



CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS POLICY

Policy Owner: Principal / Proprietor

Applies to: Students, parents/carers, staff, teachers, volunteers, customers and visitors

Effective Date: September 2026

Review Date: September 2027

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Top Hat Theatre School aims to provide a **high-quality, professional, welcoming and efficient service** to all students, parents, carers, staff and visitors.

We recognise that, occasionally, concerns or complaints may arise. We take all complaints seriously and are committed to dealing with them **fairly, respectfully, consistently and as promptly as reasonably possible**.

A complaint will not adversely affect a student's participation in classes, performances, examinations or other activities simply because a parent or carer has raised a concern.

2. PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

This policy sets out how Top Hat Theatre School will:

- receive and acknowledge complaints;
 - ensure complaints are considered fairly and objectively;
 - investigate concerns appropriately;
 - communicate with complainants courteously and professionally;
 - provide a clear response;
 - learn from complaints where appropriate; and
 - ensure that complaints involving safeguarding or serious welfare concerns are dealt with through the appropriate safeguarding procedures.
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3. WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the service, conduct, decision, action or omission of Top Hat Theatre School, its staff, teachers or representatives.

Examples may include concerns about:

- the delivery of classes or services;
- communication;
- administration;
- customer service;
- facilities;
- staff or teacher conduct;
- decisions relating to school activities; or
- another aspect of the service provided by Top Hat Theatre School.

A complaint is different from a routine question, request for information or minor issue that can be resolved informally.

Where possible, Top Hat will seek to resolve straightforward concerns informally before they become formal complaints.

4. RAISING A COMPLAINT

Complaints should normally be made **in writing** by email or letter to the Principal.

The complaint should include:

- the complainant's name and contact details;
- the nature of the complaint;
- the name of any member of staff or teacher involved, where known;
- relevant dates and details;
- any supporting information or evidence; and
- the outcome or resolution being sought, where appropriate.

Providing full and accurate information helps Top Hat investigate the matter efficiently.

Complaints should be sent to:

Julie McKenna

Principal / Proprietor
Top Hat Theatre School
Unit 4 Dallington Fields Business Park
Northampton
NN5 7QD

Email: julie@tophattheatreschool.co.uk

Telephone: 01604 588544

5. ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

Top Hat recognises that there may be circumstances in which someone wishes to raise a concern anonymously.

Anonymous complaints may be considered where sufficient information is provided to allow the matter to be assessed or investigated.

However, it may not always be possible to investigate or respond fully where the complainant cannot be identified or contacted.

Where an anonymous complaint raises a potential **safeguarding, child protection or serious welfare concern**, Top Hat will consider the information and take any appropriate action regardless of whether the complainant can be identified.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Written complaints will normally be acknowledged within **5 working days**.

The acknowledgement will confirm:

- that the complaint has been received;
- who is dealing with the complaint;
- whether further information is required; and
- the anticipated timescale for a response.

Where a complaint is particularly complex or requires information from several people, it may take longer to investigate. The complainant will be kept informed where there is a significant delay.

7. INVESTIGATION

The Principal, or another appropriate person appointed by the Principal, will investigate the complaint.

The investigation may include:

- reviewing relevant records and correspondence;
- speaking to staff or teachers involved;
- speaking to students where appropriate and in a manner suitable to their age and circumstances;
- reviewing relevant policies and procedures;
- considering supporting documentation, photographs, messages or other evidence; and
- obtaining further information from the complainant where necessary.

Complaints will be considered **objectively and without automatically assuming that either party is right or wrong**.

Where a complaint concerns the Principal, an appropriate alternative person may be appointed to consider the complaint where reasonably practicable.

8. RESPONSE TO COMPLAINTS

Top Hat will aim to provide a substantive written response within **10 working days** of receiving all information reasonably required to investigate the complaint.

The response will, where appropriate:

- summarise the complaint;
- explain the relevant findings;
- confirm whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld;
- explain any action being taken; and
- identify any learning or changes to practice where appropriate.

Where a longer investigation is necessary, the complainant will be informed of the reason and given an updated timescale.

9. COMPLAINTS INVOLVING CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE

Where a complaint concerns the treatment, behaviour or welfare of a child or young person, Top Hat will consider the child's best interests and any relevant safeguarding considerations.

Children and young people may be spoken to as part of an investigation where appropriate, taking account of their age, understanding and welfare.

Information will only be shared with those who need it for the purpose of dealing with the complaint or safeguarding those involved.

A complaint must not be used as a means of encouraging a child to confront another child or member of staff.

10. SAFEGUARDING COMPLAINTS

Complaints or concerns that involve:

- abuse or neglect;
- inappropriate behaviour towards a child;
- allegations against a member of staff or other adult;
- serious welfare concerns; or
- any matter which may place a child at risk

will **not be dealt with solely under the normal customer complaints procedure.**

Such concerns will be referred immediately to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** and managed in accordance with Top Hat Theatre School's **Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy** and any appropriate external safeguarding procedures.

Where an allegation concerns the Principal or DSL, an alternative appropriate safeguarding route will be considered.

11. COMPLAINTS ABOUT STAFF OR TEACHERS

Where a complaint concerns the conduct or behaviour of a member of staff or teacher, the individual will be given an appropriate opportunity to provide their account.

Confidentiality will be maintained as far as reasonably possible.

Where the complaint raises a potential safeguarding, disciplinary or serious professional conduct issue, the matter may be dealt with under the relevant safeguarding or staff procedures rather than solely through this complaints policy.

12. PROFESSIONAL AND RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION

Top Hat is committed to treating complainants courteously and respectfully and expects the same in return.

Complaints should be communicated calmly and without:

- abusive or threatening language;
- personal insults;
- harassment;
- intimidation;
- discriminatory language; or
- repeated communications intended to cause distress rather than resolve the issue.

Top Hat may take reasonable steps to manage communications where behaviour becomes unreasonable or abusive.

This does **not** prevent a person from making a legitimate complaint or expressing dissatisfaction.

13. SOCIAL MEDIA COMPLAINTS

Social media is not normally an appropriate forum for resolving formal complaints.

Where a concern is raised publicly on social media, Top Hat may invite the individual to raise the matter privately through the formal complaints procedure.

Top Hat will not discuss confidential information about students, families or staff publicly.

Where comments contain abusive, threatening, discriminatory, defamatory or confidential material, Top Hat may take appropriate action in accordance with its social media procedures.

14. RECORDING AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All formal complaints will be recorded appropriately.

Records may include:

- the original complaint;
- correspondence;
- evidence considered;
- investigation notes;
- the outcome; and
- any action taken.

Complaint records will be stored securely and handled in accordance with applicable data protection requirements and Top Hat's **Data Protection & Privacy Policy**.

Information will be shared only where there is a legitimate reason to do so.

15. VEXATIOUS OR REPEATED COMPLAINTS

Top Hat will always consider genuine concerns.

However, where a complaint is demonstrably repetitive, unreasonable or is being pursued in a way that prevents the school from operating effectively, Top Hat may take reasonable steps to manage further correspondence.

This may include:

- identifying a single point of contact;
- limiting communication to written correspondence;

- setting reasonable communication timescales; or
- explaining that further correspondence on the same matter will not receive a substantive response unless new information is provided.

This will not prevent Top Hat from acting on **new information or safeguarding concerns**.

16. OUTCOMES AND LEARNING

Top Hat views complaints as an opportunity to review and improve its practice.

Where appropriate, complaints may result in:

- changes to procedures;
- additional staff training;
- improvements to communication;
- changes to facilities or systems; or
- other appropriate action.

However, Top Hat will not disclose confidential information about another individual as part of a complaint response.

17. COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE OUTCOME

If a complainant remains dissatisfied following the response, they may write to the Principal explaining the specific reasons for their dissatisfaction and providing any new information that they believe should be considered.

Where appropriate and reasonably practicable, the matter may be reviewed by someone who was not directly involved in the original decision.

The purpose of a review is to consider whether the complaint was handled fairly and whether relevant information was properly considered. It is not necessarily a complete reinvestigation of every aspect of the original complaint.

18. RELATED POLICIES

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
 - Anti-Bullying Policy
 - Equality, Diversity & Equal Opportunities Policy
 - Health & Safety Policy
 - Data Protection & Privacy Policy
 - Staff Code of Conduct
 - Social Media Policy
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19. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are significant changes to legislation, guidance, Top Hat Theatre School's services or operating arrangements.

DECLARATION

Top Hat Theatre School is committed to listening to concerns, responding appropriately and maintaining professional relationships with students, parents, carers, staff and customers.

Policy Owner: Julie McKenna, Principal / Proprietor

Signed: 

Name/Role: Julie McKenna Company Director

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Review Date: September 2027