



HUET POLICY

PARENTS COMPLAINTS POLICY

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1 Introduction

The Hanley and Upton Educational Trust (HUET, 'the Trust') strives to deliver its mission and vision in partnership with stakeholders, including parents and the wider community. We view all concerns and complaints as valuable feedback to which we are committed to responding and acting upon seriously and in a timely constructive way in line with our values. We aim to put things right if they go wrong, learn lessons, and adjust our systems and processes if needed.

We believe it is best to try and deal with concerns and issues promptly rather than try to resolve matters later. Normally, we would encourage matters to be raised informally and as soon as possible with the person concerned and they will try to resolve them quickly. Lessons that can be learned will be shared with the relevant school management team and more broadly as part of our Trust-wide approach to continuous improvement.

We have experienced concerns and complaints being shared through social media or other external forms of communication. Not only does this potentially prevent a fair and objective consideration of the concern or complaint, but may also have the potential to harm the well-being of children, members of staff or other parents who may be involved or known to be involved.

Our intention will always be to find resolutions that are as acceptable as possible to those concerned. We know that there can sometimes be upset or bad feeling when things are seen to have gone wrong. We expect to approach efforts to resolve matters with respect and courtesy, and we ask that our staff are also shown this in support of an atmosphere conducive to constructive and positive relations.

Our complaints policy is regularly reviewed, including in relation to other relevant Trust policies including our Equality Policy. We take account of current legislation and guidance that we are expected to follow, including the Equality Act 2010.

When the policy refers to a 'school day', it is defined as a day in which the school is open to staff. The timelines for considering and responding to complaints do not include weekends, school or national holidays.

2 The difference between a concern and a complaint

Our hope is that most day-to-day relations between our staff and stakeholders can support an atmosphere of constructive dialogue about both good and not-so-good matters. For that reason, we separate a desire to explore a concern about an issue from a need to raise 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*'.

The next section explains how we aim to listen and respond to concerns as an ideal first step before any need arises to make a complaint.

3 Raising a concern

Our experience is that the vast majority of concerns can be resolved straight away. A concern can be shared in person, in writing or by telephone. A concern can be shared with a class teacher, or a student's form tutor, or whichever member of staff is directly involved with the concern.

We aim to support our staff to discuss and quickly address any concern that comes to them if it is appropriate and they feel comfortable in doing so. Many concerns can be readily resolved by simple clarification or provision of information.

Where a member of staff approached feels uncomfortable with discussing or acting on the concern directly, they know that they should involve their line manager with the aim of finding an alternative approach to considering the concern as quickly as possible. This includes dealing with a concern if it relates to them personally or to other members of the school or of the Trust.

The rest of this policy explains how complaints are to be managed if they are raised in the first instance or following on from dissatisfaction with how concerns have been addressed.

4 Who can make a complaint?

We recognise that complaints may be raised either in the first instance or as a follow-on from dissatisfaction with how a concern has been addressed.

Our complaints policy focuses primarily on giving guidance to parents, guardians or carers of children registered at any of our schools in the Trust; or who had left within the previous three months about a matter that arose during time in one of our schools. Our complaints policy will still be followed if the process is ongoing but the child has since left one of our schools.

Unless the matter of a complaint should be addressed under separate statutory procedures, such as appeals relating to admissions or exclusions, then we aim to use the guidance in this Policy for all complaints received from parents, guardians or carers of children at our schools.

We also recognise that complaints may be raised by others not directly involved with the school, such as members of the public or neighbours. We provide a separate process for these in Annex E to this Policy. We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher, Chair of the ASC or Trust will, if appropriate, determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

5 How to make a complaint

This Policy sets out in sections 6-9 how we expect to manage the process for considering complaints at different stages once they have been received. Complaints must be raised within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. Complaints made outside of term time will be considered 'received' on the first school day after the holiday period.

Normally, all complaints begin at what we call 'Stage 1' which takes a similar informal approach to how we would look to consider concerns. Normally, if Stage 1 does not lead to satisfaction that the complaint has been addressed, then the complaint is taken to a first formal step at 'Stage 2'.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the first formal stage, then the complaint can progress to 'Stage 3' wherein the Trust will appoint an investigator to review the Stage 2 complaint response and either

uphold the original decision, or pass recommendations to the Stage 2 responder to reconsider their initial response.

If the complainant considers that they have grounds for challenging this decision, then this can progress to the final stage of the Trust complaints procedure at 'Stage 4'. The Trust will convene a panel to review the complaint in full.

A flow chart outlining the different stages of the Trust complaints procedure, can be found in Annex A.

6 Stage 1 (Informal)

Our experience is that the vast majority of complaints can be resolved straight away, providing the complainant with the benefit of a swift response, and avoiding the need to submit a written formal complaint.

Complaints at this stage should be logged by completing this form: <https://forms.office.com/e/zPpu7Uz5L1> clearly outlining the issue, and which school the complaint pertains to, whereupon a member of the Trust team will direct the complaint to the appropriate person in the appropriate school. Where this is not possible, a complaint can be made in person or by telephone to the school office.

A written response will be sent to the complainant, which may be very brief, to confirm any meetings or verbal conversations that have taken place to resolve the complaint.

By their nature, we do not impose specific timescales for dealing with complaints at this stage, or monitor them formally, although all issues will be considered as quickly and effectively as possible and as with all communication, we aim to acknowledge or respond within three working days.

Where the first approach is made to a Trustee or member of an ASC, the next step must be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure. Trustees and members of ASCs must not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.

Where this informal stage has failed to bring about a satisfactory resolution for the complainant, the complainant is entitled to request that the concern be treated under Stage 2 (Formal) as a complaint. Unless the complaint directly concerns the CEO or head teacher, it will be they who deals with this next stage.

7 Stage 2 (Formal)

For a complaint to be investigated at Stage 2, the complaint must have been considered under Stage 1 of this policy. A request to progress to Stage 2 (Formal) must be made using the form in Annex B within three calendar months of the incident, and submitted to complaints@huet.org.uk. Complaints may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate written consent to do so.

The headteacher will record the date the Stage 2 complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and confirm the 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.

At this point, the headteacher may decide the complaint warrants a formal investigation to provide objective consideration, findings and recommendations. In that situation, normally the headteacher will appoint a senior member of staff to conduct the investigation where such a person has not had any prior involvement in the

matters of the complaint. The headteacher remains responsible for the decision to be made about how to address and resolve the complaint, with the benefit of the report from the investigator.

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
- write a report summarising the investigation, the findings and offer recommendations for the headteacher's consideration.

Upon either the conclusion of their investigation or receipt of an investigation report, the headteacher will provide a formal written response, normally within 20 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 the school or Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, a MASC or a Trustee (including the Chairs or Vice-Chairs), a suitably skilled MASC or trustee will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair of the ASC or
- the entire ASC or
- the majority of the ASC

Stage 2 will be considered by the Trust. At the conclusion of their investigation, they will provide a formal written response.

If the complaint is:

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

Stage 2 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the Trust. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

8 **Stage 3 (Trust Complaints Review)**

For a complaint to be investigated at Stage 3, the complaint must have been considered under stages 1 & 2 of this policy. The complaint (in writing) must be sent to complaints@huet.org.uk within 10 school days of the date of the of Stage 2 (Formal) response letter from the school or Trust. This will be acknowledged within 5 school days. At this stage the Trust may require further information from the complainant or the school.

The Trust will appoint an internal or independent Investigating Officer (depending on the nature of the complaint at Stage 2) who will review the procedure so far, seeking to establish whether the investigation

process under Stage 2 was fair, had been conducted properly, and that the decisions made were reasonable given the evidence presented.

The outcome from Stage 3 will either uphold the complaint response, or refer it back to the relevant member of the Trust team from Stage 2, with evidence and recommendations for reconsideration. The complainant will receive the written response following this review and any subsequent reconsideration within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 complaint. Any delay in the investigation will be communicated to the complainant at the earliest opportunity. Where the complaint has already been considered by an independent investigator (e.g. in the case of a complaint about the Trust Chair or board), then the complaint will be escalated straight to stage 4.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the Trust review, then a request to progress to Stage 4 (ASC and Trust Complaints Panel) must be made within 10 school days of the date of the of Stage 3 (Formal) response from the Trust.

9 Stage 4 (ASC and Trust Complaints Panel)

For a complaint to be investigated at stage 4, the complaint must have been considered under stages 1, 2 & 3 of this policy. Stage 4 is the final stage of the complaints process where the complainant can escalate the complaint to a panel hearing. The complainant should write to complaints@huet.org.uk within 10 school days of the date of the stage 3 complaint review outcome letter, outlining the reasons why the outcome of the complaint is not satisfactory.

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

The panel meeting is arranged by the Trust Company Secretary and will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint nor any prior stage. One panel member acting as Chair will be independent of the management and running of the school and the other two will be from the School's ASC.

If the complaint is about:

- the Trust CEO or
- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair of an ASC or
- the entire ASC or
- the majority of the ASC

then Stage 4 will be heard by a panel of 2 trustees and a third panel member who is independent of the management and running of the Trust or any of its schools.

If the complaint is:

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

then Stage 4 will be heard by a panel of governors or trustees independent to the Trust.

The panel will always deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting. Where a complainant does not wish to attend in person, the panel can be convened virtually using video calls, or the complaint considered through written representations (with agreement from the complainant).

When the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they will be given the opportunity to bring someone with them; this can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the panel meeting and the school is within its rights to refuse a request from a parent to do so. However, if the school does agree to allow a legal representative to attend, it will be made clear that the role of that person will not be to represent the complainant, but to support them during the proceedings.

There may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate, for instance if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation. However, as in the case of a legal representative accompanying a complainant, it will be made clear that the role of that person will not be to represent the school employee, but to support them during the proceedings.

The panel will always deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting. Where a complainant does not wish to attend in person, the panel can be convened virtually using video calls, or the complaint considered through written representations (with agreement from the complainant).

The Trust Company Secretary will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting together with confirmation of the Clerk. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 4 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.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least **10** 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 panel will not accept as evidence recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded in writing.

The panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or allow 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. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and written consent from all parties attending must be obtained before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in writing in any minutes taken.

The panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The panel 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 panel 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 panel will provide the complainant and school with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 school days.

This is the final stage of the complaints procedure. However, 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.

10 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 (via the Education and Skills Funding Agency or ESFA) after they have completed Stage 4.

The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the Trust or its schools. They will consider whether the Trust or its schools have adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

It should be noted that the ESFA will only consider a complaint if the complainant can provide evidence that the school or Trust:

- Does not have a complaints procedure
- Did not provide a copy of its complaints procedure when requested
- Does not have a procedure that complies with statutory regulations
- Has not followed its published complaints procedure
- Has not allowed its complaints procedure to be completed

In addition, the ESFA does not have the power to:

- Overturn the panel's decision
- Re-investigate the original complaint
- Review the accuracy of minutes taken or documents provided
- Order that compensation is paid
- Direct the school to discipline / exclude pupils
- Force the school to discipline / dismiss staff
- Instruct the school to apologise

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

11 Resolving complaints – outcomes

At each stage in the procedure, the Trust and its schools are committed to resolving 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 school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Serial, unreasonable or vexatious complainants - please see Annex F

Complaint campaigns – please see Annex G

Confidentiality - correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential and processed according to GDPR requirements, except where the Secretary of State or another authorised body requests access to them.

12 Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

13 Complaints the Trust cannot normally consider

The Trust cannot normally consider complaints in the following circumstances:

- If the complaint is received more than 3 months after the incident
- If the complaint has been made previously to the Trust or its schools about the same issue which has been fully investigated and/or resolved.
- Where the complaint is anonymous. However, the Headteacher/ExecutiveHeadteacher, the Chair of the ASC or the CEO (if appropriate), will determine whether an anonymous complaint warrants further investigation.
- Where complaints are frivolous, vexatious, abusive or malicious.
- Where a complaint is made by a third party on behalf of another person without their authority.
- Where the complaint is about examination results (this is subject to latest guidance on exams).
- Where the complaint is about the contents of a student’s Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Matters that are the subject of legal action.

