



DATA PROTECTION COMPLAINT POLICY

Version 1.1

Statutory

Policy Owner:
Director of Governance and
Compliance

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Approved By:
Trust Board

Version History

Version	Date Approved	Amendments (Briefly Detail Changes and section/page number)	Substantive or Operational Amendment	Approved By: Substantive – Trust Board Operational – Head of Function/CEO
<i>Example 1.0</i>	<i>06.01.2026</i>	<i>Page 4 – update to the relevant legislation Page 6 – update to the role holder in the Trust</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>CEO</i>
1.0	16.09.26	The Data (Use and Access) Act introduced a legal requirement to provide a way to make a data protection complaint process. Based on the policy by PHP Law	Substantive	Trust Board
1.1	25.09.26	Update policy to include Appendix A – Data Use and Access Complaint Form	Operational	Director of Governance and Compliance

Contents

1.0	Introduction	4
2.0	Roles and responsibilities	4
3.0	Scope	4
4.0	Principles	5
5.0	The Complaint Procedure	5
6.0	Response	6
7.0	Escalation.....	6
8.0	Policy Review	6
	Appendix A	7
	Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 – Complaint Form	7
	Part 1: Complainant's Details	7
	Part 2: Details of the complaint	8
	Part 3: Supporting evidence	9
	Part 4: Desired outcome	9
	Part 5: Declaration	9

Data Protection Complaint Policy

1.0 Introduction

Esteem Multi-Academy Trust (EMAT) is committed to protecting the privacy and personal data of its students, staff, parents/carers, governors and the wider school community. This policy outlines the procedure for handling complaints related to data use and access, in accordance with the Data (Use and Access) Act (DUAA) and other relevant UK data protection legislation, including the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018).

The UK GDPR documents as set out on our website provide an overview of how personal data is managed across our academies.

Any complaint that is linked to other matters whether raised as a formal or informal complaint are to be dealt with under the standard complaint process as outlined within the main complaint policy.

2.0 Roles and responsibilities

The Data Controller (DC) is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and the legal obligations imposed by the UK GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018, DUAA 2025 and other relevant legislation. The DC will delegate day to day management of this to the relevant staff member and the DC will expect that staff member to investigate any complaint unless there is a conflict of interest, in which case the DC will appoint a suitable person.

The headteacher and leadership team at each academy are responsible for ensuring all staff are aware of this policy and their data protection obligations.

All staff members are responsible for handling personal data in a secure and lawful manner and for co-operating fully with any investigation into a data use or access complaint.

3.0 Scope

This policy applies to all individuals who have dealings with Trust/Academy and believe that their personal data has been used or accessed inappropriately, or that their rights under the DUAA and other data protection laws have been infringed.

This includes but is not limited to:

- current and former students
- parents/carers
- school staff (teaching, support, and administrative)
- governors
- volunteers
- contractors and suppliers

4.0 Principles

- 4.1 Fairness and transparency: All complaints will be handled in a fair, impartial and transparent manner.
- 4.2 Confidentiality: Complaints and all related information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, unless disclosure is required by law.
- 4.3 Timeliness: Complaints will be acknowledged and investigated in a prompt manner.
- 4.4 Compliance: All actions taken will comply with the DUAA, UK GDPR, DPA 2018, and other relevant legislation.

5.0 The Complaint Procedure

5.1 Step 1 – Information resolution

We encourage individuals to first attempt an informal resolution of their concerns. If you have a concern about data use or access, you should, in the first instance, raise it with the relevant member of staff: **EMAT or School GDPR Lead**.

In many cases, issues can be resolved quickly and informally at this stage.

5.2 Step 2 – Formal complaint submission

If the informal approach is not successful or deemed inappropriate, a formal complaint should be submitted in writing using the complaint form attached.

