



Policy

Policy title:	Complaints Policy
Function:	For information and guidance about how Blue Coat School deals with complaints. This document forms part of the portfolio of policies designed to inform students, parents and the general public
Status:	Approved
Statutory guidance:	Education Act (2002) DFE - Best practice advice for school complaints procedures (2016)
Audience:	Students, Parents, Staff, Leaders, Governors, General public
Ownership:	Governing body/Headteacher
Last reviewed:	December 2018
Reviewed by:	Full governing body
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Aims and objectives

- 1 This policy sets out The Blue Coat School's arrangements, procedures and practices for complaints in line with the Education Act (2002).
- 2 This policy provides a non-adversarial mechanism to explore, evidence and judge concerns or complaints that are drawn to the school's attention.
- 3 This policy sets out a clear and transparent process to support prompt investigation into concerns or complaints.
- 4 This policy supports The Blue Coat School's commitment to continually reflect, evaluate and learn so as to identify areas for further improvement.

Roles and responsibilities

- 5 The governing body will ensure that The Blue Coat School:
 - keeps lead governors fully informed of complaints that sit within their lead governor remit
 - has an effective policy and procedure to deal with all complaints relating to the school or any facilities or services the school provides
 - has effective processes to establish an independent complaints panel where required.
- 6 The headteacher will ensure that school's complaints procedure:
 - is published and easily accessible
 - is simple to understand and use
 - is undertaken in a timely manner
 - is recorded effectively
 - keeps the complainant fully updated at each stage
 - is impartial
 - is non-adversarial
 - supports independent, fair and full investigation where necessary
 - does not have any impact on the education of children at the school
 - respects confidentiality as far as practicable at all stages
 - takes account of relevant legislation including the Equality Act 2010, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000
 - is able to address matter effectively and provide appropriate response and redress
 - is able to provide information to the senior leadership team so that provision can be improved.
- 7 Employees of The Blue Coat School will ensure that they:
 - understand this policy and the process for complaints about school
 - know how to refer complainants to this policy.
- 8 The complainant should ensure that:
 - They have read and understood this policy before submitting a complaint
 - concerns or complaints are made as soon as possible after the matter arises ideally within 3 months
 - they co-operate with the school in seeking a resolution
 - they respond promptly to requests for information or meetings

- they ask for assistance when required
- they limit the number of communications with the school while a concern or complain is being progressed so as not to delay the outcome
- they do not use aggression, threats, intimidation, violence, abusive or offensive language
- complaints are free from malice or information known to be false
- they do not promote the publication of unhelpful or unacceptable information to the wider public.

Procedures and practices

General principles

- 9 Any person, including members of the general public, may make a complaint about the provision, facilities or services that the school provides unless a separate statutory procedure applies. Further information can be found in Annex A.
- 10 The Blue Coat School is committed to responding positively to any concerns or complaints that are raised by members of its community or members of the public who have contact with the school.
- 11 The school defines 'a concern' as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. Concerns will always be dealt with informally.
- 12 The school defines 'a complaint' as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'. Complaints will be dealt with as set in the process below.
- 13 It is in everybody's interest that concerns or complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The school will take concerns and complaints seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.
- 14 Anonymous concerns or complaints will always be risk assessed. However it should be recognised that they may not be pursued.
- 15 Concerns or complaints about school provision, services or facilities should be directed to the headteacher.
- 16 Concerns or complaints about the headteacher should be directed to the Chair of Governors.
- 17 Concerns or complaints about the Chair of Governors should be directed to the Clerk to the Governing Body

Informal concerns

- 18 The school defines 'a concern' as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. Concerns will always be dealt with informally.
- 19 Anyone who has concerns is entitled to raise them. If in doubt, concerned parties should contact the School office as staff who will advise where to direct the concern to. This may include redirecting the concerned party to the appropriate:
- Head of Department
 - Key Stage Leader
 - Support Team Leader
 - Senior Leader
- 20 School staff will work with the concerned party to understand their concerns, provide reassurances and propose appropriate action to resolve the concern if necessary. Depending upon the circumstances this may take the form of:
- An exchange of email/s
 - A telephone call/s
 - Face to face meeting/s
- 21 All concerned parties are encouraged to work constructively with school staff to seek a mutually agreeable and constructive informal outcome to their concerns.
- 22 Upon conclusion of a concern, school staff will speak with or write to the concerned party outlining:
- The original concern
 - The actions taken
 - The extent to which the concerned party is satisfied with the outcome
 - What the concerned party should do if they are not satisfied with the outcome.
- A record of this concluding discussion/correspondence should be kept by the school.
- 23 Where appropriate, senior leaders will notify Lead Governors of a concern that sits within their Lead Governor remit and keep them informed of its resolution.

Formal complaints

- 24 In such cases where the concerned party does not feel that their concern has been dealt with effectively, or where a matter is more serious, and the concerned party wishes to raise it as a complaint, the formal complaints process will be followed.
- 25 The formal complaints process has 3 stages:
- Stage 1: Internal investigation
 - Stage 2: Governing body review
 - Stage 3: Independent external review
- 26 To register a formal complaint, the complainant must place their complaint in writing for the attention of the headteacher. If the complaint is about the headteacher, the complainant must place their complaint in writing to the clerk to the governors for the attention of the chair of governors.

- 27 At stage 1, the school will:
- appoint a senior leader as stage 1 investigating officer or if the complaint is about the headteacher appoint a governor as stage 1 investigating officer
 - contact the complainant within three working days to acknowledge receipt of the complaint (Annex C)
 - provide a summary of the complaints procedure
 - provide a target date for providing a response which will, where possible, be within 15 working days of the receipt of the complaint
 - talk to the complainant to identify the scope, issues and possible resolutions of the complaint (It may be possible to resolve the complaint in this discussion)
 - independently investigate the concerns using other sources
 - always seek to identify learning and improvement points for the school
 - keep the complainant updated if it is not possible to meet proposed timescales and provide reasons why
 - judge whether any aspects of the complaint should:
 - be upheld because there is evidence to support the complainants points
 - not be upheld because there is evidence to refute the complainants points
 - deemed inconclusive because there is not sufficient evidence
 - keep a detailed record of the complaint and the investigation process (Annex B)
 - write to and if required, meet with the complainant to share the outcome of stage 1 (Annex D)
 - explain what the complainant may do if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 1.
- 28 The school hopes that the complainant will feel satisfied with the outcome of stage 1, or at least that concerns have been fully and fairly considered. In the event of the complainant not being satisfied, they must place their dissatisfaction in writing for the attention of the headteacher and chair of the governors. In doing so, the matter will progress to stage 2.
- 29 At stage 2, the governing body will:
- appoint a governor as stage 2 investigating officer
 - contact the complainant within five working days to acknowledge receipt of the complaint (Annex E)
 - provide a summary of the complaints procedure
 - provide a target date for providing a response which will, where possible, be within 30 working days of the receipt of notification of that the complainant was dissatisfied with stage 1
 - explain to the complainant that the purpose of stage 2 is to:
 - examine if the processes at stage 1 where undertaken appropriately
 - review the judgements made and evaluate whether the evidence considered supports them
 - check the conduct of school staff during the investigation process
 - talk to the complainant to identify the reasons why they are dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 1 and identify what they see as acceptable resolutions (It may be possible to resolve the complaint in this discussion)
 - undertake and record a full independent scrutiny of the stage 1 process and findings
 - always seek to identify learning and improvement points for the school
 - keep the complainant updated if it is not possible to meet proposed timescales and provide reasons why
 - draw an evidence based conclusion about the extent to which:
 - the processes at stage 1 where undertaken appropriately
 - the judgements made at stage 1 where supported by evidence

