

Bourne Education Trust school complaints policy: The Arnewood School

Introduction

1. **The Arnewood School** endeavours to provide the best education possible for all its pupils in an open and transparent environment. We welcome any feedback that we receive from parents, pupils and third parties, and we accept that not all of this will be positive. Where concerns are raised the school intends for these to be dealt with:
 - Fairly
 - Openly
 - Promptly
 - Without Prejudice.
2. In order to do so, Bourne Education Trust (BET / the Trust) has approved the procedure set out below which explains what you should do if you have any concerns about the school. Members of staff will be familiar with the procedure and will be able to assist you.
3. If you are not a parent of a child currently on roll at the school and have a concern, please raise it with the school by telephone or by email to enquiries@arnewood.hants.sch.uk
In line with the policy below, we will first attempt to resolve your concern informally straight away or through discussion. If your concern remains unresolved, the next stage would be for you to make a formal complaint, which we would ask you to do following this policy. In responding to your complaint, we would also adopt the processes and principles set out in the policy.

Raising concerns informally

4. The majority of concerns can be dealt with without resorting to this procedure. Where you have a concern about educational matters or your child's wellbeing, we encourage you to raise this with your child's class teacher or year group leader via telephone, email or in person. They may be able to address your concerns straight away or arrange a meeting with you to discuss the issue.
5. If you have a concern about disciplinary matters, please raise this with a member of the school leadership team. If your concern is about financial or administration matters, please raise it with the school business manager. Alternatively, if your concern is about a member of staff's conduct, please approach them directly or, where this is thought inappropriate or does not resolve the situation, approach their line manager. The school's contact details can be found in Appendix A.

6. If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, you will be referred to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be.
7. At this informal stage, your issues will be considered carefully and, where any further information is needed, an investigation will be carried out.
8. All concerns will be dealt with confidentially, although the staff member may need to take notes if they feel that the matter may need to be taken further or it may arise again in the future. Any such notes will be kept in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018. However, such notes would be available as evidence if further investigation was required, or if the concern became a formal complaint.
9. If your issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Which policy or procedure do I need?

10. Some complaints will be dealt with through different policies or procedures, particularly those that link to other statutory procedures – these are summarised below. You may ask for a copy of any of the policies listed from the school office, and more information including contact details where relevant can be found at Appendix B.

Exception	Who to contact (see Appendix B for full details)
Admissions	Please refer to the school’s admissions policy or contact the local authority admissions team.
Child protection / safeguarding	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.
Statutory assessment of special educational needs	Please refer to the local authority’s local offer website or contact the local authority where you live.
Exclusion of children from school	Further information on raising concerns about exclusions can be found via www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions .
Whistleblowing	Bourne Education Trust has a whistleblowing policy for all employees, including temporary staff and contractors (Key Information - Bourne Education Trust)

	More information on this, and referrals to the Secretary of State, can be found in Appendix B.
Staff grievance	Please see the Bourne Education Trust's grievance policy (Key Information - Bourne Education Trust)
Staff conduct	Please see the Bourne Education Trust's disciplinary and appraisal and capability policies (Key Information - Bourne Education Trust).

11. For complaints regarding discrimination and harassment based on protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010, the complaints procedure applies but the complainant has a further right of appeal to SENDIST (Special Educational Needs and Disability First Tier Tribunal) for complaints about disability discrimination or to the county court for all other unresolved disputes regarding protected characteristics.

Complaints Procedure

12. When you raise an issue with your child's teacher, head of year or headteacher in the first instance they will work with you, investigate where appropriate, and seek a resolution. Most issues and concerns can be resolved through this informal step. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.
13. You are encouraged to use the stage 1 complaint form which can be found in Appendix C, and to provide as much detail as possible about the matter, including dates and times of events, potential witnesses, copies of any relevant documents and a clear indication of the action(s) you are seeking to resolve your complaint. If you require any help in completing the form, please contact the school office.
14. Please do not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also stop them from being able to consider complaints at stage 2 of the procedure.
15. We would not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or chair of governors, if appropriate, will decide whether to investigate an anonymous complaint.

Timescales

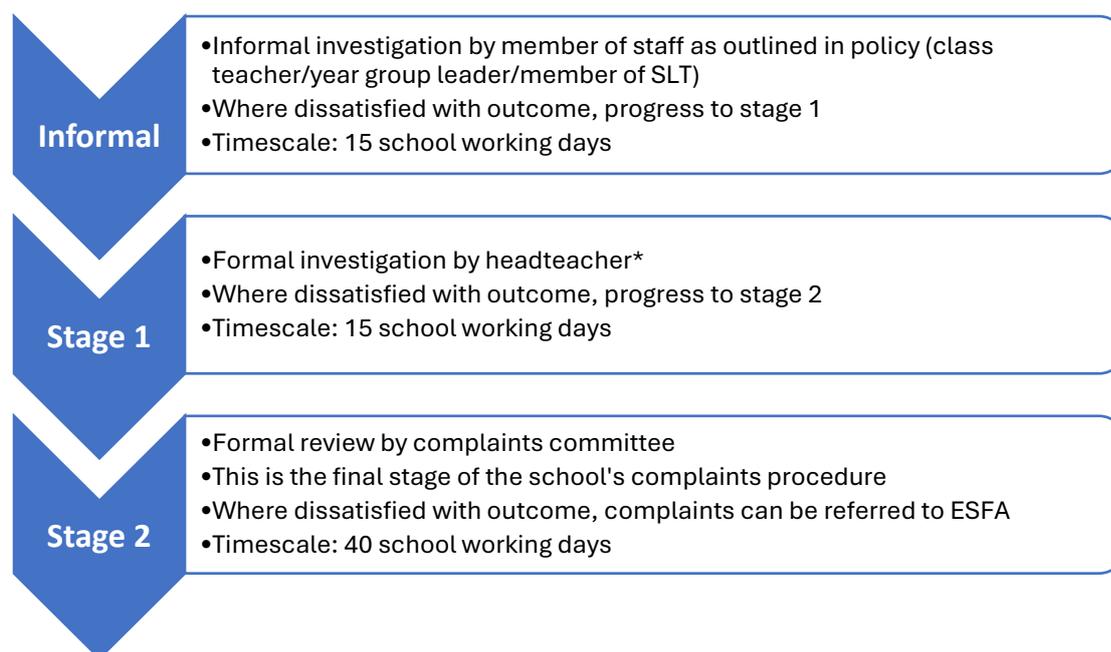
16. You must raise your complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of linked incidents have taken place, within three months of the last of these. We will consider complaints made outside this timeframe if exceptional circumstances apply. Exceptional circumstances means where new evidence has come to light, where the complaint is especially serious or where there is reasonable justification for why you have

been unable to raise the complaint before this time. In such circumstances the headteacher will review the situation and decide whether to enact the complaints procedure.

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

Timeline for formal complaints

18. The diagram below sets out the timeline for complaints. All timescales in this document refer to school working days which excludes weekends, school holidays and INSET days.



**If a stage 1 complaint concerns the headteacher or a governor it will be formally investigated by a designated member of the local governing committee (LGC). If it is believed that the complaint concerns the chair or vice chair of the LGC jointly or the majority of the LGC, it will be referred to the CEO who will determine whether it should be heard at the school or Trust level.*

19. If other organisations are investigating aspects of the complaint, such as the police, local authority safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may mean that we cannot meet these timescales or may result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

20. If you commence legal action against The Arnewood School in relation to your complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

21. We may also not be able to meet these timescales if the information needed to review a complaint is complex, if there are difficulties regarding an individual's availability to deal with the complaint, or because of issues that are outside of the school's control. If it becomes apparent that it is not possible to complete any stage of the complaints procedure within a given timeframe, the individual responsible for handling the complaint

will contact you as soon as possible and come to an agreed timeframe that works for all parties involved.

Resolving Complaints

22. At each stage in the procedure, The Arnewood School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, it will be acknowledged that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, one or more of the following may be offered:
- An explanation
 - An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
 - An assurance that the school 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 school policies in light of the complaint
 - An apology.

Withdrawal of a complaint

23. If you wish to withdraw your complaint, you will be asked to confirm this in writing.

Formal stages of the complaint procedure

Stage 1

24. In most circumstances formal complaints must be made to the headteacher via the school office. This must be in writing (preferably on the stage 1 complaint form in Appendix C) or by telephone. It is likely that you will be asked to complete a complaint form if you have not already done so.
25. The date on which the complaint is received will be recorded, and the complaint will be acknowledged in writing (either by letter or email) within two school working days. The headteacher may appoint a member of the school's leadership team or a colleague working elsewhere in BET to investigate and, in some exceptional cases, an investigator may be appointed from outside the school or BET. Where an investigator is appointed, the headteacher retains responsibility to decide on the school's response to the complaint.
26. It is likely that the headteacher or investigator will ask to meet you face to face to discuss the matter, clarifying the nature of the complaint, what remains unresolved and what outcome you would like to see. At the meeting, your concerns will be discussed, and resolution will be sought.
27. If agreement can be reached at that point on a way forward which is satisfactory to all parties, this will be confirmed in writing following the meeting and the stage 1 complaint

will be closed. If the issues are not resolved by the end of the meeting, the headteacher/investigator will then commence a full investigation.

28. The headteacher (or investigator) will consider all relevant evidence. This may include but is not limited to:

- A statement from the complainant
- Where relevant a meeting with/statement from those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- Any previous correspondence regarding the complaint
- Any supporting documents
- Interviews with/statements from anyone related to the complaint
- Any other applicable evidence.

29. At the conclusion of the investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within 15 school working days of the date of receipt of the complaint. A written record will be kept of any meetings/interviews in relation to the investigation.

30. If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide you with an update and a revised response date.

31. 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 Arnewood School will take to resolve the complaint.

32. The headteacher will provide you with details of how to escalate your complaint if you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 1.

Complaints about the headteacher or the governors

33. If your complaint concerns the headteacher, you should first directly approach the headteacher to attempt to resolve the issue informally. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, or you have good reason to feel it is inappropriate to approach the headteacher in the first instance, you should use the stage 1 formal complaint form found in Appendix C to contact the chair of governors via the school office. Please mark the envelope as Private and Confidential. A stage 1 formal investigation will be undertaken, led by a nominated governor as set out below.

34. If your complaint concerns a governor, you should use the stage 1 formal complaint form found in Appendix C to approach the governance professional to the local governing committee via the school office. Please mark the envelope as Private and Confidential. An informal resolution will be sought, but where this fails, a stage 1 formal investigation will be undertaken led by the chair of governors or a nominated governor.

35. If you believe your complaint concerns the chair of governors, the chair and vice-chair jointly, the entire local governing committee or the majority of the local governing committee the matter will be escalated to the CEO of the Trust who will determine whether it should be heard at the school or Trust level.
36. The chair of governors, the nominated governor or the CEO of the Trust may appoint an investigator from elsewhere within BET or from outside the Trust. Where an investigator is appointed, the chair of governors, nominated governor or the CEO of the Trust retains responsibility to decide on the response to the complaint.
37. If your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, then you may progress to stage 2 of this procedure, using the template stage 2 complaints form found in Appendix D of this policy.

Stage 2

38. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 1 and wish to take the matter further, you can escalate the complaint to stage 2 – a meeting of members of the local governing committee’s complaints committee. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.
39. Your request to escalate to stage 2 must be made to the governance professional using the stage 2 formal complaint form (Appendix D), via the school office, within 10 school working days of you receiving the school’s response to the stage 1 complaint. Requests received outside this timeframe will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.
40. The complaints committee will consist of two governors and an independent member with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. The independent member will be a governor from another school inside or outside BET or another qualified person. They will be suitably skilled and able to demonstrate their independence.
41. Prior to the meeting, the committee will decide amongst themselves who will act as the chair of the complaints committee. If there are fewer than two governors from The Arnewood School available, the governance professional will source any additional governors through another Trust school.
42. The following steps will be taken:
 - i) The governance professional to the complaints committee will write to you within 5 school working days to confirm receipt of the stage 2 formal complaint form and detail further action to be taken. The governance professional will request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee.
 - ii) The complaints committee will meet within 30 school working days of receipt of the request for the stage 2 complaint review. If the first identified date is not

convenient for you, they will offer up to two further dates. If these all fail to be suitable or you cancel the meeting at the last minute for whatever reason, then the committee may opt to conduct the complaint review meeting in private, without either the school or the complainant being represented. Their considerations will be based on the documentary evidence previously provided by both parties to ensure that the matter is resolved as soon as possible in the best interests of all parties. They may ask for a representative from, or appointed by, BET to be present for procedural advice.

- iii) The complaints committee will invite the following parties, where applicable:
- You
 - The person responding to the stage 1 complaint (headteacher, chair of governors, nominated governor, CEO)
 - The investigator if one was appointed
 - Relevant witnesses
 - A representative from, or appointed by, Bourne Education Trust for procedural advice only.
- iv) You may ask to bring someone to the meeting with you to provide support. This can be a friend or relative. It is inadvisable for this person to be a member of the school community for reasons of confidentiality and to avoid conflict of interest. You should let the governance professional know the name and role of this supportive companion prior to the hearing, and the governance professional will seek agreement from the chair of the committee. The supportive companion is not there as a witness, so does not address the complaints committee except with the prior agreement of the chair.
- v) Generally, neither you nor the school would bring legal representatives to the meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate, for example, 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. If you wish to be accompanied by someone who is legally qualified you must notify the governance professional of this at least 5 school working days prior to the meeting. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.
- vi) If the attendance of any pupils is required at the hearing, parental permission will be sought if the pupil is under the age of 18. Extra care will be taken to consider the vulnerability of children where they are present at a complaints hearing.
- vii) All relevant documentation to be considered by the committee will be distributed to both parties 5 school working days in advance of the meeting.
- viii) The complaints committee can make the following decisions:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
 - Uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
- ix) If the complaint is upheld in whole or part, the committee will:
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
 - Recommend changes the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not reoccur.
- x) The chair of committee will provide you and the school with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it in writing within 10 school working days. This letter will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency if you are dissatisfied with the way your complaint has been handled by The Arnewood School. Where relevant, the findings and recommendations will also be sent to the person complained about.

43. The governance professional to the complaints committee will record the proceedings in the form of notes and will circulate these and the outcome of the meeting. The notes are a summary of the discussion at the hearing and the decision of the complaints committee following the hearing but will not include the deliberations of the committee. The notes are the property of the Trust, delegated to the local governing committee.

44. This is the final stage at which the school will consider the complaint. If you remain dissatisfied and wish to take the complaint further, you must refer the matter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

Confidentiality and data protection

45. All complaints will be handled in the strictest confidence by the Trust and Data Protection principles will be applied in line with the Trust's Data Protection Policy.

46. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 or under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them or where the Trust is otherwise required by law to disclose them.

47. Records relating to complaints will be retained in line with guidance from the Information and Records Management Society (www.irms.org.uk). For formal complaints, records will be retained for the current year plus 6 years. If negligence is involved in the complaint, records will be retained for the current year plus 15 years. If child protection or safeguarding issues are involved, records will be retained for the current year plus 40 years.

48. It is expected that complainants will also keep their complaint private and confidential. In particular, complainants are not expected to discuss complaints publicly via social media (such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and WhatsApp). The posting of any defamatory, offensive or derogatory comments on social media sites by parents/carers

will be dealt with under the relevant school's Behaviour towards Staff by Parents, Carers and Visitors policy.

49. Electronic recordings of meetings must not be made by either the Trust or the complainant. A meeting to discuss a complaint may not go ahead if the complainant is insistent on recording the meeting. The Trust will take notes of any meetings to discuss a complaint, which may be shared afterwards, and complainants may do likewise.
50. Due to privacy rights under data protection legislation, information disclosed relating to an outcome may sometimes be limited if it relates to a third-party individual, for example disciplinary action of a member of staff or another pupil.

Complaints that result in staff capability or disciplinary

51. If at any formal stage of the complaint it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are necessary to resolve the issue, the details of this action will remain confidential to the headteacher and/or the individual's line manager. The complainant is entitled to be informed that the matter is being dealt with appropriately, but they are not entitled to participate in the proceedings and will not receive any detail about them or the outcome.

Serial and persistent complaints

52. The Arnewood School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. If, once all stages of the complaints procedure have been followed, a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, they will be informed that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.
53. If they then contact the school again on the same issue, the correspondence may be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the school may choose not to respond.
54. The Arnewood School will take the decision to stop responding when:
 - Every reasonable step has been taken to address the complainant's concerns
 - They have been given a clear statement of The Arnewood School's position and their options
 - They contact The Arnewood School repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time.
55. This decision will be made more easily if:
 - The complainant's letters, emails or telephone calls are abusive or aggressive
 - They make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
 - The Arnewood School believes that the complainant is making contact with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience.
56. 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 Arnewood School causing a significant level of disruption, methods of communication may be specified and the number of contacts limited in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after six months.

57. If an individual persists to the point that may constitute harassment, The Arnewood School will seek legal advice.
58. 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 barring an individual from The Arnewood School.

Barring from the school premises

59. Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. The local governing committee has a responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of pupils and staff and will therefore act to ensure that The Arnewood School remains a safe place.
60. If an individual's behaviour is a cause for concern, the headteacher can ask them to leave school premises. In some cases, individuals can be barred from entering school. They will be given the opportunity to express their views on the decision to bar in writing.
61. The decision to bar will then be reviewed by the chair of governors or a committee of governors, taking into account any representations made by the individual. The decision to bar will either be confirmed or lifted.
62. If the decision is confirmed the individual will be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place and when the decision will be reviewed.
63. Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the headteacher or chair of governors. Once the school's appeal process has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

Next steps

64. If you feel that The Arnewood School did not handle your complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of duties under educational law, you can complain to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) after the complaints procedure has been exhausted. Please note that unreasonable is used in a legal sense and means acting in a way that no reasonable school or authority would act in the same circumstances.
65. The complainant can refer their complaint to the ESFA online at: [Complain about a school: State schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-a-school). Additional information and evidence, once your complaint has been made, can be submitted to the following address: Ministerial and Public Communications Division, Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

66. The ESFA can also be contacted via telephone on 0370 000 2288 or by writing to: Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit, Education and Skills Funding Agency, Cheylesmore House, 5 Quinton Road, Coventry CV1 2WT.

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Next review:	Autumn term 2026

Appendix A

Contact details

School

The Arnewood School
Gore Road
New Milton
Hampshire
BH25 6RS

Tel: 01425 625400

Email: enquiries@arnewood.hants.sch.uk

Chair of governors

Andrew Perryman

The Arnewood School
Gore Road
New Milton
Hampshire
BH25 6RS

Email: a.perryman@arnewood.hants.sch.uk

Governance Professional to the local governing committee

c/o The Arnewood School

Gore Road

New Milton

Hampshire

BH25 6RS

Email: enquiries@arnewood.hants.sch.uk

Chief Executive Officer – Bourne Education Trust

Mr Alex Russell

Contact through the Governance Professional to the local governing committee
or info@bourne.education

Appendix B

Which procedure do I need?

Some complaints will be dealt with through different policies or procedures, particularly those that link to other statutory procedures. The list below contains some of these, with the contact information or policies to refer to. You may ask for a copy of any of the policies listed from the school office.

- **Child protection/safeguarding** - Wherever a complaint indicates that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, the school is under a duty to report this immediately to the local authority. Any action taken will be in accordance with the school's child protection and safeguarding policy which can be found on the school website or from the main office. If at any time a child protection concern becomes apparent, the child protection and safeguarding policy takes precedence over the complaints process, which will be halted until the child protection matter is resolved.

Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.

- Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures apply (www.hampshirescp.org.uk)

If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the county council direct:

- Hampshire Children's Services (0300 555 1384)

- **School admissions** - Please refer to the school's admissions policy or contact:
 - Hampshire County Council Admissions Team,
<https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/admissions/>
- **Statutory assessment of special educational needs**. Please refer to the
 - Hampshire County Council Local Offer website
<https://fish.hants.gov.uk/kb5/hampshire/directory/localoffer.page>

or contact the local authority where you live.

- **Exclusion of children from school** - Further information on raising concerns about exclusions can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.
Complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through this policy.
- **Whistleblowing** - Bourne Education Trust has a whistleblowing policy for all employees, including temporary staff and contractors (Key Information - Bourne Education Trust).



The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.

- **Staff grievance** - Complaints from staff will be dealt with internally following Bourne Education Trust's grievance policy (Key Information - Bourne Education Trust).
- **Staff conduct** - Complaints about staff will be dealt with, if appropriate, internally following Bourne Education Trust's disciplinary and appraisal and capability policies (Key Information - Bourne Education Trust).
- **Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities** - Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.
- **Subject access requests and freedom of information requests** - Please see Bourne Education Trust's data protection, subject access request and freedom of information policies (Key Information - Bourne Education Trust).

For complaints regarding discrimination and harassment based on protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010, the complaints procedure applies but the complainant has a further right of appeal to SENDIST (Special Educational Needs and Disability First Tier Tribunal) for complaints about disability discrimination or to the county court for all other unresolved disputes regarding protected characteristics.

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

Please give details of any paperwork you are attaching.

Signed:

Date:

Official use

Date received:	Signed:
Date acknowledgement sent:	
By whom:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date:	

Appendix D

The Arnewood School Formal Complaint Form (Stage 2)

Please complete and return to the governance professional to the local governing committee via the school office.

Name	
Name of pupil, year group and your relationship to them (where applicable)	
Address	
Telephone (Day)	
Telephone (Mobile)	
Email Address	
Please give details of why you wish to take your complaint further and escalate the complaint to stage 2. Please give:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Reasons why you feel your concerns have not been fully addressed▪ Any evidence that you feel has not been fully considered, and,▪ Which elements of your complaint remain unresolved from stage 1	

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

Please give details of any paperwork you are attaching.

Signed:
Date:

Official use

Date received:	Signed:
Date acknowledgement sent:	
By whom:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date:	

Appendix E

Roles and responsibilities

It is expected that all those involved in a complaint are treated respectfully.

The complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- Co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- Explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

The complaint investigator

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
 - Consideration of records and other relevant information
 - Interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
 - Analysing information
- Effectively liaising with the complainant to clarify what he/she feels would put things right
- Responding to the complainant in plain and clear language.

The investigator should make sure that they:

- Conduct interviews with an open mind and are prepared to persist in the questioning
- Keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent notetaker to do so
- 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 headteacher 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.

The governance professional to the complaints committee

The governance professional is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- Set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the venue and proceedings are accessible (please see page 6 for more information)
- Collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing
- Meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing
- Record the proceedings
- Notify all parties of the committee's decision.

The chair of the complaints committee

The chair of the complaints committee has a key role in ensuring that:

- Both parties are asked (via the governance professional) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- The meeting is conducted in a manner whereby everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- The procedure for the meeting is explained
- The role of the governance professional to the complaints committee and the Bourne Education Trust representative is explained (including that they take no part in the decision-making but are there to record proceedings and provide procedural advice)
- The remit of the committee is explained to the complainant and both they and the school have the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption
- The issues are addressed
- Key findings of fact are made
- The committee is open-minded and acts independently
- Notes of the meeting are taken
- No member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.

Bourne Education Trust representative

The role of the representative from, or appointed by, Bourne Education Trust is to provide impartial advice and guidance to school staff, governors and complainants at all stages of the complaints process.