



Complaints Policy

History of document: To be reviewed annually and re-approved every two years, or sooner if deemed necessary.

Issue number	Author	Date written	Approved by Board	Comments
1	C Burt	September 2016	23/05/2017	
2	J Goodwin	May 2019	21/05/2019	
3	H Boulton	July 2020	21/07/2020	

1. BACKGROUND

All academies must have a complaints procedure. This must meet the standards set out in the [Education \(Independent School Standards \(England\) Regulations 2014](#) Schedule 1, Part 7, which sets out how complaints procedures should be drawn up and used effectively to handle complaints from parents of pupils.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. The Trust aims to provide an outstanding service to the young people and families it serves, as well as the local community it operates in. The Trust is committed to working in partnership with students, parents/carers and other concerned individuals to ensure it continues to improve and takes account of the views of all its stakeholders. However, individuals may have occasion to express concern or make a complaint. The purpose of this document is to outline how concerns and complaints should be resolved.
- 2.2. This complaints procedure is not limited to parents/carers of children registered at Trust schools. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to the Trust, and its schools, about any provision of facilities or services we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures we will use this complaints procedure.
- 2.3. In most instances, concerns will be dealt with by staff before they reach the stage of a formal complaint.

3. INFORMAL STAGE

- 3.1. Parents/Carers should feel free to raise their concerns with the Head of Year/Class Teacher or other appropriate member of staff either in person, by telephone or in writing. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have the appropriate consent to do so. Other parties should raise their complaint with the school office. If calling in person or telephoning, the complaint will be recorded onto the attached Complaint Form.
- 3.2. Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at the Formal Stage.
- 3.3. The Trust and its Schools are committed to responding as quickly as possible to any issues raised i.e. staff will listen to parents' concerns and seek to reach a speedy and satisfactory resolution.
- 3.4. Complainants will, where possible, receive a response to their concern within 3 school days. If it is not possible to meet this deadline they will be informed of when a response will be made.
- 3.5. If, after attempting to resolve the issue informally, a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome they will be provided with information about the

formal complaints procedure (go to Formal Stage 1).

- 3.6. A complaint about the conduct of a Headteacher should be made to the Chair of the Local Governing Body.
A complaint about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office.
A complaint about Trust CEO and/or Trust Central Services should be made to the Chair of Trustees.
A complaint about the Chair of Trustees, any individual trustee or the whole Trust Board should be addressed to the Clerk to the Trustees via the Trust office.
- 3.7. A written record will be made, and retained, of informal complaints received and any action taken. A Complaint Form is attached to this policy.
- 3.8. We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher, Chair of Governors or Chair of Trust Board, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.
- 3.9. We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

4. FORMAL STAGE 1: HEADTEACHER / TRUST CEO

- 4.1. Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made to the Headteacher, via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone. Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to [the Chair of Governors](#) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
- 4.2. Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged within 3 school days and will specify how the complaint will be investigated, by whom and the timescale within which a full response will be made.
- 4.3. The Investigating officer will ensure that a full response is made within 10 school days. If the timescale needs to be extended, parents/carers will be informed.
- 4.4. The Headteacher may nominate a senior member of staff, who has had no prior involvement with the complaint, to investigate.
- 4.5. During the investigation the Headteacher, or nominated person, may contact the complainant to clarify the details of the complaint and speak to other persons as necessary.
- 4.6. A Complainant will be allowed the opportunity to meet with the investigating officer and to be accompanied by a friend or relative to speak on their behalf or help them make their case.

- 4.7. The Headteacher, or nominated person investigating the complaint, will interview relevant witnesses and take statements from those involved.
- 4.8. If the complaint involves a pupil, he/she should also be interviewed, normally with a parent/carer present. In some cases, this might not be possible and a member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable should attend the interview.
- 4.9. The investigating officer should keep written records of all meetings and telephone conversations undertaken as part of the investigation together with any other relevant documentation.
- 4.10. A full written response will be made to the complainant who may be offered a further meeting to explain how the investigation was carried out and how decisions were reached.
- 4.11. The complainant will be advised that if they are dissatisfied with the outcome they may take the matter further by escalating it to Formal Stage 2. This request should be made to the Chair of the Local Governing Body, again via the school office, within 10 school days of receipt of the letter from the Headteacher.
- 4.12. Where the Trust considers the scope of the complaint warrants it, external independent investigating support may be engaged.
- 4.13. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.
- 4.14. Complaints about the Headteacher must be made to the Chair of Governors. Complaints about any member of the governing body must be addressed to the Clerk via the school office.
- 4.15. If the complaint is:
 - jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
 - the entire governing body or
 - the majority of the governing body

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

5. FORMAL STAGE 2: APPEAL TO PANEL OF LOCAL GOVERNORS / TRUSTEES

- 5.1. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 there will be a further and final right of appeal to a specially convened panel of governors or trustees.
- 5.2. Appeals should be lodged with the Chair of Local Governors / Trust Board within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 decision.
- 5.3. The panel will meet within 20 school days of receiving the complaint and the complainant and the Headteacher will be informed of the date, time and venue of the hearing.
- 5.4. The complainant will receive, at least five days before the panel meets, a written reply from the investigating officer explaining how the decision at Stage 1 had been made, unless this has already been provided under 4.10 above. Any submissions from the complainant should be received a minimum of 5 school days before the appeal.
- 5.5. The panel will comprise of at least 2 governors who have had no previous knowledge of, or involvement in, the case and an additional independent person. The panel should not include teaching or staff governors. The panel must make provision to include one person who is independent of the management and running of the school.
- 5.6. The panel will appoint its own Chair, normally the Chair or Vice-chair of the Local Governing Body. The Chair of the panel will ensure that the appeal hearing is minuted.
- 5.7. The panel will consider the way the complaint has been investigated and handled by the school. The panel will carry out a review of the investigation carried out at Formal Stage 1. It will hear the report of the investigating officer at Formal Stage 1 and any submissions on that report by the complainant. **The review should not entail a rehearing of the case.**
- 5.8. It will be open to the governors to uphold the complaint and/or direct a different remedy to that decided upon by the investigating officer at Stage 1.
- 5.9. The complainant may be accompanied by a friend or relative to speak on their behalf or help present their case.
- 5.10. The decision of the panel is final and will be communicated in writing to the complainant and the Headteacher within 3 school days.
- 5.11. Where the Trust considers the scope of the complaint warrants it, external independent investigating support may be engaged.
- 5.12. If the complaint is:
 - jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
 - the entire governing body or
 - the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent, co-opted governors.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions [the school or Trust](#) will take to resolve the complaint. The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied (see 5.13).

- 5.13. A further stage of appeal can be taken to the Secretary of State at the Department for Education, but only on the grounds that the governing body is acting or proposing to act unreasonably or illegally. This can be either online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

- 5.14. The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the Trust.
- 5.15. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Notes:

Persistent complainants and vexatious actions – complaints will be thoroughly investigated but will not be re-opened unless relevant new issues are brought forward, in which case these will be investigated in accordance with the Complaints Procedure.



Complaint Form

Please complete and return, via the school office, to the Head Teacher, Chair of Governors or Clerk to Governors, as appropriate, marked Private and Confidential.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address:
Post Code:
Telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anyone about it already:

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:
Name of sender:
Complaint referred to for action and date:
Outcome: