



Policy and Procedure

Communications Policy

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Standards Committee

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TRUST COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Our Mission

Outstanding Catholic education for all pupils. As a family of schools, we will enable our young people to develop spiritually, morally, intellectually and personally, putting their faith into action, through serving Christ in others, in the church and in the world around them.

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1.0	14 th May 2026	New Policy – published alongside BCWCAT Complaints Policy 2025–2027	Trust Board

Introduction

The Blessed Christopher Wharton Catholic Academy Trust (BCWCAT) is committed to maintaining clear, respectful and effective communication across all of our schools and with everyone in our community. As a Catholic family of schools, guided by Gospel values of justice, compassion and the dignity of every person, we believe that good communication is at the heart of every positive relationship.



This policy sets out the expectations that govern how our schools communicate with parents, carers, governors, staff and other stakeholders. It is not a replacement for the BCWCAT Complaints Policy. Rather, it works alongside it, providing the framework within which day-to-day communication and the early stages of concern resolution take place. Where a matter escalates to a formal complaint, the Complaints Policy takes precedence.

This policy applies to all BCWCAT academies.

This policy should be read alongside the BCWCAT Complaints Policy 2025–2027, the BCWCAT ICT Acceptable Use Policy, and the BCWCAT Parents, Visitors and Carers Code of Conduct.

Contents

1. Purpose and Aims
 2. Legislation and Guidance
 3. Our Commitment to Communication
 4. Types of Communication
 5. Parental Contact with School
 6. Who to Contact and How
 7. The School Contacting Parents and Carers
 8. Email Protocol
 9. Staff Wellbeing and Communication Boundaries
 10. Zero Tolerance of Abusive and Threatening Behaviour
 11. Staged Response to Unacceptable Behaviour
 12. Unreasonable, Persistent or Vexatious Communication
 13. Social Media
 14. Recording of Meetings
 15. Relationship with the Complaints Policy
 16. The Parents' Guide to School Complaints
 17. Streamlining Communication and Staff Workload
 18. Monitoring and Review
- Appendix 1 – Acceptable Use Summary for Parents and Carers
- Appendix 2 – Escalation Pathway for Unacceptable Behaviour
- Appendix 3 – Complaints Stages Quick Reference



1. Purpose and Aims

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- efficient, appropriate and respectful communication between all members of the school community
- clear expectations for parents, carers and stakeholders about how to contact school and what to expect in response
- strong protections for staff wellbeing, including clear boundaries around out-of-hours contact and workload
- a fair and proportionate framework for managing communication that becomes unreasonable, persistent or abusive
- alignment with the BCWCAT Complaints Policy, the Department for Education's Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures, and the joint Parent Guide to School Complaints (2025/26)

The aims of this policy are to support:

- effective partnerships between home and school that are built on mutual trust and respect
- the wellbeing and workload of all staff across the Trust
- parents and carers in raising concerns and accessing information through the right channels, at the right time
- the smooth running of our schools so that staff can focus their time and energy on pupils

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy has regard to the following legislation and guidance:

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- Education Act 1996 (s.547 – nuisance or disturbance on school premises)
- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (s.89 – behaviour policies)
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (duty of care to staff)
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Defamation Act 2013
- Human Rights Act 1998
- UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, current edition)
- DfE Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures (2023)
- DfE Workload and Wellbeing Toolkit for Schools
- Parent Guide to School Complaints (Parentkind / DfE / Ofsted / IET, 2025/26)



3. Our Commitment to Communication

BCWCAT schools are committed to high standards of communication with all stakeholders. We welcome feedback, questions and concerns raised in a respectful and constructive way. We will always listen, and we will explain the reasons for our decisions wherever we are able to do so.

We will:

- respond to all reasonable communications in a timely and professional manner
- communicate proactively to keep families informed about matters that affect their children
- provide clear information about who to contact, and how, for different types of concern
- treat all those who contact us with dignity and respect
- take all concerns seriously, including where we are unable to change our position

We ask all parents, carers and stakeholders to:

- communicate with our staff with courtesy and respect, even when raising a concern
- allow staff sufficient time to respond, recognising that most of their working day is spent directly with pupils
- direct communications to the appropriate person for the issue concerned
- engage constructively with our formal processes when informal resolution has not been possible

Good communication between home and school benefits every child. We ask everyone in our community to approach communication in the spirit of partnership, and in the interest of children's education and wellbeing.

4. Types of Communication

4.1 Internal Communication

Communication between staff within our schools takes place through meetings, email, Microsoft Teams and the staff intranet, staff briefings and bulletins, the school calendar, the Management Information System (MIS), CPOMS (safeguarding system), and Governor Hub (for governors and trustees).

4.2 External Communication

Communication with parents, carers and the wider community takes place through the school's main telephone number and administrative email address, the Arbor parent app, the school website, newsletters and letters, social media (for school news and achievements), formal reporting to parents, and pre-arranged meetings. In secondary schools, the student planner is also used for day-to-day home-school communication.



5. Parental Contact with School

BCWCAT schools welcome contact from parents and carers. We want to work in close partnership with families to support every child's progress, wellbeing and achievement. The guidance below helps ensure that communication is directed to the right person at the right time, so that concerns are resolved as quickly and positively as possible.

5.1 Telephone

The school's main visitor reception number is the first point of contact for telephone enquiries. Visitor reception staff will relay messages to the appropriate person as soon as possible. Staff aim to return calls within three working days. Part-time staff may take slightly longer to respond due to their contracted hours.

- If a matter is urgent, such as a family emergency, child protection concern or safeguarding issue, please inform the receptionist immediately so that a Designated Safeguarding Lead or senior member of staff can speak with you as soon as possible.
- Lessons and other pupil-facing activities will not be interrupted for staff to take telephone calls.

5.2 Email

Parents and carers should use the school's main administrative email address for all communication, which is available on the school website. Staff are not in a position to monitor emails consistently during the school day as they are working directly with pupils, and they are not expected to check or respond to emails during their personal time. For this reason, parents should not email staff members directly, and staff are under no obligation to respond to direct emails. All communication must be directed through the school's admin inbox to ensure it is managed appropriately and responded to in a timely way.

When sending emails to school, please:

- keep your message clear and focused, stating your specific concern and the outcome you are seeking
- use a respectful and constructive tone, even when raising a concern
- avoid sending an email when you are feeling emotionally charged – take time to reflect first
- avoid the use of capital letters, bold text or enlarged fonts to convey emotion
- direct the email to one person and avoid copying the same message to multiple staff members
- be mindful of timing – try to avoid difficult messages at the end of the working day or the working week

Staff aim to respond within three working days. If you have not heard back within five working days, please send a follow-up email to the main school office address, noting in the subject line that this is a follow-up due to no response received.



5.3 Student Planner (Secondary Schools)

In secondary schools, a note in the student planner is an effective way to pass a message promptly to a member of staff. The student is responsible for showing the note to the relevant teacher. This is particularly useful for requesting a call-back or a brief update on routine matters.

5.4 Meetings

All meetings with school staff should be arranged in advance. Parents and carers are asked to contact the school via the main office to request a meeting. For non-urgent matters, staff will aim to confirm a mutually convenient meeting time within five school working days. The school will determine the appropriate level of urgency and the most suitable format for the meeting.

If you have an urgent matter, such as a safeguarding concern or family emergency, please contact school by telephone so that a Designated Safeguarding Lead or senior member of staff can speak with you as quickly as possible.

6. Who to Contact and How

The escalation routes below reflect the DfE's Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures (2023) and the joint Parent Guide to School Complaints (2025/26). Concerns are most often resolved most quickly when directed to the right person at the right time. Please follow one stage at a time and escalate only if the matter cannot be resolved at the stage below.

Please always use the school's main administrative email address or telephone number to make initial contact, unless a direct contact has been specifically provided to you.



6.1 In a BCWCAT Primary School (Including Nursery and EYFS)

The DfE guidance is clear that informal resolution should always be attempted at classroom level first, before matters are escalated to more senior staff or to the formal complaints procedure.

Stage 1 – Class Teacher

Contact your child's class teacher in the first instance for concerns about day-to-day learning, friendships, behaviour, homework or classroom experience.

Teachers know your child best and can usually resolve everyday matters quickly and informally.

How to contact: via the school's main office email address or telephone number. In nursery and EYFS settings, a brief conversation at drop-off or pick-up may also be appropriate for minor matters.

Stage 1 (Parallel Route) – School SENCO

If your concern relates specifically to your child's special educational needs or disability (SEND), contact the school SENCO directly via the main school office.

The SENCO is best placed to discuss SEND support plans, EHC plans and reasonable adjustments.

Stage 2 – Deputy Headteacher

If your concern cannot be resolved by the class teacher or SENCO, or if it is broader than a single classroom, contact the Deputy Headteacher via the main school office.

Examples: persistent bullying, concerns about the school's response to a safeguarding or wellbeing matter, concerns involving more than one class or year group.

Stage 3 – Headteacher

For whole-school concerns, concerns about staff conduct, concerns about the school's implementation of its policies, or where earlier stages have not resolved the matter, contact the Headteacher via the main school office.

The Headteacher is the final point of informal escalation before a formal complaint is submitted.



Stage 4 – Formal Complaint

If you remain dissatisfied after raising the matter with the Headteacher, you may submit a formal complaint in accordance with the BCWCAT Complaints Policy 2025–2027.

A formal complaint should be submitted in writing to the Headteacher. If the complaint concerns the Headteacher, it should be directed to the Chair of Governors via governance@bcwcat.co.uk.

Please ensure the informal stages above have been fully exhausted before submitting a formal complaint. This is consistent with DfE guidance and the Parent Guide to School Complaints (2025/26).

6.2 In a BCWCAT Secondary School

Secondary schools have a wider range of staff roles, each with their own area of responsibility. The DfE guidance emphasises that parents and carers should identify the right person for the type of concern they have, rather than going directly to the most senior member of staff available. This approach leads to faster and more effective resolution in the vast majority of cases.

Stage 1a – Form Tutor (Pastoral Concerns)

Contact your child's form tutor in the first instance for concerns about pastoral matters, including general wellbeing, attendance, peer relationships and day-to-day school life.

How to contact: via the school's main administrative email address or by leaving a message with reception. A note in the student planner is also an effective way to request a call-back.

Stage 1b – Subject Teacher (Subject-Specific Concerns)

Contact the relevant subject teacher for concerns specific to a particular subject, including classroom experience, homework, assessment or subject-specific progress.

How to contact: via the school's main administrative email address, noting the subject and teacher's name in your message.

Stage 1c – School SENCO (SEND Concerns)

Contact the school SENCO if your concern relates specifically to your child's special educational needs or disability (SEND), their support plan, or their EHC plan provision.

How to contact: via the school's main administrative email address.

Stage 2a – Head of Year (Pastoral Matters)



If a pastoral concern cannot be resolved by the form tutor, or if the concern is more serious – for example persistent bullying, a significant safeguarding or wellbeing matter, or an issue involving more than one member of staff – contact the relevant Head of Year.

Heads of Year have oversight of pastoral matters across their year group and can coordinate support across different areas of school life.

How to contact: via the school's main administrative email address or telephone number.

Stage 2b – Head of Department or Faculty Leader (Subject Matters)

If a subject-related concern cannot be resolved by the classroom teacher, contact the relevant Head of Department or Faculty Leader.

Examples: concerns about assessment decisions, quality of feedback, or the consistency of a subject's approach across the year group.

How to contact: via the school's main administrative email address.

Stage 3 – Assistant Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher

If a concern remains unresolved after contact with a middle leader, or if the matter requires senior leadership involvement, contact the appropriate member of the senior leadership team via the main school office.

Examples: concerns about whole-school policy, concerns crossing multiple areas of school life, or matters involving the conduct or decisions of a middle leader.

Stage 4 – Headteacher

For whole-school concerns, concerns about senior staff conduct, or where all earlier stages have not resolved the matter, contact the Headteacher via the main school office.

The Headteacher is the final point of informal escalation before a formal complaint is submitted.

Stage 5 – Formal Complaint

If you remain dissatisfied after raising the matter with the Headteacher, you may submit a formal complaint in accordance with the BCWCAT Complaints Policy 2025–2027.

A formal complaint should be submitted in writing to the Headteacher. If the complaint concerns the Headteacher, it should be directed to the Chair of Governors via governance@bcwcat.co.uk.

Please ensure you have fully exhausted the informal stages above before submitting a formal complaint. This is consistent with DfE guidance and the Parent Guide to School Complaints (2025/26).

Please contact one person at a time and follow one stage at a time. Contacting multiple members of staff simultaneously about the same concern, or bypassing earlier stages, is likely to slow down



resolution and may be treated as unreasonable communication under this policy. The DfE and Parentkind both advise that the vast majority of concerns are resolved most quickly through direct, respectful communication with the right person at the outset.

7. The School Contacting Parents and Carers

The school's preferred methods for contacting parents and carers are email, the Arbor parent app and telephone. Parents and carers are required to ensure their contact details held by school are accurate and kept up to date at all times.

The school website provides a wide range of information that parents and carers may find helpful, including term dates, key policies, safeguarding contacts and out-of-hours emergency information. Parents and carers are encouraged to check the school website in the first instance before contacting school directly, as many questions can be answered through this channel.

Social media is used by our schools to celebrate pupils' achievements and share relevant school news. Staff must not be contacted through social media channels by parents, carers or members of the public.

8. Email Protocol

Email is a powerful communication tool when used well, but high volumes of email can have a significant negative impact on staff wellbeing and workload. BCWCAT is committed to a clear, Trust-wide approach that protects staff while maintaining effective communication with all stakeholders.

8.1 Staff Email Expectations

- Staff are not expected to monitor or respond to emails outside of their directed working hours, including at weekends.
- During school holidays, staff are not required to monitor their inboxes. An out-of-hours automated response should be set, directing the sender to the school website for safeguarding contacts and for information about when school reopens.
- Staff should be mindful of workload and staff wellbeing when composing and distributing emails, particularly all-staff messages.
- All emails should carry a clear, descriptive subject line.

8.2 Guidance for Email Senders (Staff, Parents and Carers)

- Be mindful of tone. Emails are not well-suited to conveying strong emotions and can easily be misread.



- Avoid the use of capital letters, bold or coloured fonts, or underlining to convey emphasis or frustration.
- Avoid sending an email when emotionally charged. Take time to reflect before writing.
- Be thoughtful about timing, especially for difficult or sensitive messages. Avoid sending these at the end of the school day or at the end of the week.
- Be clear about what action, if any, you are asking the recipient to take.
- Direct your email to one person wherever possible. Copying the same message to multiple staff is not appropriate.

8.3 Out-of-Hours Automated Response

Staff are encouraged to set an out-of-hours automated reply, particularly during school holiday periods. The response should state the date school reopens and direct recipients to the safeguarding section of the school website for urgent matters.

Example automated response: "Thank you for your email. The school is now closed until [insert date]. This inbox will not be monitored daily. I will respond when school reopens. Should you have a safeguarding query or concern during the school holiday, please see the safeguarding section of the school website for guidance and useful out-of-hours contact numbers."

9. Staff Wellbeing and Communication Boundaries

BCWCAT has a legal duty of care to protect the wellbeing of its staff under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and under Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, current edition). Staff cannot fulfil their responsibilities to pupils if they are subjected to excessive, repetitive or unreasonable communication demands. Abusive behaviour towards staff also has a direct impact on their capacity to safeguard and support children.

In order to protect staff wellbeing, the following applies:

- Staff are not required to respond to communications outside of their directed working hours.
- Staff will not have their teaching or other pupil-facing duties interrupted to deal with parental contact.
- Where communication becomes excessive, repetitive or is targeted at individual members of staff, the Headteacher may implement a communications management plan, directing all future contact through a single central point of contact.
- Staff communications are confidential. The unauthorised publication or sharing of staff emails or other private communications may breach the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 and will be treated seriously.

Clear communication boundaries benefit everyone. They protect staff wellbeing and ensure that when staff do respond, they are able to do so thoughtfully and constructively.





10. Zero Tolerance of Abusive and Threatening Behaviour

All members of the school community have the right to work and learn in a safe and respectful environment. BCWCAT schools operate a zero-tolerance approach to violent, threatening, harassing or abusive behaviour directed at any member of staff, pupil or other person connected to the school. This applies in person, by telephone, by email and online.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- shouting, screaming or using loud or intrusive language
- threatening, intimidating or aggressive behaviour, whether verbal or non-verbal
- offensive, discriminatory or derogatory language
- harassment, bullying or the incitement of hostility towards others
- malicious or knowingly false allegations about staff or other individuals
- excessive, repeated or unreasonable demands on staff time
- wilful damage to property or any form of violence
- offensive sexual gestures or remarks

This list is illustrative rather than exhaustive. Any behaviour that causes distress, alarm or harm will be taken seriously and addressed in accordance with the staged process set out in Section 11 of this policy.

Where a telephone call becomes abusive or threatening, staff have the right to respectfully end the call. The incident will be recorded and reported to the Headteacher. Staff will not engage with abusive or threatening communication in any form.

11. Staged Response to Unacceptable Behaviour

Where unacceptable behaviour occurs, BCWCAT schools will follow the staged response set out below. The progression through stages may be accelerated depending on the severity of the behaviour. Parents may be invited onto the school site, and incidents will be recorded on CPOMS. This process operates alongside, but is separate from, the formal complaints procedure.

Step 1 – Address the Issue Directly

For low-level concerns, such as the tone of an email or an unhelpful manner during a telephone call, a staff member may address the issue directly with the individual, either verbally or in writing. This will be done respectfully and with the aim of restoring positive communication.

Sample wording for staff: "Thank you for taking the time to contact us. Please may I respectfully draw your attention to our BCWCAT Communications Policy and ask that future communications reflect



the expectations set out within it. We very much wish to work positively with you to support your child and would welcome the opportunity to discuss your concern through the appropriate channels."

Step 2 – Internal Report and Headteacher Consideration

Where a more serious incident occurs involving abusive, threatening or harassing behaviour, the affected member of staff should complete an internal incident report and submit it to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will consider the matter and may write to the individual to remind them of this policy, or may invite them for an informal conversation held with a second staff member present. All communications will be recorded and retained.

Step 3 – Formal Written Warning

If a further incident involving the same person occurs, the Headteacher will write formally to the individual to set out that their conduct is unacceptable and to make clear the potential consequences of any repetition.

Step 4 – Ban from Premises / Escalation to Trust Board

In serious or persistent cases, the Academy Council may enforce a ban from school premises. This may involve the BCWCAT Trust Board and/or the CEO. A ban may lead to the individual being removed from premises as a trespasser under Section 47 of the Education Act 1996, or to prosecution under the Public Order Act 1986.

Even where a ban from premises is in place, all parents and carers retain the right to receive information about their child's educational progress. This will be facilitated through virtual or controlled contact, or in writing. Information about incidents of abusive or threatening behaviour will be shared between primary and secondary schools on pupil transition. Any ban will be subject to periodic review.



12. Unreasonable, Persistent or Vexatious Communication

BCWCAT is committed to taking all concerns seriously. However, communication can become unreasonable in ways that place disproportionate demands on staff and prevent schools from operating effectively. This section should be read alongside Section 10 of the BCWCAT Complaints Policy 2025–2027.

12.1 What Makes Communication Unreasonable

Communication may be considered unreasonable if the individual:

- refuses to engage with the appropriate process or declines to clearly state the concern or desired outcome
- submits excessive, very frequent or disproportionately lengthy communications
- contacts multiple members of staff simultaneously about the same matter
- repeatedly raises the same issue after it has been investigated, addressed and formally concluded
- changes the nature of the concern part-way through the process
- introduces excessive or irrelevant information that causes unnecessary delay
- uses aggressive, threatening, abusive or discriminatory language

12.2 Serial or Persistent Complaints

If an individual continues to contact the school or Trust repeatedly on the same issue, without presenting new information or evidence, the correspondence may be treated as serial or persistent. The Trust may decide to stop responding where all reasonable steps have been taken to address the concern and the individual has been given a clear statement of the Trust's position. The complainant will be informed in writing if the Trust decides to stop responding. New complaints will be considered if they raise materially different issues.

12.3 Vexatious Communication

Communication may be deemed vexatious if it is pursued in a way that is unreasonable, persistent, or intended to cause disruption or harm. The Trust will assess whether communication has become vexatious and will notify the individual in writing with reasons. Any restrictions applied will be proportionate and linked to behaviour rather than to the views expressed. Safeguarding, attendance and statutory communications will always be maintained.

Restrictions may include:

- requiring all communication to be directed through a single named point of contact
- restricting communication to one channel only (e.g. email to a central monitored address, or written correspondence only)
- declining to respond to repetitive communications where the matter has already been fully addressed
- confirming in writing that the complaints process has been exhausted and the Trust will no longer respond on the matter



The individual may appeal any restriction in writing within 10 school days. An independent review will be undertaken and the outcome will be final.

12.4 Anonymous Communications

The Trust is not obliged to respond to anonymous communications. However, where an anonymous communication raises a safeguarding concern or suggests possible criminal activity, the matter will be investigated or referred to the appropriate agencies regardless of its source.

12.5 AI-Generated and Automated Communications

In line with guidance from the DfE, Ofsted and Parentkind, the school may decline to provide a detailed response to communications that appear to be AI-generated, automated, or submitted for purposes other than a genuine personal concern. Such communications will be logged. Parents and carers are encouraged to communicate in their own words, clearly and directly, as this is always more likely to result in a prompt and helpful response.

13. Social Media

BCWCAT schools use social media to celebrate pupil achievements and to share school news. The following expectations apply to all members of the school community:

- Staff must not be contacted via personal or professional social media accounts by parents, carers or members of the public.
- Defamatory, misleading, abusive or hostile posts about any BCWCAT school, its staff or pupils will be taken seriously and may result in legal action under the Defamation Act 2013 or the Malicious Communications Act 1988.
- Sharing a complaint on social media is unlikely to lead to a quicker resolution and can be harmful to those involved. It may also constitute a breach of data protection law where it identifies individuals, including children.
- Where a parent or carer engages in unacceptable behaviour on social media, all non-essential communication will be restricted to statutory written channels only.

BCWCAT schools will not engage with complaints raised through social media. Concerns should always be directed through the channels set out in this policy and the BCWCAT Complaints Policy.

14. Recording of Meetings

To protect the privacy of all parties and to enable open, constructive and professional dialogue, the following applies to all meetings held with school staff:



- Staff do not consent to the audio or video recording of any meeting, whether held in person or via a remote platform such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom. This includes the use of mobile phones, digital recorders, and AI transcription software.
- If an unauthorised attempt is made to record a meeting, the meeting will be paused. If recording continues, the meeting will be terminated.
- Where the school considers a written record necessary, it will produce its own summary, which will serve as the official record of the meeting.
- Written records of meetings are confidential and are not for wider circulation. The unauthorised sharing of meeting records may breach data protection law.
- Parents and carers may bring a supporter to meetings for emotional support. The supporter's role is to support, not to represent or advocate on behalf of the complainant.



15. Relationship with the Complaints Policy

This Communications Policy and the BCWCAT Complaints Policy 2025–2027 are complementary documents that work together. This policy governs how day-to-day communication is managed and how early concerns are raised and resolved. The Complaints Policy sets out the formal process that applies once a concern escalates to a formal complaint.

It is important that parents and carers understand that most concerns can be resolved quickly, informally and without the need for a formal complaint, provided they are raised with the right person at the right time. The DfE, Ofsted and Parentkind all emphasise that early, direct and constructive communication is the most effective route to resolution for the vast majority of concerns.

Where a matter does escalate, the Complaints Policy provides a clear four-stage process. For ease of reference, a summary is included at Appendix 3 of this policy.

Governors do not engage with individual complaints outside the formal procedure. Their role is one of strategic oversight, not the management of individual concerns. Parents and carers who wish to make a formal complaint should follow the stages set out in the BCWCAT Complaints Policy 2025–2027.

Once the Trust's complaints procedure has been fully exhausted, the decision of the Trust Complaints Panel is final within the Trust. Complainants who remain dissatisfied may refer their concern to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) at www.gov.uk/complain-about-school. The ESFA will not overturn the Trust's decision but will review whether the Trust has followed its own procedure properly and acted in accordance with education law.

16. The Parents' Guide to School Complaints

BCWCAT supports and commends the joint Parent Guide to School Complaints (2025/26), produced by Parentkind, the Department for Education, Ofsted, and the Improving Education Together Board. This guide is available on each school's website and from the school office on request.

The guide sets out five key steps for parents and carers raising a concern:

Step 1 – What kind of issue is it?



Identify whether you have feedback, a concern, or a formal complaint. Each requires a different response. Concerns should be raised informally with the school in the first instance; formal complaints should follow the school's published complaints procedure.

Step 2 – Who in school do I go to?

Direct your concern to the person closest to your child and the issue. Start with the class teacher or form tutor; escalate to a senior leader or the Headteacher if the matter cannot be resolved. (See Section 6 of this policy.)

Step 3 – How do I raise my complaint?

Follow one level at a time. Start with the facts. Keep a record. Stay objective and avoid making concerns personal to individual members of staff. Be clear about what outcome you are seeking. Be constructive and trust the school to listen.

Step 4 – When should I expect a response?

Check the school's Complaints Policy for timescales. Ask for a written acknowledgement of a formal complaint. Resolution times will vary depending on the complexity of the matter.

Step 5 – Where do I escalate if unresolved?

If you have fully followed the school's complaints procedure and remain dissatisfied, escalation options include the Trust Complaints Panel (Stage 4 of the BCWCAT Complaints Policy) and, thereafter, the ESFA. Ofsted does not investigate individual complaints or disputes between parents and schools.

The guide also highlights how complaints can go wrong. BCWCAT endorses this guidance and asks all parents and carers to be mindful of the following:

- Sharing a complaint on social media is harmful to those involved and will not lead to a quicker resolution.
- Making concerns personal to individual staff members, rather than focusing on processes and decisions, makes resolution harder.
- Abusive or aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated and can have consequences for the individual concerned.
- AI-generated communications can inadvertently escalate rather than support resolution and should be used with caution.
- A good ongoing relationship between home and school benefits children. It benefits all parties to seek to move forward constructively after a complaint has been resolved.



17. Streamlining Communication and Staff Workload

BCWCAT schools continually review their communication practices to reduce unnecessary workload on staff while maintaining high standards of information-sharing with the school community. We are guided in this by the DfE's Workload and Wellbeing Toolkit for Schools.

Examples of how our schools seek to streamline communication include:

- centralising staff notices in a weekly bulletin to reduce the volume of individual all-staff emails
- regular whole-staff briefings to share key operational updates
- using the school website to host policies, key dates, safeguarding information and frequently asked questions
- using the Arbor parent app for routine communications, permissions and updates to families
- using Governor Hub for governance papers and communications with governors and trustees
- producing regular parent newsletters to reduce the volume of individual telephone and email queries

Parents and carers are encouraged to check the school website and Arbor before contacting school directly, as many questions can be answered through these channels.

18. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if there are significant changes to legislation, DfE guidance or Trust practice. It is approved by the Finance and Resources Committee on behalf of the Trust Board.

The Governance Administrator and Headteachers across the Trust are responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy. Instances of unacceptable communication will be logged centrally to enable the Trust to identify patterns and take appropriate action.

This policy will be published on each school's website and made available to all parents, carers, staff and governors on request.

This policy links to:

- BCWCAT Complaints Policy 2025–2027
- BCWCAT Disciplinary Policy
- BCWCAT Equality Statement and Objectives
- BCWCAT ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- BCWCAT Parents, Visitors and Carers Code of Conduct



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- DfE Workload and Wellbeing Toolkit



Appendix 1 – Acceptable Use Summary for Parents and Carers

This summary is a quick-reference guide to the key expectations for parents and carers when communicating with BCWCAT schools. It is intended to help communication go well for everyone and to support positive home–school partnerships.

✓ Please DO	✗ Please DO NOT
• Use the school's main office email or telephone as your first point of contact • Allow up to 3 working days for a response • Follow the correct escalation pathway (Section 6) • Keep communications clear, polite and focused on a specific issue • State clearly what outcome you are seeking • Use the formal complaints process if informal resolution has not worked • Treat all staff with courtesy and respect • Check the school website for information before contacting school	• Contact multiple staff simultaneously about the same concern • Send emails when feeling very upset – wait until you feel calm • Use aggressive, threatening or offensive language in any form • Contact staff via social media • Attempt to record any meeting without the school's written agreement • Share complaints or concerns on social media • Expect an immediate response to emails sent outside school hours • Use AI-generated communications as a substitute for direct, personal contact



Appendix 2 – Escalation Pathway for Unacceptable Behaviour

The table below summarises the staged response to unacceptable behaviour as set out in Section 11 of this policy. The pace of escalation may be accelerated depending on the severity and nature of the behaviour concerned.

Step	Trigger	Action
1	Low-level concern (e.g. inappropriate tone in an email or message)	Staff member addresses directly with the individual, verbally or in writing. Incident noted informally.
2	Higher-level incident: abusive, threatening or harassing communication	Staff member completes internal incident report. Submitted to Headteacher. Headteacher may write or speak to the individual. All communication recorded.
3	Further incident involving the same person	Headteacher issues a formal written warning. All behaviour and correspondence logged.
4	Continued repeat incidents	Referral to Chair of Governors / Academy Council. Final written warning considered. Police may be notified.
5	Continued behaviour; ban from premises being considered	Individual invited to make representations to the Academy Council before a decision is made. Temporary ban may be imposed pending outcome.
6	Serious or persistent behaviour following Step 5	Academy Council enforces a ban from premises. Trust Board and/or CEO may be involved. Police involvement or legal action may follow.

The Trust reserves the right to escalate directly to police or legal involvement, without issuing a prior warning, where behaviour is sufficiently serious. Even where a ban from premises is in place, parents and carers retain the right to receive information about their child's educational progress through controlled means.



Appendix 3 – Complaints Stages Quick Reference

The table below provides a quick reference summary of the four-stage complaints process as set out in the BCWCAT Complaints Policy 2025–2027. This Communications Policy works alongside that process; if a concern cannot be resolved through good communication, the Complaints Policy provides the formal route.

For the full complaints procedure, please refer to the BCWCAT Complaints Policy 2025–2027 and the Parent Guide to School Complaints (2025/26), both of which are available on the school website.

Stage	Who	Timescale	What Happens
Stage 1	Class teacher / form tutor / relevant staff member	Acknowledgement within 5 school days; resolution within 10 school days	Informal resolution. Meeting offered where appropriate.
Stage 2	Headteacher (formal written complaint)	Acknowledgement within 5 school days; written conclusion within 10 school days	Formal investigation and written outcome.
Stage 3	Review Panel (incl. at least 1 independent member)	Panel convened within 20 school days; decision within 10 school days of hearing	Panel reviews handling and decisions at previous stages.
Stage 4	Trust Complaints Panel	Request within 10 school days of Stage 3 decision; panel within 20 school days	Trust-level review. Decision is final within the Trust.

If you remain dissatisfied after the Trust Complaints Panel (Stage 4), you may refer your concern to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) at www.gov.uk/complain-about-school. The ESFA will not overturn the Trust's decision but will review whether the procedure was followed correctly and whether the Trust acted in accordance with education law. Complaints about the Headteacher should be submitted in writing to the Chair of Governors via governance@bcwcat.co.uk.