- the conduct of school staff during the investigation process met appropriate standards
 - keep a detailed record of the complaint and the investigation process (Annex B)
 - write to and if required, meet with the complainant to share the outcome of stage 2 (Annex F)
 - explain what the complainant may do if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 2.
- 30 It is hoped that the complainant will feel satisfied with the outcome of stage 2, or at least that concerns have been fully and fairly considered. In the unlikely event that a complaint remains dissatisfied, the matter may be progressed to stage 3. In such cases the school will write to the complainant to acknowledge that the complaint has progressed to stage 3 (Annex G).
- 31 At stage 3, the school will:
- convene a meeting of the Governors Complaints Panel which will be comprised of:
 - at least 3 people, 1 of whom will independent of the management running of the school
 - panel members who have had no direct involvement in the matters detailed in the complaint or who were involved in stage 1 or stage 2 of the complaints process
 - ensure that the Governors Complaints Panel:
 - formally invites the complainant to attend a hearing
 - specifies that the complainant may be accompanied at a hearing if they wish
 - hears about and cross examines the original complaint
 - hears about and cross examines the complainant's reasons for dissatisfaction at stage 1
 - hears about and cross examines the complainant's reasons for dissatisfaction at stage 2
 - decide if the judgements made at stage 1 and stage 2 where correct or incorrect
 - keep a record of the matters discussed and the panel's findings
 - write to the complainant within 15 working days of the meeting to share the outcome of and any recommendations from stage 3 (Annex H)
 - explain what the complainant may do if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 3.
- 32 In the unlikely event that the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 3, the complainant has the right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State has a duty to consider all complaints raised but will only intervene where the governing body has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and where it is expedient or practical to do so. Details about how to do this are set out in Annex J and will be provided to complainants if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 3. At the conclusion of a referral to the Secretary of State, the school will write to the complainant to acknowledge any findings (Annex K).

Serial, and persistent complaints

- 33 The Blue Coat School will do its best to help people who have concerns or complaints and provide them with the necessary information to reach a satisfactory conclusion following full completion of the complaints procedure.
- 34 There may be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied and seeks to re-open the same issue. In such cases, the Chair of Governors can inform them that the procedure has been completed and the matter is considered closed.

- 35 Where the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the school may consider choosing not to respond.
- 36 The Blue Coat School will not stop responding just because a complainant is difficult to deal with or asks complex questions. The decision to stop responding will not be taken lightly. The Blue Coat School will evaluate the extent to which the complaint is unreasonable using the prompts below:
- Has the school taken every reasonable step to address the complainants concerns?
 - Has the complainant been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options?
 - Is the complainant contacting the school repeatedly but making the same points each time?
 - Can the school evidence that the complainant is contacting them with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience?
 - Is the complainant's correspondence abusive or aggressive?
 - Is the complainant making personal or threatening comments about staff?
- 37 Where the school considers that a complaint has been dealt with, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will formally notify the complainant that the matter has been closed.
- 38 Where possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant before closing the complaint.

Unreasonable complainants

- 39 The Blue Coat School will not tolerate unreasonable behaviour at any stage during the complaints process. Where a complainant's behaviour is causing significant and unnecessary disruption, the school may deem the complainant to be 'unreasonable'.
- 40 The Blue Coat School defines 'unreasonable' complainants as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'. A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:
- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
 - refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved
 - refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure
 - insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice
 - introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
 - makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
 - changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
 - repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
 - refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's

complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education

- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.
-

41 A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint pursues the complaint:

- maliciously
- aggressively
- using threats, intimidation or violence
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- knowing it to be false
- using falsified information
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

42 Where possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

43 If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it.

44 In such cases the school will implement a tailored plan to manage the complaint efficiently and effectively. This may include but is not limited to:

- restricting the complainant to a single point of contact
- limiting the number of times the complainant may make contact
- seeking third party assistance such as the local authority or the citizens advice bureau
- seeking formal guidance through the Police or Legal Services
- barring the complainant from school premises.

Monitoring, review and evaluation

45 The school will keep a log of all formal complaints and used it to monitor and evaluate patterns or trends in complaints.

46 The headteacher will ensure that the school regularly reviews its handling of all formal complaints.

47 Lead governors will rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the school's handling of formal complaints that are related to their lead governor remit.

Annex A: Complaints not dealt with by this policy

A complaints procedure should cover all complaints about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides with the exceptions listed below, for which there are separate (statutory) procedures.

Complaints about...	Where to look...	Who to speak to...
Admissions to schools	Admissions Policy	School office
Special educational needs	SEN Policy	School office
Child protection	Safeguarding Policy	Headteacher or Chair of Governors
Exclusion from school	Behaviour Policy	Headteacher or Chair of Governors
Whistleblowing	Staff Professional Conduct Policy	Headteacher or Chair of Governors
Staff grievance	Staff Professional Conduct Policy	Headteacher or Chair of Governors
Services provided by other organisations	Providers Policies	School office

Annex B: Record of complaint form

Received on:	
Received by:	
Acknowledgement date:	

Complainant details:

Name:	
Address:	
Telephone:	
Email:	

Stage 1:

Received on:	
Investigating officer:	

Ref	Aspect of complaint	Desired resolution	Supporting evidence (Complainant)	Supporting evidence (Other sources)	Judgement	Learning points for school
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

Summary	
Target completion date:	
Actual completion date:	
Letter of conclusion date:	
Complainant response:	Yes / No
Complaint closed	Yes / No

Stage 2:

Received on:	
Investigating officer:	
Acknowledgement date:	

Process	
1) Did the school appoint an independent investigating officer (IO) without delay?	Yes / No
2) Did the school acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days?	Yes / No
3) Did the school provide a summary of the complaints procedure?	Yes / No
4) Did the school provide a target date for providing a response to the complaint that was within 15 working days of receipt?	Yes / No
5) Did the IO talk to the complainant to identify the scope, issues and possible resolutions of the complaint?	Yes / No
6) Did the IO independently investigate the concerns using other sources?	Yes / No
7) Did the IO keep the complainant updated if it is not possible to meet proposed timescales and provide reasons why?	Yes / No
8) Did the IO keep a detailed record of the complaint and the investigation process?	Yes / No
9) Did the IO write to and if required, meet with the complainant to share the outcome of stage 1?	Yes / No
10) Did the IO explain what the complainant may do if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 1?	Yes / No

Judgement					
Ref	Aspect of complaint	Stage 1 Judgement	Complainants dissatisfaction and desired resolution	Review of evidence	Stage 2 Judgement
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

Conduct	
1) Did the complainant raise any concerns about how they have been dealt with by the IO during the completion of stage 1?	Yes / No
2) Did the complainant raise any concerns about how they have been dealt with by any others school staff during the completion of stage 1?	Yes / No

Learning points identified at stage 2	
Process	1)
	2)
	3)
	4)
	5)
Judgement	1)
	2)
	3)
	4)
	5)
Conduct	1)
	2)
	3)
	4)
	5)

Summary	
Target completion date:	
Actual completion date:	
Letter of conclusion date:	
Complainant response:	Yes / No
Complaint closed	Yes / No

Stage 3:

Received on:	
Received by:	
Acknowledgement date:	

Learning points identified at stage 3	
Process	1)
	2)
	3)
	4)
	5)
Judgement	1)
	2)
	3)
	4)
	5)
Conduct	1)
	2)
	3)
	4)
	5)

Summary	
Letter of conclusion date	
Complainant response:	Yes / No
Complaint closed	Yes / No

Annex C: Letter of acknowledgement (Stage 1)

This template will be used to acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint and present the required information to support good communication with the complainant at stage 1.

Dear [Name]

Re: [Title of complaint]

Thank you for your [email/letter] dated [date] received by the school on [date].

In your correspondence you have formally expressed your dissatisfaction about an aspect of school provision. Consequently, The Blue Coat School will deal with this matter under stage 1 of its complaints policy. For your assistance, you will find a copy of the school's complaints policy attached to this letter of acknowledgement.

The school has appointed [name, position] as the investigating officer for stage 1 of this complaint. They will be in contact with you shortly as part of their investigations into the matter you have raised.

The Blue Coat School aims to investigate and respond to stage 1 complaints within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint. We hope to respond to this complaint by [date]. We will keep you updated if it is not possible to meet this proposed timescale and explain the reasons why.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter.

Yours sincerely

Annex D: Letter of conclusion (Stage 1)

This template should be used as a guide to how to communicate the findings of stage 1 to the complainant.

Dear [Name]

Re: [Title of complaint]

Thank you for the time you gave to our discussion on [date] when I shared with you the outcome of stage 1 of The Blue Coat School's investigation into the complaint you raised on [date]. This letter serves to summarise the key points of our discussion.

In your complaint, you raised concerns about:

- [Title of aspect 1 from Annex B]
- [Title of aspect 2 from Annex B]
- [Title of aspect 3 from Annex B]
- [Title of aspect 4 from Annex B]
- [Title of aspect 5 from Annex B]

In our recent discussion I was able to explain to you that The Blue Coat School has responded to your complaint by undertaking stage 1 of its complaints procedure. This involves rigorous investigation by a member of the senior leadership team. The findings of that investigation are set out below:

[Title of aspect from Annex B]

Paragraph 1: Summarise the complainants view of this aspect

Paragraph 2: Explain what evidence the school has considered and what conclusions can be drawn about this aspect of the complaint

Paragraph 3: Conclude whether this aspect of the complaint should be upheld, deemed inconclusive or not upheld

(The above structure should be repeated for all aspects of the complaint.)

Summary

Following this stage 1 investigation, The Blue Coat School concludes that your complaint should [be upheld / be partially upheld / be deemed inconclusive / not be upheld]

(Use the following paragraphs if upheld:)

The Blue Coat School offers you its unreserved apologies about all of the aspects you have raised in this complaint. Given the findings of this investigation it is appropriate that the school now addresses the following issue/s:

- Point 1 to follow up
- Point 2 to follow up

The Blue Coat School is committed to improvement. You should also be reassured that as part of our investigation into this complaint, we have identified a number of learning points for the school to consider as it looks forward.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter and the issues you have drawn to our attention. We hope that you are satisfied with the outcome of stage 1 of our investigation process and would be extremely grateful if you could write to us to let us know if you now consider the matter resolved so that we can guide you accordingly.

(Use the following paragraphs if partially upheld:)

The Blue Coat School offers you its unreserved apologies about the aspects of this complaint we have upheld. Given the findings of this investigation it is appropriate that we now address the following issues:

- Point 1 to follow up
- Point 2 to follow up

The Blue Coat School is committed to improvement. You should also be reassured that as part of our investigation into this complaint, we have identified a number of learning points for the school to consider as it looks forward.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter and for the issues you have drawn to our attention. We hope that you are satisfied with the outcome of stage 1 of our investigation process and would be extremely grateful if you could write to us to let us know if you now consider the matter resolved so that we can guide you accordingly.

(Use the following paragraphs if deemed inconclusive:)

The Blue Coat School regrets that it has been unable to establish whether or not your complaint can be substantiated but seeks to reassure you that we are a school that is committed to improvement. As part of our investigation into this complaint, we have identified a number of learning points for the school to consider as it looks forward.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter and the issues you have drawn to our attention. We hope that you are satisfied with the outcome of stage 1 of our investigation process and would be extremely grateful if you could write to us to let us know if you now consider the matter resolved so that we can guide you accordingly.

(Use the following paragraphs if not upheld:)

The Blue Coat School is not able to uphold any aspects of your complaint but seeks to reassure you that we are a school that is committed to improvement. As part of our investigation into this complaint, we have identified a number of learning points for the school to consider as it looks forward.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter and the issues you have drawn to our attention. We hope that you are satisfied with the outcome of stage 1 of our investigation process and would be extremely grateful if you could write to us to let us know if you now consider the matter resolved so that we can guide you accordingly.

Yours sincerely

Annex E: Letter of acknowledgement (Stage 2)

This template will be used as a guide as to how to acknowledge receipt of a complainant's dissatisfaction at stage 1 and present the required information to support good communication with the complainant during stage 2.

Dear [Name]

Re: [Title of complaint]

Thank you for your [email/letter] dated [date] received by the school on [date].

In your correspondence you have formally expressed your dissatisfaction about some aspects of the school's handling of stage 1 of your recent complaint. In line with The Blue Coat School's complaints policy, this matter will be progressed to stage 2. For your assistance, you will find a copy of the school's complaints policy attached to this letter of acknowledgement.

The school has appointed [name, position] as the investigating officer for stage 2 of this complaint. They will be in contact with you shortly as part of their investigations into the matter you have raised.

The Blue Coat School aims to investigate and respond to stage 2 complaints within 30 working days of receipt of the complaint. We hope to respond to this complaint by [date]. We will keep you updated if it is not possible to meet this proposed timescale and explain the reasons why.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter.

Yours sincerely

Annex F: Letter of conclusion (Stage 2)

This template should be used as a guide as to how to communicate the findings of stage 2 to the complainant.

Dear [Name]

Re: [Title of complaint]

Thank you for the time you gave to assist the undertakings of stage 2 of the school's complaints process. During stage 2, I have:

- examined if the processes at stage 1 where undertaken appropriately
- reviewed the judgements made and evaluated whether the evidence considered supports them
- checked the conduct of school staff during the investigation process

This letter serves to summarise the findings of stage 2 of the complaints process.

Following stage 1 of the complaints process, you expressed dissatisfaction about:

- [Summary of any dissatisfaction relating to stage 1 judgement]
- [Summary of any dissatisfaction relating to stage 1 process]
- [Summary of any dissatisfaction relating to stage 1 conduct]

The finding of my independent review are set out below.

Judgement

Paragraph 1: Summarise the complainants view of this aspect

Paragraph 2: Explain what evidence the panel has considered and what conclusions can be drawn about this aspect of the complaint

Paragraph 3: Conclude whether this aspect of the complaint should be upheld, deemed inconclusive or not upheld

Process

Paragraph 1: Summarise the complainants view of this aspect

Paragraph 2: Explain what evidence the panel has considered and what conclusions can be drawn about this aspect of the complaint

Paragraph 3: Conclude whether this aspect of the complaint should be upheld, deemed inconclusive or not upheld

Conduct

Paragraph 1: Summarise the complainants view of this aspect

Paragraph 2: Explain what evidence the panel has considered and what conclusions can be drawn about this aspect of the complaint

Paragraph 3: Conclude whether this aspect of the complaint should be upheld, deemed inconclusive or not upheld

Summary

Following this stage 2 investigation, The Blue Coat School concludes that your complaint should [be upheld / be partially upheld / be deemed inconclusive / not be upheld]

(Use the following paragraphs if upheld:)

The Blue Coat School offers you its unreserved apologies about all of the aspects you have raised in this complaint. Given the findings of this investigation it is appropriate that the school now addresses the following issue/s:

- Point 1 to follow up
- Point 2 to follow up

The Blue Coat School is committed to improvement. You should also be reassured that as part of our investigation into this complaint, we have identified a number of learning points for the school to consider as it looks forward.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter and the issues you have drawn to our attention. We hope that you are satisfied with the outcome of stage 2 of our investigation process and would be extremely grateful if you could write to us to let us know if you now consider the matter resolved so that we can guide you accordingly.

(Use the following paragraphs if partially upheld:)

The Blue Coat School offers you its unreserved apologies about the aspects of this complaint we have upheld. Given the findings of this investigation it is appropriate that we now address the following issues:

- Point 1 to follow up
- Point 2 to follow up

The Blue Coat School is committed to improvement. You should also be reassured that as part of our investigation into this complaint, we have identified a number of learning points for the school to consider as it looks forward.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter and for the issues you have drawn to our attention. We hope that you are satisfied with the outcome of stage 2 of our investigation process and would be extremely grateful if you could write to us to let us know if you now consider the matter resolved so that we can guide you accordingly.

(Use the following paragraphs if deemed inconclusive:)

The Blue Coat School regrets that it has been unable to establish whether or not your complaint can be substantiated but seeks to reassure you that we are a school that is committed to improvement. As part of

our investigation into this complaint, we have identified a number of learning points for the school to consider as it looks forward.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter and the issues you have drawn to our attention. We hope that you are satisfied with the outcome of stage 2 of our investigation process and would be extremely grateful if you could write to us to let us know if you now consider the matter resolved so that we can guide you accordingly.

(Use the following paragraphs if not upheld:)

The Blue Coat School is not able to uphold any aspects of your complaint but seeks to reassure you that we are a school that is committed to improvement. As part of our investigation into this complaint, we have identified a number of learning points for the school to consider as it looks forward.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter and the issues you have drawn to our attention. We hope that you are satisfied with the outcome of stage 2 of our investigation process and would be extremely grateful if you could write to us to let us know if you now consider the matter resolved so that we can guide you accordingly.

Yours sincerely

Annex G: Letter of acknowledgement (Stage 3)

This template will be used as a guide as to how to acknowledge receipt of a complainant's dissatisfaction at stage 2 and present the required information to support good communication with the complainant during stage 3.

Dear [Name]

Re: [Title of complaint]

Thank you for your [email/letter] dated [date] received by the school on [date].

In your correspondence you have formally expressed your dissatisfaction about the findings of stage 2 of the school's complaints process in relation to your recent complaint. In line with The Blue Coat School's complaints policy, this matter will be progressed to stage 3. For your assistance, you will find a copy of the school's complaints policy attached to this letter of acknowledgement.

The school will convene its Governors Complaints Panel to undertake a thorough review of your complaint. The Chair of the Panel will be in contact with you shortly.

The Blue Coat School aims to undertake stage 3 of the complaints process within 30 working days of receipt of dissatisfaction of stage 2. We hope to conclude this complaint by [date]. We will keep you updated if it is not possible to meet this proposed timescale and explain the reasons why.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter.

Yours sincerely

Annex H: Letter of conclusion (Stage 3)

This template should be used as a guide as to how to communicate the findings of stage 3 to the complainant.

Dear [Name]

Re: [Title of complaint]

Thank you for the time you gave to attend our Governors Complaints Panel on [date] to:

- ???
- ???
- ???

This letter serves to summarise the findings of stage 3 of the complaints process.

Judgement

Paragraph 1: Summarise the complainants view of this aspect

Paragraph 2: Explain what evidence the panel has considered and what conclusions can be drawn about this aspect of the complaint

Paragraph 3: Conclude whether this aspect of the complaint should be upheld, deemed inconclusive or not upheld

Process

Paragraph 1: Summarise the complainants view of this aspect

Paragraph 2: Explain what evidence the panel has considered and what conclusions can be drawn about this aspect of the complaint

Paragraph 3: Conclude whether this aspect of the complaint should be upheld, deemed inconclusive or not upheld

Conduct

Paragraph 1: Summarise the complainants view of this aspect

Paragraph 2: Explain what evidence the panel has considered and what conclusions can be drawn about this aspect of the complaint

Paragraph 3: Conclude whether this aspect of the complaint should be upheld, deemed inconclusive or not upheld

Summary

Following this stage 3 investigation, The Blue Coat School concludes that your complaint should [be upheld / be partially upheld / be deemed inconclusive / not be upheld]

(Use the following paragraphs if upheld:)

The Blue Coat School offers you its unreserved apologies about all of the aspects you have raised in this complaint. Given the findings of this investigation it is appropriate that the school now addresses the following issue/s:

- Point 1 to follow up
- Point 2 to follow up

The Blue Coat School is committed to improvement. You should also be reassured that as part of our investigation into this complaint, we have identified a number of learning points for the school to consider as it looks forward.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter and the issues you have drawn to our attention. We hope that you are satisfied with the outcome of stage 3 of our investigation process and would be extremely grateful if you could write to us to let us know if you now consider the matter resolved so that we can guide you accordingly.

(Use the following paragraphs if partially upheld:)

The Blue Coat School offers you its unreserved apologies about the aspects of this complaint we have upheld. Given the findings of this investigation it is appropriate that we now address the following issues:

- Point 1 to follow up
- Point 2 to follow up

The Blue Coat School is committed to improvement. You should also be reassured that as part of our investigation into this complaint, we have identified a number of learning points for the school to consider as it looks forward.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter and for the issues you have drawn to our attention. We hope that you are satisfied with the outcome of stage 3 of our investigation process and would be extremely grateful if you could write to us to let us know if you now consider the matter resolved so that we can guide you accordingly.

(Use the following paragraphs if deemed inconclusive:)

The Blue Coat School regrets that it has been unable to establish whether or not your complaint can be substantiated but seeks to reassure you that we are a school that is committed to improvement. As part of our investigation into this complaint, we have identified a number of learning points for the school to consider as it looks forward.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter and the issues you have drawn to our attention. We hope that you are satisfied with the outcome of stage 3 of our investigation process and would be extremely grateful if you could write to us to let us know if you now consider the matter resolved so that we can guide you accordingly.

(Use the following paragraphs if not upheld:)

The Blue Coat School is not able to uphold any aspects of your complaint but seeks to reassure you that we are a school that is committed to improvement. As part of our investigation into this complaint, we have identified a number of learning points for the school to consider as it looks forward.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter and the issues you have drawn to our attention. We hope that you are satisfied with the outcome of stage 3 of our investigation process and would be extremely grateful if you could write to us to let us know if you now consider the matter resolved so that we can guide you accordingly.

Yours sincerely

Annex I: Letter of acknowledgement (Referral to Secretary of State)

This template will be used to acknowledge receipt of a complainant's dissatisfaction at stage 3 and present the required information to support good communication with the complainant during a referral to the Secretary of State.

Dear [name]

Re: [Title of complaint]

Thank you for your [email/letter] dated [date] received by the school on [date].

In your correspondence you have formally expressed your dissatisfaction about the findings of stage 3 of your recent complaint.

In line with The Blue Coat School's complaints policy, this matter should be referred by you to the Educational Funding Agency (EFA) who will independently consider your complaint. You can find additional guidance about how the EFA will handle your complaint at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/complaints-procedure>

If you choose to refer to the matter to the EFA, it is important that we temporarily suspend communication with you about your complaint during their independent investigation. We will write to you again about this matter following completion of the EFA's investigation.

The Blue Coat School regrets it has been unable to resolve your complaint satisfactorily and remains open to direct dialogue to seek a resolution should you wish.

To support the correct communication between ourselves at this time, I would be extremely grateful if you would confirm your intentions.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter.

Yours sincerely

Annex J: How to refer a complaint to the Secretary of State

After stage 3, the complainant is entitled to consider referring the complaint to the Secretary of State. More information about how the DFE will handle the complaint can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/complaints-procedure>

Complaints can be submitted by post to:

Ministerial and Public Communications Division
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Or through the DFE's online form at:

<https://form.education.gov.uk>

Annex K: Letter of conclusion (Referral to Secretary of State)

This template should be used to communicate the findings of a referral by the complainant to the Secretary of State.

Dear [Name]

Re: [Title of complaint]

Thank you for the time you have given to The Blue Coat School's complaints process. We regret that we have been unable to resolve your concerns at stage 1, 2, or 3 of our complaints policy and consequently you felt that it was necessary to refer your complaint to The Department for Education (DfE).

We can confirm that the DfE [are not willing to investigate you complaint because... / have investigated your complaint and...]. This letter... [serves to explain why / serves to outline their findings].

The Department for Education's view

[Summarise the key findings of the DfE as appropriate]

Summary

The Blue Coat School fully [accepts/supports] the findings of stage 3 of the investigation into your complaint.

(Use the following paragraphs if upheld:)

The Blue Coat School offers you its unreserved apologies about all of the aspects you have raised in this complaint. Given the findings of this investigation it is appropriate that the school now addresses the following issue/s:

- Point 1 to follow up
- Point 2 to follow up

We further seek to reassure you that we are a school that is committed to improvement. As part of our investigation into this complaint, we have identified a number of learning points for the school to consider as it looks forward.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter and the issues you have drawn to our attention. We hope that you are satisfied with the outcome of stage 2 of our investigation process and would be extremely grateful if you could write to us to let us know if you now consider the matter resolved so that we can guide you accordingly.

(Use the following paragraph if not upheld)

The Blue Coat School is satisfied that the DfE is unable to uphold any aspects of your complaint but seeks to reassure you that we are a school that is committed to improvement. As part of our investigation into this complaint, we have identified a number of learning points for the school to consider as it looks forward.

Thank you for writing to us about this matter and the issues you have drawn to our attention. We hope that you are satisfied with the outcome of stage 2 of our investigation process and would be extremely grateful if you could write to us to let us know if you now consider the matter resolved so that we can guide you accordingly.

Yours sincerely