The complaint should be addressed to the relevant GDPR lead for EMAT or relevant academy GDPR Leads

The written complaint should be made on the form in **Appendix A** (Data (Use and Access) 2025 Complaint Form) which is also on the [EMAT Website](#) - and shall include the following information:

- your full name and contact details.
- a clear and concise description of the complaint, including what happened, when it happened, and who was involved.
- a description of the data involved and how you believe it was used or accessed inappropriately.
- any relevant dates, times, or evidence.
- details of any informal steps you have already taken to resolve the issue.
- the desired outcome of the complaint.

5.3 Step 3 – Acknowledgement and investigation

You will receive an acknowledgment of the written complaint within 5 working days of the setting receiving it. The DC will conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the complaint.

This may involve:

- interviewing the complainant
- interviewing relevant staff members
- reviewing school records, logs, and policies
- consulting with external legal or data protection experts if necessary

The academy/EMAT will aim to complete the investigation and provide a substantive response within 20 working days of the complaint's acknowledgment. If the investigation is complex and requires more time, the DC will write to the complainant to explain the reason for the delay and provide a new estimated completion date.

6.0 Response

The DC will provide a formal written response to the complainant.

This response will include:

- the findings of the investigation.
- a clear and reasoned conclusion as to whether the DUAA or other data protection laws have been breached.
- details of any corrective action taken or planned to prevent a recurrence of the issue.
- the outcome of the complaint, including whether it has been upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld.
- information on the next steps available to the complainant if they remain dissatisfied.

7.0 Escalation

If the complainant is not satisfied with the final response, they have the right to escalate their complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

The ICO's contact details are as follows:

Website: <https://ico.org.uk>

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Postal Address: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

8.0 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Data Protection Officer and the Trust leadership team to ensure it remains relevant, effective, and compliant with all current legislation.

Appendix A

Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 – Complaint Form (To be completed by the complainant)

Please return this form to Esteem Multi-Academy Trust (EMAT) GDPR lead (info@esteemmat.co.uk) or the school's GDPR lead. Contact information for each school can be found [here](#).

Part 1: Complainant's Details

Please provide your full contact information so we can communicate with you regarding your complaint.

Full Name:	
Relationship to EMAT/School: (e.g. student, parent/carer, staff member, former student, volunteer, contractor)	
Complete if you are the student:	
Year group:	
Form/class:	
Complete if you are the parent/carer submitting on behalf of a student:	
Student's full name:	
Student's year group:	
Contact telephone number:	
Email address:	
Postal address:	
Preferred method of contact: (e.g. email, phone or post)	

Part 2: Details of the complaint

Please provide a clear and concise description of your complaint:

Date(s) of the incident(s)	
When did the misuse occur or when did you become aware of it?	
Nature of the complaint	
Please tick all that apply and provide details below:	
Unauthorised access to personal data	
Unauthorised disclosure of personal data	
Incorrect or inaccurate personal data	
Unlawful processing or use of personal data	
Failure to respond to a data subject request e.g. Subject Access Request or Right to Erasure	
Other (please specify)	
Description of the incident(s)	
What happened? Provide a detailed narrative of the events.	
Who do you believe was involved? e.g. specific staff member, department, external party	
What personal data was involved? e.g. name, address, medical information, academic records, disciplinary records, financial details, sensitive personal data	
How do you believe your data was misused or accessed inappropriately?	
Where did the incident occur (if applicable)	
Has there been any previous attempts to resolve this issue informally? e.g. discussed with a teacher, GDPR lead, head of department.	Yes or No
If yes, please provide details of who you spoke to and when.	

Part 3: Supporting evidence

Please list and attach any evidence that supports your complaint. This could include:

- emails or correspondence
- screenshots
- dates and times of relevant events
- witness statements (if applicable)

Please list attached documents here:

Part 4: Desired outcome

Please specify the resolution that you are seeking as a result of this complaint?

☐	Investigation and explanation of what happened
☐	Correction of inaccurate data
☐	Deletion of unlawfully processed data
☐	An apology
☐	Assurance that similar incidents will not occur in the future
☐	Other (please specify):

Part 5: Declaration

I understand that the Trust / School will investigate this complaint in accordance with its Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 Complaint Process.

Signature: