

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Trust takes any complaint about the education, other services provided or about the conduct of staff very seriously.
- 1.2 We believe that tackling concerns at the earliest possible stage allows us to improve relationships, enhance learning, prevent issues escalating and reduces the number of formal complaints.
- 1.3 A complaint is defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Trust or one of its schools / academies, which affects an individual or group'.

2. Application of the complaints procedure

- 2.1 This procedure will be used to consider complaints about The Trust and member schools / academies, except those which relate to the following areas, which have their own statutory procedures:
 - admissions
 - exclusions
 - special education provision
 - complaints covered by the Children Act 1989
 - complaints about the allocation of awards and benefits.
- 2.2 This procedure does not cover complaints which are, or have been, the subject of legal proceedings or complaints being considered by the Secretary of State under any statutory power.

3. Principles

- 3.1 We will:
 - take complaints seriously;
 - make every attempt to resolve matters by informal means without the need for formal procedures;
 - be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complainant;
 - give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible;
 - aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding;
 - provide an opportunity for any complaint to be discussed in order to be resolved;
 - where applicable, use the outcome of a complaint to reflect on the services provided.

4. Informal complaints

- 4.1 Normally a complaint will be raised verbally in the first instance to enable it to be addressed before it matters escalate further.
- 4.2 A complaint may be raised with any member of the management team who will aim to resolve the matter or will refer the matter on to a more appropriate person.
- 4.3 We aim to resolve informal complaints as soon as possible and in any event normally within 10 working days.
- 4.4 The member of staff concerned will make a written record of the issue raised, the date on which it was received, the outcome and the date when this was communicated to the complainant.

- 4.5 If the complainant is not satisfied they may make escalate matters and make a formal complaint.

5. Making a formal complaint

- 5.1 A formal complaint should be put in writing for the attention of the CEO of The Trust where the complaint refers to The Trust, or the Headteacher where the complaint refers to a school / academy.
- 5.2 In the event of a complaint about the CEO of the Trust, the complaint should be sent to the Chair of the Board of Trustees, in the event of a complaint about a Headteacher, the complaint should be sent to the Chair of the Local Governing Body.
- 5.3 We will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing within 5 working days.
- 5.4 Every effort will be made to conclude an investigation and provide a written response to the complainant within 15 working days of the receipt of a formal complaint.
- 5.5 A complaint made more than three months after the event will not be considered except in exceptional circumstances.
- 5.6 Anonymous complaints will not be investigated, except in exceptional circumstances, as it is not possible to clarify matters or respond to the complainant.
- 5.7 Exceptional circumstances may include serious concerns such as child protection issues.

6. Investigating the Complaint

- 6.1 The complaint will be investigated by another suitable member of staff (or if appropriate a governor or trustee where the complaint concerns the CEO of the Trust / a Headteacher) who is independent of the complaint.
- 6.2 Where the nature of the investigation is such that the complaint cannot be concluded within 15 working days, a holding letter will be sent to the complainant giving an indication of the timescale in which a response will be made.
- 6.3 The person/s investigating the formal complaint will:
- clarify the nature of the complaint ;
 - meet with the complainant or contact them as required (for clarification or further information as necessary);
 - ascertain what the complainant feels would put things right if this is not clear;
 - conduct the investigation, analysing relevant documents and interviewing those who may be involved (allowing them to be accompanied if they wish)
 - keep written records.
- 6.4 Written records including notes of meetings, interviews, discussions and telephone calls will be retained in case the complaint is taken further.

7. Providing a response

- 7.1 Every effort will be made to conclude an investigation into a formal complaint and provide a written response to the complainant within 15 working days of the receipt of a formal complaint.
- 7.2 A response letter will normally include the following:
- a brief summary of the complaint
 - a summary of the process undertaken
 - the outcome of the investigation

- the reasons for that outcome, unless confidentiality would be compromised (in which case a suitably worded conclusion should be provided)
- potential next steps

7.3 If a complainant is not satisfied once the internal processes have concluded they may complain directly to the Education & Skills Funding Agency.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/557407/Complain_about_an_academy.pdf

8. Vexatious Complaints

- 8.1 Where there is good reason to consider that a complaint is vexatious, for example malicious, unduly, frequent or persistent without foundation. The Trust/ School / Academy will be entitled to take such action as appropriate to manage behaviour. This may include (but is not limited to) placing limits on contact with staff or opting not to invoke this procedure further.
- 8.2 Where such action has been taken by the Trust / School / Academy the complainant will receive written notification.

Document management

Review cycle:	Every two years
Next review due:	October 2019
Policy owner	Head of Human Resources