

BRIGHTON FORWARD



Brighton Forward Complaints Policy and Procedure For Post-16 and Alternative Provision Key Stage 4 Students

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Brighton Forward is committed to reviewing its policy and good practice annually.

Reviewed by: Laura Vallone
Review date: 22nd March 2026
Next review: March 2027

1. Introduction

Brighton Forward is committed to providing a safe, supportive, and effective learning environment for all students, including those in Post-16 and Alternative Provision Key Stage 4. We recognise that concerns or complaints may arise, and this policy ensures that complaints are handled fairly, promptly, and transparently, in accordance with statutory guidance.

2. Difference Between a Concern and a Complaint

A **concern** is an expression of worry or doubt about an issue that is important to the individual, where reassurance or clarification is sought. Concerns are often raised informally and can usually be resolved quickly through discussion or explanation.

A **complaint** is a formal expression of dissatisfaction regarding an action taken, a lack of action, or the quality of a service provided. Complaints require a more structured response and investigation through the formal stages of the complaints procedure.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are addressed promptly and effectively. Many issues can be resolved informally at the earliest stage without the need to proceed to a formal complaint.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all students, parents, carers, and representatives involved with Brighton Forward's Post-16 provision and Alternative Provision Key Stage 4.

4. Principles

- Complaints will be treated seriously, confidentially, and without discrimination.
- We aim to resolve complaints informally where possible.
- Clear timescales are set for each stage of the procedure.
- Complainants may be accompanied at formal hearings.
- Records of complaints and outcomes will be securely maintained.
- Vexatious complaints will be managed appropriately to protect the college community.

5. Differentiated Complaint Procedures

5.1 Post-16 Students

Post-16 students follow a complaints procedure aligned with further education and Skills Funding Agency guidance.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

- Raise concerns with the relevant staff member (teacher, key worker, or Managing Director (MD)).
- Staff will seek to resolve the issue promptly.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

- If the concern cannot be resolved informally or through initial formal channels, the complainant should submit a written complaint addressed to the MD of Brighton Forward.
- **Acknowledgement within 5 working days:** The MD should promptly confirm receipt of the complaint in writing (email or letter), ensuring the complainant knows the complaint is being taken seriously and outlining the next steps and expected timelines.
- **Response within 20 working days:** The MD is responsible for overseeing the investigation and ensuring a thorough and timely written response is provided within this timeframe. This response should include findings, conclusions, and any actions or remedies.

Stage 3: Complaints Panel Hearing

- If dissatisfied, request a panel hearing with at least three members, including one independent person.
- The complainant may attend and be accompanied.
- Panel findings and recommendations will be provided in writing.

Stage 4: Escalation

- If unresolved, complainants may escalate to commissioning local authority.
- The local authority will review whether the complaint was handled properly, not the substance.

5.2 Alternative Provision Key Stage 4 Students

Complaints about the education, support, or environment provided directly by Brighton Forward should be addressed through Brighton Forward's complaints procedure.

Complaints related to decisions, policies, or provision made by the home school (such as placement decisions, EHC plan implementation, or other school-level concerns) should be directed through the home school's complaints procedure. The home school will be notified at every stage.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

- Raise concerns with the relevant staff member or MD.
- Staff will seek prompt resolution.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

- If the concern cannot be resolved informally or through initial formal channels, the complainant should submit a written complaint addressed to the MD of Brighton Forward.
- **Acknowledgement within 5 working days:** The MD should promptly confirm receipt of the complaint in writing (email or letter), ensuring the complainant knows the complaint is being taken seriously and outlining the next steps and expected timelines.
- **Response within 20 working days:** The MD is responsible for overseeing the investigation and ensuring a thorough and timely written response is provided within this timeframe. This response should include findings, conclusions, and any actions or remedies.

Stage 3: Complaints Panel Hearing

- The panel hearing is a key part of the formal complaints procedure and should include at least three people, one of whom must be independent of the management and running of the college.
- The complainant has the right to attend and be accompanied by a supporter.
- The panel provides written findings and recommendations, ensuring transparency and fairness.

Stage 4: Escalation

- Since the student is on roll at their home school, complaints about decisions made by the local authority (such as EHC needs assessments or exclusions) fall under the local authority's complaints service.
- If unresolved at the local level, complaints can be referred to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), which investigates maladministration in how decisions were made but does not reassess the decisions themselves.

6. Vexatious Complaints

Brighton Forward is committed to fair complaint handling. Complaints deemed vexatious—repetitive, unreasonable, or disruptive—may result in:

- Limiting further contact on the issue.
- Declining to investigate repeated complaints without new evidence.
- Protecting staff and students from distress.

- Ensuring resources focus on supporting all students.

7. Confidentiality and Record-Keeping

- All complaints and correspondence are confidential and securely stored.
- Records include complaint details, resolution stages, outcomes, and actions taken.
- Information is shared only on a need-to-know basis or as legally required.

8. Accessibility and Support

- This procedure is available in writing and explained to students, parents, and carers.
- Support is offered to help make or understand complaints.

9. Contact Details

- Managing Director: Laura Vallone, laura@brightonforward.co.uk
- Education Funding Agency (EFA): <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-funding-agency>
- Skills Funding Agency: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/skills-funding-agency>
- Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)
 - Phone: 0300 061 0614
 - Address: PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH
 - Website: <https://www.lgo.org.uk/>

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Laura Vallone who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Student's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the student (if relevant):
Address:
Postcode:
Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the college about it.
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature:
Date:
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By whom:
Complaint referred to:
Date: