



COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Introduction

What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether made orally or in writing. This policy addresses general complaints. Complaints about the curriculum, collective worship, racist incidents or provision for children with special educational needs are dealt with under separate procedures.

How does the Staged Approach Work?

The staged approach is designed to ensure that every effort is made to deal with complaints informally at academy level in partnership with the complainant. The formal stages should only be triggered in exceptional circumstances:

- Stage 1 is the informal stage. In the case of a complaint by a parent, the class teacher will receive the first approach and the majority of issues should be resolved at this stage. In the case of a complaint by a member of the public, the academy office should be the first point of contact. A decision will then be made as to which member of staff is best placed to deal with the complaint.
- Stages 2 and 3 are formal stages involving the Principal and governing body.

Principles and Procedures

Our principle aim is to deal with complaints:

- Openly
- Fairly
- Promptly
- Without prejudice

Our procedures for dealing with complaints will:

- Be simple to understand and follow
- Be focused on outcomes
- Have established time limits for action



- “ Keep people informed at all stages
- “ Where necessary, respect people’s desire for confidentiality
- “ Be carefully monitored and evaluated
- “ Provide information to the academy’s senior management team so that the academy’s procedures can be improved.

An Overview

Stage One

Discuss concerns informally with the relevant teacher.

Stage Two

Discuss concerns formally with the Assistant Principal or Principal.

Stage Three

Make a formal complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors to investigate the complaint.

Role of the Academy’s Complaints’ Co-ordinator

The academy’s Complaints’ Co-ordinator is Helen Farrington. She is responsible for the operation and management of the academy complaints’ procedure and will be able to provide further information on request.

Guidance on Each Stage of the Procedure

There are three stages to this procedure:

Stage 1 is informal

Stages 2 and 3 are formal

Any person expressing continued dissatisfaction should be advised of the next stage in the procedure.

Stage One: Discuss concerns informally with the relevant teacher.

- “ Complainants are advised to speak to the teacher concerned so everyone has a clear picture of the situation from all points of view. Most problems can be resolved at this informal stage.
- “ If the complainant indicates that he/she would have difficulty in



discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff, the complaint may be referred to another member of staff. This member of staff may not necessarily be more senior.

“ The member of staff who is dealing with the complaint should ensure that the complainant is reassured that the matter will be investigated and is clear what action has been agreed. All staff should be aware of the need for confidentiality.

“ A brief record of any telephone calls, meetings and agreed actions should always be kept although it is not always necessary to provide the complainant with a written record at this stage. The Complaints' Coordinator/Senior Teacher should monitor these records.

“ If either the complainant or staff member feels the matter needs to be taken further, the Principal or a senior member of staff should be contacted.

Stage Two: Discuss concerns formally with the Principal or a senior member of staff.

“ More serious concerns which remain unresolved at the end of Stage 1 should be referred to the Principal or a senior member of staff. They will then investigate the matter further. Any meetings that are held with the complainant in relation to the complaint should be arranged within 10 school days. However, more complex complaints may require an extension to this time limit.

“ A log of all contacts relating to the complaint should be kept.

“ The Principal or Senior Teacher should communicate the outcome to the complainant either verbally or in writing. Any agreed actions should be put in writing.

“ If, as a result of the investigation, issues arise relating to staff discipline or capability, details should remain confidential to the Principal. However, the complainant should be informed that the academy has taken appropriate follow-up action.

Stage Three: Make a formal complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors.

“ Governors should only proceed with this formal stage of the Complaint Procedure if they have received a complaint in writing addressed to the Chair of Governors and all previous stages have been exhausted.

“ Acknowledgement of the written complaint should normally be sent by the clerk to the governing body within 5 school days.

“ It is essential that this process is fair and objective. To avoid a conflict of interest, it is vital that the full governing body does not



hear the complaint at this stage. Any governor who has been involved with the complaint at an earlier stage would be unable to give objective consideration to the issue.

“ It is for the governing body to agree upon the procedures for the Complaint Panel meeting. However, the governing body will usually convene a small panel of 3 or 5 governors who have not previously been involved in the complaint. The panel will usually meet within 15 school days of receiving the complaint.

“ The Chair of the panel should notify the Principal and the complainant as to whether they will be invited to attend the panel meeting. Alternatively, the panel may decide to consider written material only. Both parties must be treated equally. For example, if the Principal is invited to the meeting, so must the complainant.

“ If the complaint relates to a staff disciplinary or capability matter about which the Principal has already taken action, the governors should focus on how the original complaint was managed to avoid prejudicing any ongoing disciplinary or capability procedures.

“ The Principal and complainant should be informed of the Panel's decision in writing within 10 school days.

“ This is the final stage in the academy's Complaints Procedure.

The Governing Body's decision is final, however, where you have been through the academy's internal complaints procedures (with or without recourse to a complaints review panel) and are still unhappy with the outcome or decision from the governing body you can write to School Partnership Trust enclosing full details of your complaint, including correspondence between yourself and the academy and the governing body. Please address your correspondence to:

School Partnership Trust,
Chief Executive, Education House,
Unit 5 Fusion Court, Fusion Court
Aberford Road
Garforth, Leeds LS25 2GH

If the complainant believes that the governing body or the School Partnership Trust acted “unreasonably”, they can complain to the Secretary of State in the Department for Education under Section 496 of the Education Act 1996. Please note that “unreasonable” is used in a strict sense and means acting in a way that no reasonable school or authority could act in the circumstances. The complainant should write to



The Secretary of State, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT or call 0870 001 2288.

Since 2007 Ofsted also has powers to investigate certain complaints by parents about their child's school. Complainants should write to Ofsted, Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square, Manchester.