Complaints Policy and Procedure

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This policy is published on the Inspire Learning Partnership website. Academy websites provide a direct link to the Trust's policy page where this procedure can be accessed. Hard copies are available on request.

This Policy and Procedure document has been developed in accordance with:

- Part 7 of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014;
- Department for Education (DfE) Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures;
- Department for Education requirements for academy trust complaints procedures.

This document supports the Trust's commitment to openness, accountability, continuous improvement and effective engagement with pupils, families and stakeholders.

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Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at schools within the Trust.The Trust will ordinarily apply this procedure to complaints from other parties, although the Trust reserves the right to determine an appropriate alternative process where necessary.. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to

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exclusions or admissions or staff workplace issues (grievances) and disciplinary procedures), we will use this complaints procedure.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as '*an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought*'.

A complaint may be defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*'.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the Complaints Policy and Procedure. Inspire Learning Partnership takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, The Headteacher/CEO/Chair of the Trust Board (as applicable) will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, The Headteacher/CEO/Chair of the Trust Board will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the Inspire Learning Partnership will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this Complaints Policy and Procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

The Trust encourages complainants to raise concerns at the earliest opportunity and to communicate respectfully and constructively throughout the process. Concerns are often resolved most effectively by the staff member closest to the issue.

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, if they have appropriate consent to do so.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher via the school office**.** Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Please mark them as Private and Confidential and send them to: rosie.perry@ilpartnership.org.

Complaints about the Chair of the Local Academy Committee, any individual Local Academy Committee member or the whole Local Academy Committee, should be addressed to our Governance Professional. Please mark them as Private and Confidential and send them to: rosie.perry@ilpartnership.org.

Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or a Trustee of the Trust, should be addressed to the Chair of the Board of Trustees, via the Trust office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential and send them to: rob.shaw@ilpartnership.org.

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For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the relevant school office. You can also ask a third-party organisation for example like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher/CEO or Chair of the Trust Board (as applicable), if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Generated Correspondence

The Trust recognises that complainants may choose to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools to assist them in drafting correspondence.

The use of AI does not prevent a complaint from being considered. However, complainants remain responsible for the accuracy and content of any correspondence submitted in their name.

Where correspondence appears to have been generated wholly or partly using AI, the Trust may:

- seek clarification regarding the specific concerns being raised;
- ask the complainant to confirm that the views expressed accurately reflect their own concerns and desired outcomes;
- request that lengthy, repetitive or excessively detailed submissions are summarised to enable an effective investigation.

The Trust will consider the substance of a complaint rather than the format in which it is presented. However, complaints must contain sufficient factual information to enable a fair investigation and resolution.

Where issues have already been fully considered under this procedure, the Trust may determine that further repetitive, duplicated or substantially similar correspondence does not require an additional response

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will only consider complaints made outside of this time frame, if we deem that exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Scope of this Complaints Policy and Procedure

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This policy and procedure cover all complaints about any provision or services by Inspire Learning Partnership, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the local authority, as appropriate.
• Statutory assessments of special educational needs	Concerns about statutory assessments of special educational needs should be raised directly with local authorities.
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns or wish to make an allegation against an adult who works or volunteers with children, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) directly. Further details can be found on the Trust website: https://www.ilpartnership.org/Safeguarding/
• Suspension and exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about suspension or exclusion can be found at: http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through this complaints procedure.*
• Whistleblowing (Protected Disclosures)	We have an internal whistleblowing (protected disclosures) procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe Volunteers who have concerns about our Trust should complain through this complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the Trust's internal grievance (resolving workplace issues) procedures.

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• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the Trust's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.

Complaints about services provided by other suppliers who may use Trust premises or facilities should be directed to the complaints procedure for those external providers hiring the facility.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action against Inspire Learning Partnership in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Unreasonable and/or serial/persistent complaints

The Trust is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the Trust. Operating from a position of mutual respect, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive, or threatening or considered as harassment.

The Trust may consider behaviour associated with a complaint to be unreasonable where the complainant:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of the complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure;
- Insists on the complaint being dealt within in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure, other associated policies and good practice
- Demands redress that lacks any serious purpose or value
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- Submits complaints or correspondence that are excessively lengthy, repetitive, generated in multiple versions, or contain large amounts of irrelevant information which make effective investigation difficult.

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- Makes unjustified comments about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- Repeatedly makes the same or similar complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into a complaint where the Trust's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to the Department for Education (DfE)
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Makes excessive demands on Trust time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and/or by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

If the person making the complaint does so whether face-to-face, by telephone, in writing or electronically:

- Maliciously
- Aggressively
- Obsessively
- Repetitiously
- Using threats, intimidation, harassment or violence
- Using abusive, offensive, harassing or discriminatory language
- Knowing it to be false
- Using falsified information
- Publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media, websites and newspapers.

Or, where the frequency or nature of their contact with the Trust, hinders our consideration of their or other people's complaints.

If an individual's behaviour is causing a significant level of disruption, we reserve the right to implement a tailored communication strategy, which may include restricting the individual to a single point of contact via an email address and limiting the number of times they can make contact, such as a fixed number of contacts per term.

If an individual persists to the point that may constitute harassment, the Trust may seek legal advice and/or involve the Police.

Duplicate complaints

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If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account. If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

Complaint Campaigns

Where the Trust receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject or from complainants unconnected with the school/Trust, it may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school and/or Trust website and/or
- Sending a template response to all the complainants. This may include situations where similar complaints have been generated from a common template, campaign or automated drafting tool and raise substantially the same issues.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Inspire Learning Partnership wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review Trust and/or school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Complaint Records and Chronology

To ensure complaints are managed consistently and transparently, a complaint chronology must be commenced for all complaints considered under Stages 2, 2A and 3.

The individual leading each stage of the complaints procedure is responsible for maintaining and updating the chronology using the Trust's approved Complaints Chronology Template.

- The chronology should provide a clear record of:
- key dates and actions;

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- correspondence received and issued;
- meetings, telephone conversations and discussions held;
- actions arising from the complaint.

The chronology must be kept up to date throughout the relevant stage of the procedure and retained with the complaint records.

Where a complaint progresses to the next stage, the chronology and associated records must be provided to the person responsible for leading that stage to ensure continuity of information and a complete audit trail.

The completed chronology will form part of the official complaint record and may be considered during any Trust Review, Complaints Panel hearing or external review of the Trust's handling of the complaint.

Stage 1 – Informal complaints

It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis.

Concerns should be raised with the most appropriate member of staff, such as the class teacher, phase leader, subject leader, or other relevant member of staff. Where appropriate, concerns may be referred to the Headteacher for consideration.

Complainants should not approach individual members of the Local Academy Committee regarding concerns or complaints. Local Academy Committee members have no role in the investigation or determination of individual complaints and cannot act on an individual basis.

The member of staff handling the concern will seek to understand the issues raised, undertake any necessary enquiries and work with those involved to reach a resolution wherever possible.

At the conclusion of this informal stage, the complainant will normally receive a response within **10 school days** of the concern being raised.

Where the concern cannot be resolved informally, or where the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, the matter may be progressed to **Stage 2: Formal Investigation by the Headteacher**.

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation by Headteacher

If a complainant remains dissatisfied following Stage 1, they may make a formal complaint to the Headteacher via the school office, unless the complaint is about the Headteacher or a Local Academy Committee member. Complaints may be submitted in person or in writing, preferably using the Trust's Complaint Form.

The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt in writing within **2 school days.**

As part of the acknowledgement process, the Headteacher will seek to clarify:

- the nature of the complaint;
- the aspects which remain unresolved; and
- the outcome the complainant is seeking.

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Where appropriate, this may be undertaken through a meeting with the complainant.

The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school leadership team, a member of the Trust Education Support Team, or another suitably skilled investigator. However, responsibility for the final decision and outcome at this stage remains with the Headteacher.

During the investigation, the Headteacher or appointed investigator will:

- establish the facts relevant to the complaint;
- review any documentation and evidence provided;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those who are the subject of the complaint, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish; and
- maintain a written record of meetings, interviews and evidence considered during the investigation.

Following the investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within **10 school days** of the complaint being received.

Where it is not possible to meet this timescale, the complainant will be informed of the reasons for the delay and provided with a revised response date.

The written response will:

- summarise the complaint;
- outline the steps taken to investigate the complaint;
- explain the findings and conclusions reached;
- provide the reasons for the decision; and
- where appropriate, identify any actions to be taken in response to the complaint.

The response will also explain how the complainant may request a **Stage 2A: Trust Review** if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

Complaints About the Headteacher or a Local Academy Committee Member

Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, or an individual member of the Local Academy Committee (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), the complaint should be submitted to the Chief Executive Officer.

The Chief Executive Officer will appoint a suitably skilled person to undertake the Stage 2A investigation and provide the formal response. Where appropriate, this person may be independent of the Trust.

This ensures that the complaint is investigated impartially and by a person with no prior involvement in the matter.

Complaints about the Headteacher or member of the Local Academy Committee must be made to the CEO, via the Executive Assistant/Governance Professional: rosie.perry@ilpartnership.org.

Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or a Trustee of the Trust, should be addressed to the Chair of the Board of Trustees, via the Trust office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential and send them to: rob.shaw@ilpartnership.org.

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Stage 2A: Trust Review

if the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the **Stage 2 investigation or the complaint is about the Headteacher or a Local Academy Committee member**, they may request a **Stage 2A Trust Review**.

A request for a Trust Review must be made in writing to the Trust within **10 school days** of the date of the **Stage 2 outcome letter** and should set out the reasons why the complainant remains dissatisfied. Requests received outside this timescale may be accepted where reasonable grounds exist.

Upon receipt of the request, the Trust will acknowledge the request within **2 school days**.

The Trust Review will be undertaken by an appropriate senior Trust leader who has had no previous involvement in the complaint and who is sufficiently independent of the matters being reviewed.

The purpose of the Trust Review is not normally to reinvestigate the complaint unless the complaintis about the Headteacher or a Local Academy Committee member. If this is the case, the Stage 2 process will be followed. Instead, it is to consider whether:

- the complaint was investigated fairly and thoroughly at Stage 2;
- the complaints procedure was followed correctly;
- all relevant evidence was appropriately considered;
- the findings and conclusions were reasonable and proportionate; and
- any further action is required.

As part of the review, the Trust may:

- consider documentation and evidence gathered during earlier stages;
- seek clarification from those involved in the investigation;
- request additional information where necessary; and
- determine whether any aspect of the complaint requires further investigation.

Following completion of the review, the Trust will provide a written outcome within **10 school days** of receipt of the review request.

The written outcome will:

- summarise the matters reviewed;
- set out the findings of the Trust Review;
- explain the reasons for the decision reached;
- identify any actions to be taken, where appropriate; and
- advise the complainant of their right to progress the matter to **Stage 3: Complaints Panel** if they remain dissatisfied.

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The Trust Review may conclude that:

- the complaint is not upheld and the original decision remains unchanged;
- the complaint is partially upheld and further action is required; or
- the complaint is upheld and appropriate remedial action should be taken.

Where the Trust Review identifies procedural errors, incomplete investigation, or new evidence that may materially affect the outcome, the matter may be referred for further investigation before a final decision is reached.

The outcome of the Trust Review represents the Trust's final management review of the complaint before consideration by a Complaints Panel.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2A: Trust Review, they may request that the complaint is considered by a Complaints Panel. This is the final stage of the Trust's complaints procedure.

The request for a panel hearing must be made in writing to the Governance Professional within **15 school days** of receipt of the Stage 2A outcome letter. Requests received outside this timescale may be accepted where reasonable grounds exist.

The Governance Professional will acknowledge receipt of the request within **2 school days** and will arrange for a Complaints Panel to be convened.

The Complaints Panel will consist of **three individuals who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and who have had no previous involvement in considering the complaint**. At least one panel member will be independent of the management and running of the Trust.

For complaints relating to an individual school, the independent panel member may be a member of a Local Academy Committee from another academy within the Trust, provided they have no prior involvement in the complaint and no conflict of interest. Trustees will not normally act as the independent panel member for complaints relating to an academy because they have strategic oversight of the Trust and its schools.
The Governance Professional will aim to convene the panel within **20 school days** of receiving the request. Where this is not reasonably possible, the complainant will be informed of the revised timescale and the reason for the delay.The complainant will be invited to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by a relative, friend, advocate or other supporter. If the complainant is unable to attend, written representations may be submitted for consideration by the panel.

At least five school days before the hearing, the Governance Professional will:

- confirm the date, time and venue of the hearing;
- provide details of the panel arrangements;
- circulate relevant documentation to all parties; and
- request any additional written evidence.

Any additional evidence should normally be submitted no later than three school days before the hearing. Documentation will be circulated to all parties at least two school days before the hearing.

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The panel will not normally consider new complaints or matters that have not previously been investigated under Stages 1 and 2. Any new complaint will be considered separately under this procedure.

The hearing will be conducted in a fair, impartial and non-adversarial manner. The panel will consider all relevant evidence and determine whether the complaint should be upheld in whole, upheld in part or dismissed.

The panel may:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- recommend actions to resolve the complaint; and/or
- recommend changes to Trust or school procedures to prevent similar issues arising in the future.

The panel will make findings and recommendations and will provide these in writing to:

- the complainant;
- where relevant, the person complained about;
- the Headteacher; and
- the Trust.

The Chair of the Complaints Panel will provide the complainant with a written outcome within 10 school days of the hearing. The outcome letter will explain the panel's findings, recommendations and reasons for its decision.

The findings and recommendations will be available for inspection by the Board of Trustees and the Headteacher. A written record will be kept of all formal complaints, whether resolved at Stage 2 or considered by a Stage 3 panel, and of any action taken by the Trust regardless of the outcome.

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where disclosure is required by law, where the Secretary of State requests access, or where a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access.

The decision of the Complaints Panel concludes the Trust's internal complaints procedure. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may refer the matter to the Department for Education on the grounds that the Trust has not followed its published complaints procedure or has acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of its duties.

Complaints escalated to / about the Trust, CEO or Trustee

Where a complaint relates directly to the Trust, it should be submitted in accordance with the arrangements set out in the "**How to Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint**" section of this procedure.

Complaints concerning:

- the Trust will be investigated by an appropriately appointed senior leader;

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- the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will be investigated by the Chair of the Board of Trustees; and

- the Chair of the Board of Trustees will be investigated by the Vice-Chair of the Board of Trustees or another suitably independent Trustee.

The complaint will be acknowledged within 2 school days and investigated in accordance with the principles and timescales set out within Stage 2 or Stage 2A of this procedure, as appropriate.

Following the investigation, the complainant will receive a written outcome. Where it is not possible to meet the published timescales, the complainant will be informed of the reasons for the delay and provided with a revised response date.

Where the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of the investigation, they may request that the complaint is considered under Stage 3: Complaints Panel, which represents the final stage of the Trust's internal complaints procedure.

If the complaint concerns the Chair and Vice-Chair jointly, the full Board of Trustees, or the majority of Trustees, the Trust will appoint a completely independent Complaints Panel in accordance with this procedure.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school / Trust did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the DfE after they have completed Stage 3.

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the Trust or school. They will consider whether the Trust/school has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE online at: https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe or by writing to:

Ministerial and Public Communication Division
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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APPENDIX 1: Complaint Form

INSPIRE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Headteacher or Governance Professional to the Board of Trustees (as appropriate to the stage of complaint) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken. The contact for the Governance Professional is rosie.perry@ilpartnership.org.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:** **Email address:**
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

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What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any documentation? If so, please give details.
Signature: **Date:**
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Action taken:
Date:

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APPENDIX 2: Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint clearly and accurately, ensuring that any information submitted on their behalf, including information generated using digital or AI tools, reflects their own concerns and desired outcome.
- ensure any supporting information is relevant, factual and proportionate to the complaint being raised.
- co-operate with the school/Trust in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
    - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
    - interviewing staff and children/young people (if appropriate) and other people relevant to the complaint
    - consideration of records and other relevant information
    - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal

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- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the Headteacher/CEO or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- commence, maintain and transfer the Trust's Complaints Chronology Template as required throughout the complaints process.

The Headteacher/CEO or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-ordinator

(this could be the Headteacher or CEO or Trustee or other staff member providing administrative support)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, Headteacher, CEO, Chair of Local Academy Committee, Chair of Trust or the Governance Professional and to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
    - sharing third party information
    - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

Clerk/Governance Professional to the Trust Board

The Clerk/Governance Professional is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example: stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting

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- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

  If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so

  No person may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant

  We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting

  Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting

  Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

  The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

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If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

Changes History Table

Version	Date	Amended by	Approved By	Summary of Changes
5	September 2026	Director of School Operations and Safeguarding and reviewed by the Executive Team	Trust Board	• Introduction of a new Stage 2A Trust Review prior to a Complaints Panel. • Implementation of mandatory complaint chronology records and audit trails. • Addition of AI-generated correspondence provisions. • Updated terminology (Headteacher and Local Academy Committee). • Strengthened panel independence and governance arrangements. • Enhanced management of campaign, duplicate and serial complaints. • Improved investigation, record-keeping and escalation procedures.

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