

Complaints Policy

September 2026

Date Approved:	Sept 26	Review Date:	Sept 28	Approved by:	The Trust Board
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Purpose and principles of this policy

Fareham Academy is committed to providing a high-quality education and maintaining a positive, respectful and constructive relationship with parents, carers, pupils and the wider community. We recognise that concerns and complaints can provide an opportunity to resolve issues, improve practice and strengthen trust between the Academy and those it serves.

This policy is intended to provide a clear, fair and accessible process for raising and resolving concerns and complaints. The Academy will seek to resolve concerns and complaints at the earliest appropriate stage wherever possible, while ensuring that they are considered objectively, proportionately and in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness.

The Academy expects all parties involved in a concern or complaint to engage respectfully, constructively and in good faith. The purpose of this procedure is to resolve issues, not to apportion blame.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A **concern** may be defined as '*an **informal** expression of worry, doubt or dissatisfaction about an issue, action or lack of action where reassurance, clarification or early resolution is sought*'.

A **complaint** may be defined as '*a **formal** expression of dissatisfaction about actions taken or a lack of action, which the complainant wishes to be considered under the formal stages of this procedure*'.

Concerns are ordinarily considered at Stage 1 of this procedure. If an individual remains dissatisfied following the conclusion of Stage 1, they may raise a formal complaint under Stage 2.

Fareham Academy takes both concerns and complaints seriously and will make every effort to resolve them as quickly as possible.

Who can raise a concern or make a complaint?

This procedure is primarily intended to deal with concerns and complaints from parents and carers of pupils at the Academy. The Academy may also use this procedure, or such adapted process as it considers appropriate, to consider concerns or complaints from other individuals, including members of the public, about the provision of facilities or services by the Academy. Where a concern is raised or a complaint is made by a third party on behalf of another individual, the Academy will require appropriate written consent before sharing information or corresponding substantively with that third party.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. A complaint should ordinarily be submitted in writing using the Academy's Complaint Form at Appendix 1.

To assist the Academy in dealing with matters efficiently and fairly, individuals raising concerns or making complaints are encouraged to explain:

- what has happened;
- when it happened;
- who was involved;
- what steps have already been taken to raise or resolve the matter; and
- what outcome they are seeking.

If you require help in completing the form at Appendix 1, please contact the school office. You can also ask a third-party organisation such as the Citizens Advice Bureau 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 concerns and complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous concerns or complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees, if appropriate, will determine whether the concern or complaint warrants investigation. In making that decision, the Academy will consider the seriousness of the issues raised, whether sufficient information has been provided to allow the matter to be investigated, whether there are safeguarding implications and whether the matter can be addressed through another appropriate process.

Time scales

Any matter raised under this procedure should normally be brought to the Academy's attention 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 consider concerns and complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply. Exceptional circumstances may include, but are not limited to, serious illness, bereavement, safeguarding concerns or other circumstances which reasonably prevented the complainant from raising the matter sooner.

Matters received outside term time

Any matter raised under this procedure outside term time will be treated as received on the first school day after the holiday period ends.

Overview of the complaints process

The usual route for complaints is as follows:

- Stage 1 – Informal concern and resolution

Concern raised with the appropriate member of staff → matter considered and response provided.

- Stage 2 – Formal complaint investigated by a member of school staff

Complaint made to the Headteacher's Executive Assistant → investigator appointed → formal written response.

- Stage 3 – Formal complaint investigated or reviewed by the Headteacher

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following Stage 2 → Headteacher considers the complaint and may delegate enquiries or investigation to a member of the Senior Leadership Team → Headteacher issues formal written response.

- Stage 4 – Review by the Chair of Trustees or complaint concerning the Headteacher

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following Stage 3, or if the complaint concerns the Headteacher → Chair of Trustees considers the matter or appoints an appropriate person to do so.

- Stage 5 – Complaint Appeal Panel Hearing

Final internal stage → panel of at least three people, including one person independent of the management and running of the Academy.

Different routes apply where the complaint concerns the Chair of Trustees, individual Trustees, the majority of the Trust Board or the whole Trust Board. These are set out below.

Internal resolution and external agencies

Fareham Academy encourages the resolution of concerns and complaints through its own published procedures wherever possible. External organisations, including Ofsted, the Department for Education, local authorities and other agencies, will ordinarily expect the Academy to have been given a reasonable opportunity to consider and respond to a concern or complaint before becoming involved.

This does not apply where the matter falls within a safeguarding, whistleblowing or other statutory process requiring external referral, or where an individual is otherwise entitled to raise concerns directly with an external body.

Scope of this complaints procedure

This procedure covers concerns and complaints about the provision of facilities or services by Fareham Academy, except where the matter is dealt with under a separate statutory or internal procedure as outlined below:

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools	Issues relating to admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the local authority.
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Issues relating to child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). LADO@hants.gov.uk
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising issues about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. <i>*concerns and complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i> https://www.fareham-academy.hants.sch.uk/policies
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing 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: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have issues about our school should raise these through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to raise an issue direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your concern/complaint.
Staff grievances	Complaints raised by staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints involving staff conduct may be considered under this complaints procedure to the extent appropriate. Where the Academy considers that the matters raised may require consideration under internal employment, disciplinary or capability procedures, those matters will be addressed separately and confidentially. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary sanction or confidential employment outcome relating to a member of staff, although they may be informed that the matter has been considered and, where appropriate, that action has been taken.
Special educational needs and disability matters	Issues relating to special educational needs provision should usually be raised first with the relevant member of staff, the SENCo or the Headteacher, as appropriate. Some matters concerning Education, Health and Care Plans, statutory assessments, local authority decisions or disability discrimination may fall within separate statutory procedures, including local authority processes, mediation, disagreement resolution or the First-tier Tribunal where applicable. Where a matter falls outside this complaints procedure, the Academy will signpost complainants to the appropriate route where it is able to do so.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the issues raised under this complaints procedure, 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 Fareham Academy in relation to the issues they have raised under this complaints procedure, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

The Academy may also decline to consider an issue raised under this procedure where the same issues are being considered through another statutory, legal or regulatory route, or where it would be inappropriate or prejudicial for the Academy to continue its complaints process at the same time.

Outcomes and resolution

At each stage in the procedure, Fareham Academy wants to resolve the issues raised under the complaints policy. 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 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 school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

The Academy will not usually provide details of confidential staff, pupil, safeguarding or disciplinary matters to complainants. Where information cannot be shared, the Academy will explain this as far as it is appropriate and lawful to do so.

Withdrawal of a complaint

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

Where a complaint is withdrawn, the Academy may still decide to consider any issues arising from it if there are safeguarding, regulatory, governance or operational reasons to do so.

Stage 1 – Concerns and informal resolution

In most cases, concerns should first be raised with the member of staff closest to the matter, such as the pupil's tutor, class teacher, subject teacher, Head of Year, Head of Department or another appropriate member of staff. This enables the Academy to clarify the issue, investigate promptly and seek to resolve matters before they escalate.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Executive Assistant, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Executive Assistant 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.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the concern will provide an informal written response within 20 school days of the date of receipt of the concern.

The individual raising the concern should not approach any trustee to raise concerns. They have no power to act on an individual basis, and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 5 of the procedure.

Where the individual raising the concern contacts a Trustee directly, the Trustee should not express a view on the merits of the concern and should refer the individual to the appropriate route under this procedure. This is intended to preserve the independence and impartiality of Trustees who may later be required to consider the matter.

If the individual remains dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, they may raise a formal complaint under Stage 2.

Who should formal complaints be addressed to?

Formal complaints against school staff (other than the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance to the Headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Formal complaints concerning the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Formal complaints concerning the Chair of Trustees, an individual Trustee or the whole Trust Board should be addressed to the Clerk to the Trust Board via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

All other Stage 2 formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher's Executive Assistant.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaints investigated by a member of School Staff

Stage 2 formal complaints should ordinarily be submitted in writing using the Complaint Form at Appendix 1. Where a complainant requires support to submit a complaint in writing, the Academy will consider what reasonable assistance or adjustment may be appropriate.

The person receiving the formal complaint, or the relevant complaints co-ordinator, will record the date the complaint is received and ensure that receipt is acknowledged in writing within 2 school days. Within this response, they will identify who the complaint investigator will be. The investigator will then make contact to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see.

Where a complaint is unclear, broad, repetitive or contains multiple issues, the investigator may ask the complainant to clarify the complaint and identify the specific issues to be considered. The Academy is not required to investigate matters that are unclear, outside the scope of this procedure or which have already been considered but will explain its position where this applies.

During the investigation, the investigator will, if necessary:

- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.
- consider relevant documents and other evidence; and
- consider whether any safeguarding, equality, data protection or confidentiality issues arise.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the investigator will provide a formal written response within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the investigator is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

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 for the school to take that will resolve the complaint.

The investigator will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

Stage 3 – Formal complaints investigated by the Headteacher

Stage 3 will usually apply where a complainant remains dissatisfied following Stage 2. These complaints should be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office. Ordinarily this should be done in writing using the Complaint Form at Appendix 1.

The Headteacher may investigate the complaint afresh or review the handling and outcome of Stage 2, depending on the nature of the complaint and the matters remaining in dispute.

The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 2 school days.

Within this response, the Headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

During the investigation, the Headteacher will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

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 Fareham Academy will take to resolve the complaint.

The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 3.

The Headteacher may designate a member of the Senior Leadership Team to undertake enquiries or investigation on their behalf. Where this happens, the designated member of staff will report their findings to the Headteacher, who will decide the outcome of the Stage 3 complaint and issue the formal response.

Stage 4 – Review of the Headteacher’s Decision by the Chair of Trustees or Complaint regarding the Headteacher

Complainants should write to the Chair of Trustees providing details of their complaint and explaining why they are dissatisfied with the outcomes proposed by the Headteacher. Any other relevant information should be included at this stage. It is not appropriate to write to Trustees on an individual basis as this may subsequently make it difficult to convene a panel of Trustees with no prior involvement in the case.

Upon receipt of the complaint, the Chair of Trustees will acknowledge the complaint within 5 school days and provide a response within 10 school days. Where appropriate, the Chair may seek to resolve

the matter without the need for escalation to Stage 5. More complex matters may require a longer response period of up to 20 school days.

At Stage 4, the Chair of Trustees will normally review whether the complaint has been handled properly, whether an appropriate investigation has been undertaken, whether relevant evidence has been considered and whether the outcome reached falls within a reasonable range of responses. The Chair may also consider whether any further action is required to resolve the complaint.

If the complaint concerns the Headteacher's conduct, the Chair of the Trust Board will decide whether the issue should be dealt with in accordance with the complaint's procedure or the staff disciplinary procedure. The latter would be invoked as an outcome of the investigation into the complaint, and the complainant may be informed that the matter has been considered under the appropriate internal process, but confidential employment or disciplinary information will not be shared.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher or an individual Trustee other than the Chair or Vice-Chair, the Chair of Trustees may appoint a suitably skilled Trustee with no prior involvement to consider the complaint at Stage 4.

If the complaint is about the Chair of Trustees alone, the Vice-Chair or another suitably skilled Trustee with no prior involvement may consider the complaint at Stage 4. If this is not appropriate, the Trust Board may appoint an independent investigator.

If the complaint is about the Chair and Vice-Chair jointly, the majority of the Trust Board or the whole Trust Board, Stage 4 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the Trust Board.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the Stage 4 response, they may request escalation to Stage 5. The Clerk will then arrange a Complaint Appeal Panel in accordance with Stage 5 of this procedure. Where the Chair of Trustees has been involved in Stage 4, the Chair should not sit on any subsequent Stage 5 panel.

Stage 5 – Complaint Appeal Panel Hearing

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 4 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 5 – a panel hearing consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, including one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 5 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 4 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 5 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Trust Board or
- the majority of the Trust Board

Stage 5 will be heard by a completely independent committee panel.

A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting.

The purpose of the panel hearing is not to rehear every issue from the beginning unless the panel considers that this is necessary. The panel will consider whether the complaint has been fairly and properly handled, whether relevant evidence has been considered, whether the outcome was reasonable and whether any further action is required.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 5 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 5 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place for any recordings. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Fareham Academy with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 15 school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Fareham Academy.

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 Fareham Academy will take to resolve the complaint.

The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher.

A written record will be kept of concerns and formal complaints where appropriate, including whether formal complaints are resolved before, during or after a panel hearing, together with any action taken, regardless of the decision.

All 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.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school 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 Department for Education after they have completed Stage 5.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Fareham Academy. They will consider whether Fareham Academy 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 Department for Education online at: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe>, by their helpline on: 0370 000 2288.

After you've submitted your complaint to DfE, you can send additional information and evidence by post to:

Ministerial and Public Communication Division

Department for Education

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Managing serial, persistent, unreasonable or vexatious complaints

Fareham Academy is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly, impartially and in accordance with this policy. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the Academy. However, the Academy does not expect staff, pupils, Trustees or others involved in the complaints process to tolerate behaviour that is abusive, offensive, threatening, discriminatory, harassing or otherwise unacceptable.

The Academy may regard complainant behaviour as unreasonable where the frequency, nature, tone or content of the complainant's contact hinders the Academy's consideration of the complaint, creates a disproportionate burden on school resources or has an adverse impact on staff or pupils.

Examples of unreasonable complaint behaviour may include where a complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of the complaint or the outcomes sought, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure;

- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial, irrelevant or repeated information and insists that it is taken into account and responded to;
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insists they are fully answered, often immediately or to the complainant's own timescales;
- makes unjustified complaints 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 complaint, despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed;
- refuses to accept the findings of an investigation where the Academy's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed;
- seeks an unrealistic or disproportionate outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy or complicated contact with staff by email, telephone, letter, in person or through other means while a complaint is being dealt with;
- uses threats to intimidate;
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or behaviour;
- knowingly provides falsified information;
- publishes unacceptable, confidential, misleading or defamatory information on social media or other public forums; and
- repeatedly copies external organisations into correspondence in circumstances where the Academy has already explained the appropriate route for the matter and has been given no reasonable opportunity to respond, unless the matter properly requires external referral.

Complainants should limit communication with the Academy that relates to their complaint while the complaint is being progressed. Repeated correspondence about the same matter may delay the outcome being reached.

Wherever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying measures under this section.

If unreasonable behaviour continues, the Academy may write to the complainant explaining why their behaviour is considered unreasonable and asking them to change it. Where appropriate, the Academy may put in place a communication plan. This may include:

- identifying a single point of contact;
- limiting contact to a particular method, such as email;
- limiting the frequency of contact;
- declining to respond to repeated issues already addressed;
- setting reasonable expectations about response times;
- declining to consider further complaints about the same matter unless new and material evidence is provided.

Any communication plan will be proportionate, kept under review and will not prevent a complainant from raising a new and genuine complaint.

In response to any serious incident of aggression, violence, harassment or threat, the Academy may take immediate steps to protect staff, pupils and the school community. This may include contacting the police, restricting access to the Academy site, seeking legal advice and confirming any action taken in writing.

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

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

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school 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.

Complainants are encouraged to allow the Academy a reasonable opportunity to investigate and respond before drawing conclusions or escalating matters externally, except where the matter properly requires immediate external referral, such as safeguarding or whistleblowing concerns.

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 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
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the Headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The Headteacher 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

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, Headteacher, Chair of Trustees or the Clerk 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 to the Trust Board

The Clerk 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
- 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/vulnerable
- 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 trustee 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.

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.

Appendix 1 - Complaint Form

Please complete and return this form to the person identified in this policy as responsible for receiving the relevant type of formal complaint. If you are unsure where to send it, please contact the school office.

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.

Please explain what outcome you are seeking?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Action taken:

Date:

Appendix 2 – Complaints process flow

- **Standard route**

Concern → Stage 1 → Stage 2 → Stage 3 → Stage 4 → Stage 5 → Department for Education

- **Headteacher complaint route**

Complaint → Chair of Trustees → Stage 4 → Stage 5

- **Chair / majority of Trust Board / whole Trust Board complaint route**

Complaint → Stage 4 independent investigator → if unresolved, Stage 5 fully independent panel → Department for Education

Appendix 3 – Communication route for concerns

For clarity, parents and carers are encouraged to raise concerns through the following route wherever appropriate:

Nature of concern	First point of contact	Escalation route
Pastoral concern	Tutor	Head of Year → SLT link → Headteacher
Curriculum concern	Class teacher	Head of Department → SLT link → Headteacher
Uniform / standards concern	Tutor or Head of Year	SLT link → Headteacher
Behaviour concern	Relevant member of staff / Head of Year	SLT link → Headteacher
Staff conduct concern	Headteacher via school office, unless the concern relates to the Headteacher	Chair of Trustees if concerning Headteacher
Safeguarding concern	Designated Safeguarding Lead / safeguarding team	External safeguarding agencies where appropriate

This table is intended as guidance only. The Academy may direct a concern to the most appropriate person depending on the circumstances.