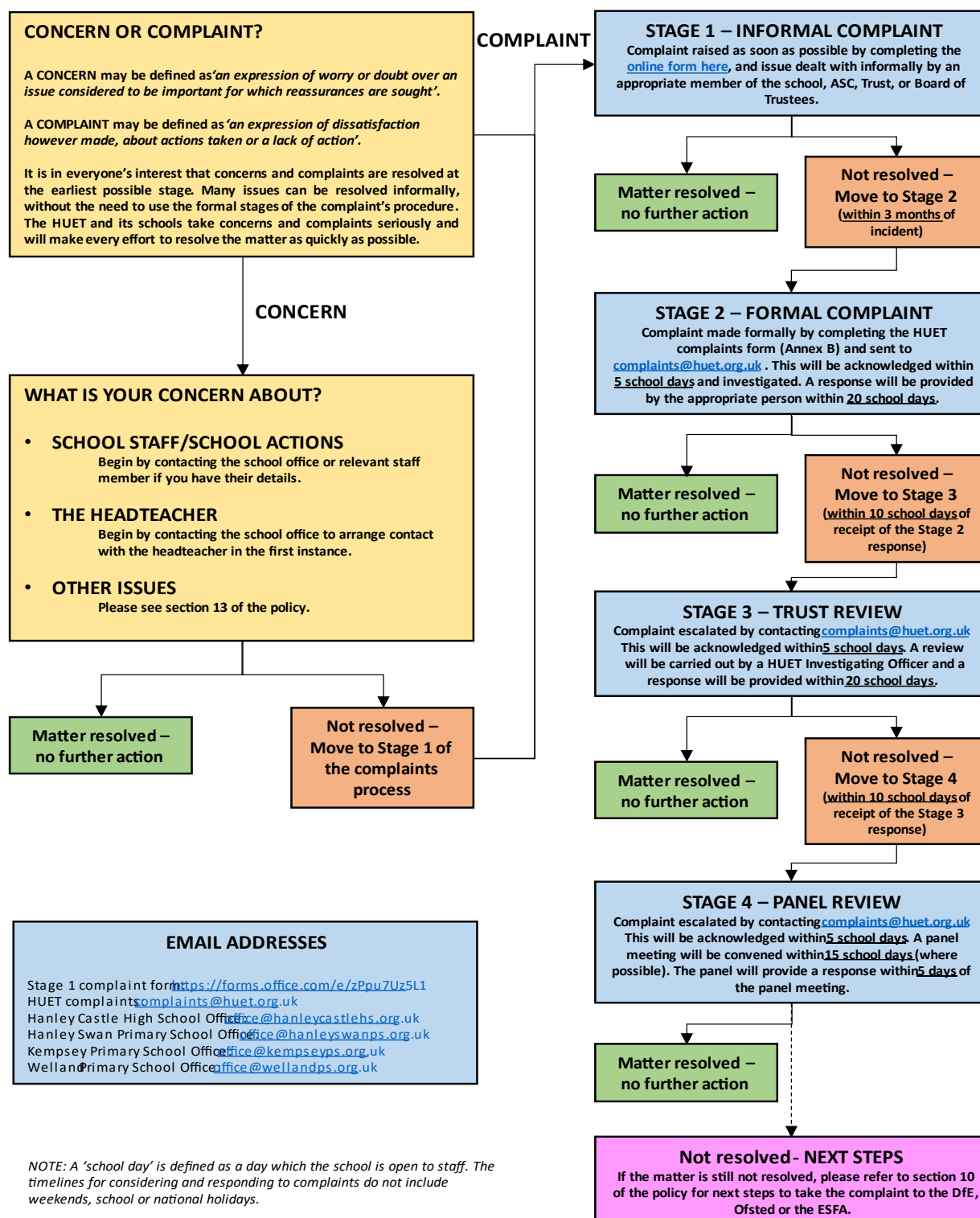
- If the complaint is about a third-party provider of a service that is organised or facilitated by us – complaints of this nature should be directed to the service provider.
- Where complaints are about things that are out of scope of this policy

14 Circumstances which may affect the complaint procedure

- Complainants should not approach individual members of the academy standards committee (MASCs) or trustees to raise concerns or complaints. MASCs and trustees have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 4 of the procedure.
- 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 a complainant commences legal action against the Trust or its schools in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

15 Annex A – Complaints Procedure Flowchart

If you have a concern or a complaint, please share it with the relevant academy staff, Academy Standards Committee (ASC) or the Trust as soon as possible. Often, these can be addressed and resolved quickly and informally. The HUET and our schools will endeavour to find reasonable resolutions that are acceptable to everyone involved.



16 Annex B Complaint Form

Please complete and return to complaints@huet.org.uk or take a paper copy to the relevant school office. For complaints about the Trust, a paper copy should be taken to the office at Hanley Castle High School.

The Procedure, at Stage 2, explains what action will be taken after receipt.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address:
Postcode:
Day time telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it (please attach additional sheets if necessary).
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

17 Annex C 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.

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 panel that sets out the facts, identifies findings and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The headteacher or complaints panel 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 / designated complaints MASC or trustee / 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, Chair of ASC, Chair of Trust and Clerk 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

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the panel 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
- make a written record of the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the panel's decision by email, including findings and recommendations, and ensure that these are available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the headteacher
- ensure that a written record is kept of all complaints that are made, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision
- ensure that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are 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

Panel Chair

The panel'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
- the remit of the panel 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 panel is open-minded and acts independently

- no member of the panel 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).

Panel Member

Panel members should be aware that:

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

No MASC or trustee may sit on the panel 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 panel 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 panel 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 panel 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 panel considers is not in the child/young person's best interests

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

18 Annex D Complaints not in the scope of this procedure

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs School re-organisation proposals 	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Worcestershire County Council.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>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).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through schools' complaints procedure.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>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.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any complaint which relies on evidence obtained covertly 	<p>For clarification, this includes evidence which has been gathered electronically (for example recorded on a mobile phone without the knowledge and written consent of all who have been recorded) or by any other covert means.</p>

19 Annex E Third party complaints

The procedure outlined below will be used where complaints are received from individuals who are not parents of a pupil or pupils at the school, or from individuals who do not have parental responsibility for a pupil or pupils at the school.

For the avoidance of doubt, this includes where complaints have been started by parents of former pupils after they have left the school, albeit about incidents that arose during the pupil's time at the school.

However, where the Parental Complaints process has been started (but not completed) whilst parents have had children at the school, but the children have since left, the school should continue to follow the Parental Complaints Policy.

Complainants should first attempt to address their complaint to the school or Trust (as appropriate) informally.

Only if this fails to resolve the situation should the complaint be submitted in writing:

- where the complaint is about a school, please write to the headteacher
- where the complaint is about a headteacher, please write to the Chair of the relevant Academy Standards Committee (ASC)
- where the complaint is about the Trust, please write to the CEO
- where the complaint is about the CEO, please write to the Chair of the Trust.

In all cases, the complaint will be acknowledged within 5 school days and a final written response will be provided within a further 15 school days.

This will conclude the complaint.

20 Annex F Serial, unreasonable or vexatious complainants

The Trust and its schools are 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 our school. However, 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.

The Trust defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a 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 complaint's procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their 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 the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the headteacher or Chair of the ASC (or Trust, if appropriate) will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the headteacher or Chair of the ASC (or Trust, if appropriate) will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. Should the required change in behaviour not take place the complainant will be informed that their complaint will not be processed.

For complainants who excessively contact any Trust school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school concerned or, if appropriate, from any Trust school.

21 **Annex G Complaint campaigns**

Complaint campaigns are where the school or the Trust receives large volumes of complaints that are all based on the same subject.

Where the school or the Trust becomes the subject of a complaints campaign from complainants who are not connected with the school, a standard, single response may be published on the school or Trust website if deemed appropriate.

If the school receives a large number of complaints about the same subject from complainants who are connected to the school, e.g. parents, each complainant will receive an individual response, although the substance of this response may be identical in each case. This response may also be published on the school or Trust website if deemed appropriate.

If complainants remain dissatisfied with the school's response, they will be directed to the DfE.