

Best Foot Forward – Complaints Policy

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Assigned Review Period: 1 Year

Next Review Due: October 2026

1. Policy Statement

Best Foot Forward is committed to working in partnership with students, parents/carers, referrers and local authorities. We value feedback and will respond to concerns or complaints fairly, consistently and without delay.

Complaints are an opportunity to listen, learn, and improve the quality of our services.

2. Purpose

This policy ensures:

- Complaints are handled promptly, fairly and transparently.
- Complainants are treated with respect and kept informed.
- Staff are supported when a complaint is raised.
- Lessons learned are used to improve services.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Students, parents/carers, referrers, local authorities and members of the public.
- All aspects of Best Foot Forward provision, including teaching, mentoring, safeguarding, administration and communication.

This policy does not cover:

- Staff grievances (see Grievance Policy).
- Allegations of abuse against staff (see Managing Allegations Policy).
- Whistleblowing concerns (see Whistleblowing Policy).

4. Principles

- Complaints will be taken seriously and handled confidentially.
- We aim to resolve concerns informally where possible.
- No complainant will be disadvantaged for raising a complaint.
- Complaints will be investigated objectively by someone not directly involved.
- Complaints will be monitored for equality to ensure no discrimination.

5. Stages of the Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- Concerns should be raised as soon as possible with the relevant staff member, tutor or mentor.
- Where possible, issues will be resolved informally through discussion.
- A written record will be kept of the concern and any outcome.

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Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

- If unresolved, or if the issue is serious, a written complaint should be submitted to the CEO (via email or letter).
- Acknowledgement will be sent within **5 working days**.
- The complaint will be investigated, and a written response provided within **20 working days**.
- If additional time is needed (e.g. to gather evidence), the complainant will be informed.

Stage 3 – Appeal

- If dissatisfied, the complainant may request an appeal.
- An appeal panel will be convened, consisting of at least two senior staff not previously involved, and (where appropriate) an independent representative.
- The panel will review the complaint and provide a final written decision within **20 working days**.
- The panel's decision is final within Best Foot Forward.

6. Safeguarding Complaints

- Where a complaint raises a safeguarding concern, it will be handled under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and may be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- Safeguarding complaints will always take priority.

7. External Escalation

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after exhausting Best Foot Forward procedures, they may contact:

- **Local Authority commissioning the service.**
- **Ofsted** (for matters relating to education provision):
 - Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
 - Helpline: 0300 123 4666

8. Confidentiality and Record-Keeping

- All complaints will be logged and stored securely in line with *Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR*.
- Records will include details of the complaint, investigation, outcome, and any actions taken.
- Anonymised data will be reviewed to identify trends and service improvements.

9. Monitoring and Review

- The CEOs will monitor complaints and report themes to the senior leadership team.
 - Lessons learned will be shared with staff and, where appropriate, parents/carers and referrers.
 - This policy will be reviewed annually or earlier if guidance changes.
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