensure that the Panel is convened in line with the timeframes and guidance set out in this policy, and should assemble the panel and nominate a Panel Chair. The Designated Governor for the complaint may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns ahead of the hearing.

The Clerk to the Governors will make arrangements for the hearing on behalf of the Panel Chair and invite you to provide any written information or evidence you intend to use in the formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter if you wish. The Panel Chair may invite any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. You should be told who this person is before the hearing. If any member of staff is required by the Governing Body to attend the hearing they will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named in a complaint may also choose to attend the hearing even if not required to do so by the Governors. They may be represented. If this happens you will be informed in advance.

When the Panel has fully investigated your complaint, the Panel Chair or Designated Governor in charge of the investigation will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the Governing Body. The Chair of Governors will then write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. Our Governing Body will aim to deal with your complaint **within 28 term time school days (5½ weeks)**.

Notes will be kept of each Formal stage of a complaint. The School will ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept on file in the School's records. These records will be kept separately from the pupil's personal records.

COMPLAINTS TIMESCALES

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 this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

The School will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. In such instances, the Headteacher and/or the Chair of Governors will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation and will ensure that this is completed, if so. The outcome of the investigation cannot be shared with the complainant, as the School will not know who they are and therefore, the School cannot ascertain whether or not the person is entitled to have confidential information regarding the complaint investigation shared with them.

VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS OR SERIAL, PERSISTENT AND UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS

The school will not respond to complaints that are vexatious, repeated or manifestly trivial. It may decline to deal with some complaints where the number and/or type of complaints made by a particular individual or family is unreasonable. If, at any stage of the complaints procedure, governors decide that a complaint is or has become vexatious they will advise the complainant that the school will not correspond on the matter further. Should correspondence continue, it will be read and filed but may receive no acknowledgement.

For the purposes of this procedure a complaint may be viewed as serial and/or persistent if it relates to the same issue that was the subject of a previous complaint (made by the same complainant) which has already been through a formal complaints procedure in which the complainant has been notified of the outcome. In such cases it is likely that the complainant will be informed that the matter is now closed and that the school will provide no further response.

For the purposes of this procedure a complaint may be viewed as unreasonable if it contains threatening, abusive or offensive language and conveys unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason. In such cases the Headteacher/ Chair of Governors/ clerk to the governing board (as appropriate) will consult with relevant parties and may decide that the complaint is not considered under this procedure. The complainant will be notified in writing that this is the case and that the school will provide no further response.

In instances where there is a breakdown of relations between the complainant and the school, a decision may be made to restrict contact. Any restrictions imposed should be appropriate and proportionate. The options that the school is most likely to consider are:

- requesting contact in a particular form (e.g. – letters only);
- requiring contact to take place with a named member of Staff (e.g. – Headteacher);
- restricting telephone calls to specified days and times;
- asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about his/her future contact with the school; and
- informing the complainant that if he/she still does not follow this advice (as stated above) any further correspondence that does not present significant new matters or new information will not necessarily be acknowledged, but should be kept on file.
- if the complainant tries to reopen an issue that has already been examined through the complaints procedure, the chair of the governing body may inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

FURTHER RECOURSE

Most complaints are resolved by this process. Should your complaint not be resolved, your further options are as follows:

- You can complain to the Secretary of State at the Department for Education:

The Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT
Website: www.education.gov.uk
Telephone: 0370 000 2288

In the case of complaints about **Special Educational Needs provision**, you may complain further to the Local Authority. This should be done by writing to the Children's Services Complaints Manager.

It should be noted however that if you wish to pursue this route, you must do so within **20 working days (4 weeks)** of receiving the written outcome of the hearing into your complaint. After **20 working days (4 weeks)**, neither the school nor the Local Authority is under any obligation to investigate or progress your complaint any further.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Advisory Centre for Education Education Advice & Training 72 Durnsford Road London N11 2EJ Web: Where You Stand - ACE Phone: 0300 0115 142	POhWER Hertlands House Primett Road Stevenage SG1 3EE Web: www.pohwer.net Phone: 0300 456 2370
Children's Legal Centre Riverside Office Centre Century House North North Station Road Colchester Essex CO1 1RE Web: www.childrenslegalcentre.com Phone: 0345 345 4345	National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) Egerton House Tower Road Birkenhead Wirral CH41 1FN Web: www.nyas.net Phone: 0345 345 4345
Special Educational Needs & Disability Information Advice Support Service (SENDIASS) Web: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/sendias Email: SENDIASS@hertfordshire.gov.uk Phone: 01992 555847	

APPENDIX 1**MAKING A FORMAL COMPLAINT**

Please complete and return this form to office@tbshs.org by email with “For the attention of The Headteacher / Chair of Governors / Designated Governor for Complaints” in the Subject line. Alternately, please post the form to the School address.

Your name:
Your child's name (if relevant):
Address:
Post Code:
Daytime contact telephone number: Evening contact telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint:

What action have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (ie who did you speak to and what was their response?)

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

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:Date:

OFFICE USE ONLY:

Date received: Received by:

Referred to: Date: