St Chad's
Academies Trust

Complaints Policy (Academy)

Children first: in the footsteps of St. Chad

As we follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Chad, we seek to be servant leaders who have a desire to see all those, within our Trust family, truly flourish both spiritually and academically

Document information

Document title	Complaints Policy (Academy)		
Owner	Compliance		
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Review Date	Two yearly reviews unless significant changes occur which require an earlier review		
The policy has been implemented following consultation, in line with statutory practice, with central team colleagues and St Chad's Academies Trust Board, and may be amended from time to time, following further consultation with St Chad's Academies Trust Board			
This policy links to:	Data Protection Policy: Practical Guidance for Staff Information Security Overarching Data Protection Safeguarding Disciplinary policy Whistleblowing Policy Investigation Policy		

If you would like this information in another language or format, please speak to the Trust Operations team.

Phone: 01543 622433

Email: lea.millinchip@stchads.uk

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1 Table of substantive changes from previous versions:

This table explains where we have made substantive changes, for your ease of reference and assurance.

Date	Section Amended
31.07.2025	Section 6.2 added to read the complaints panel will include at least one person who is independent of the management and running of the academy, i.e. they will not be a Trustee, a Local academy committee member at any of our academies or an employee of the Trust at any of our academies.
11.02.2026	Section 8.3 amendment to Trust Headteacher
11.02.2026	Appendix 1, sections 2.1.2, 2.1.5, 5.0, 5.1.1, 5.1.2 and 5.2 amendment to Trust Headteacher.
11.02.2026	Appendix 2, sections 3.1 and 4.0 amendment to Trust Headteacher
11.02.2026	Appendix 3 section 9.4 amendment to Trust Headteacher
11.02.2026	Appendix 4 section 9.0 amendment to Trust Headteacher
25.02.2026	Appendix 3 section 1.3 amendment to the role of the panel at stage 3.
11.03.2026	Amendment to Appendix 2, section 3.2, The Trust Headteacher or designated colleague will follow up any recommendations with relevant parties within 5 school days
11.03.2026	Amendment to Appendix 3, section 9.4 The Complaint Panel's findings and any recommendations will be shared with the relevant parties by the Chair of the panel within 5 school days

2 Introduction

2.1 St Chad's Academies Trust ('the Trust') is committed to ensuring that it provides a strong infrastructure to enable our academies to flourish and improve. The Trust recognises that its leaders and colleagues are central to this success and greatly values their commitment and contribution.



2.2 The core values of the Trust form the basis of all discussions with colleagues. We expect all colleagues of St. Chad's Academies Trust to respect and model these values.

3 Aims

3.1 This is the Complaints policy of [• name of academy].

3.2 The aims of this policy and related procedures are to provide a framework for the resolution of complaints which:

3.2.1 Allows for their resolution informally and sets out the Academy's formal procedures where this is not achievable.

3.2.2 Is easily accessible and publicised, simple to understand and use, and impartial and non-adversarial.

3.2.3 Enables a full, fair and transparent investigation.

3.2.4 Respects people's desire for confidentiality.

3.2.5 Addresses all the points at issue and provides an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary.

3.2.6 Provides information to the Academy's senior leadership / management team so that services can be improved.

3.2.7 helps promote a whole academy culture of safety, equality and protection.

4 Definitions and interpretation

4.1 Where the following words or phrases are used in this policy:

4.1.1 References to the **Trust** are references to St Chad's Academies Trust, the multi academy trust responsible for the Academy.

4.1.2 References to **school days** mean Monday to Friday, when the Academy is open to pupils during term time. The dates of terms are published on the Academy's website.

4.1.3 References to **Parent** or **Parents** means the natural or adoptive parents of the pupil (irrespective of whether they are or have ever been married, with whom the pupil lives, or whether they have contact with the pupil) as well as any person who is not the natural or adoptive parent of the pupil, but who has care of, or parental responsibility for, the pupil (e.g., foster carer / legal guardian).

4.1.4 References to **Complainants** means any third party other than Parents. The complaints procedures for Complainants is dealt with under this policy at Appendix 4;

4.1.5 References to **complainants** (with a small "c") refers to both Parent or Parents (as defined at paragraph 0) and Complainants (as defined at paragraph 0).

4.2 All parental complaints should be identified at the outset by the Academy and dealt with in accordance with the Academy's Complaints Policy.

4.3 Timescales for each stage of the complaint's procedure are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. It is expected that the management of every complaint will progress in a timely manner.

4.4 The Academy aims to resolve all complaints efficiently and promptly and Parents are encouraged to bring any matter causing concern to the Academy's attention as soon as possible.

4.5 Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay to the timescales for a stage of the complaints procedure, the Academy will notify the Parent and inform them of the new timescales and explain the delay as soon as possible.

4.6 Complaints raised should be in writing unless a reasonable adjustment is requested by the Parent to amend this.

5 Scope and application for Parents

5.1 This policy applies to the whole Academy including the [• Nursery] *Delete if not applicable

5.2 This policy applies to complaints by Parents (as defined at paragraph 0). The scope and application of this policy for persons other than Parents is outlined at Appendix 4. The Academy has separate grievance and whistleblowing policies to cover concerns that a colleague may have.

5.3 This policy applies to any expression of dissatisfaction however made about actions taken, or a lack of action, by the Academy where the Parent may seek an apology, explanation and / or action by the Academy.

5.4 This policy does not apply to matters for which there are separate statutory procedures (e.g. admission appeals, exclusion reviews, special educational needs appeals, etc).

5.5 This policy applies to complaints from each of the following:

5.5.1 Parents of current pupils.

5.5.2 Parents of former pupils, if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was registered as a pupil at the Academy, or within three months of the pupil being removed from the register and

5.5.3 Parents of prospective pupils.

5.6 The Academy will investigate anonymous complaints and maintain records of actions.

5.7 Requests for financial awards, such as claims for compensation or damages are beyond the scope of the Academy's Complaints Policy.

5.8 All Parents should be aware that, regardless of the nature of a complaint and whether or not it is upheld, Parents are not entitled to details of any related sanctions imposed on colleagues or pupils, or measures in respect of Parents, for data protection and confidentiality reasons.

5.9 There may be occasions when it is necessary to deviate from this complaints procedure if this is reasonable and justified, subject to the Academy continuing to meet the statutory requirements under Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Parents will be notified of any changes.

6 Timescales

6.1 Whenever possible, in the interests of a prompt resolution of issues, a complaint should 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. We will, however, consider complaints made outside of this time frame where exceptional circumstances apply. A complaint raised outside this time frame should therefore confirm the reasons for the delay in raising it.

6.2 Timescales for each stage of the Academy's complaints procedure are set out below. It is expected that the management of every complaint will progress in a timely manner. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay to the timescales for a stage of the complaints procedure (such as other bodies investigating aspects of the complaint), the Academy will notify the Parent and inform them of the new timescales as soon as possible.

6.3 Complaints which are raised in the school holidays will usually be deemed to have been received on the first school day after receipt.

6.4 If a Parent commences legal action against the Trust in relation to their complaint, the Chief Executive Officer or Chair of the Trust Board will consider whether or not to suspend the complaints procedure until those proceedings have been concluded.

7 Regulatory frameworks

7.1 This policy has been prepared to meet the Academy's responsibilities under:

7.1.1 EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers *(DfE, January 2024).*

7.1.2 The education (Independent school standards) regulations 2014 Part 7

7.1.3 Education and Skills Act 2008.

7.1.4 Children Act 1989.

7.1.5 Childcare Act 2006.

7.1.6 Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (**UK GDPR**); and

7.1.7 Equality Act 2010.

8 Responsibility statement and allocation of tasks

8.1 The Trust has overall responsibility for all matters which are the subject of this policy.

8.2 The Trust is aware of its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the requirement under s 149 of the Equality Act 2010 to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty. This means in carrying out its functions, the Trust is required to have due regard to the need to:

8.2.1 Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.

8.2.2 Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and

8.2.3 Foster good relations across all characteristics - between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

8.3 To ensure the efficient discharge of its responsibilities under this policy, the Trust has allocated the following tasks:

Task	**Allocated to**	**When / frequency of review**
Keeping the policy up to date and compliant with the law and best practice	Trust Compliance Officer	As a minimum annually, ideally termly, and as required
Monitoring the implementation of the policy	Trust Compliance Officer	Termly
Seeking input from interested groups (such as pupils, colleagues, Parents) to consider improvements to the Academy's processes under the policy	Trust Headteacher	Annually
Formal annual review of complaints and implementation of any recommendations, to identify trends and recommend further improvement to policies and procedures	Academy Trust	Annually

9 Publication and availability

9.1 This policy is published on the Academy's website.

9.2 This policy is available in hard copy on request.

9.3 A copy of this policy is available for inspection from the Academy office during the school day.

9.4 This policy can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required and the Academy will make other reasonable adjustments required to enable Parents to access and complete this procedure, such as holding meetings in accessible locations.

9.5 Information regarding the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure of this policy during the preceding school year is available to Parents of pupils and Parents of prospective pupils and, on request to the Trust Compliance Officer.

10 Management of complaints

10.1 The Academy's policy allows for complaints from Parents to be considered at three stages (Appendix 4 of this policy outlines the complaints procedure for persons other than Parents):

Stage 1: Informal raising of a complaint. Further details of this procedure are set out in Appendix 1.

Stage 2: A formal complaint in writing. Further details of this procedure are set out in Appendix 2.

Stage 3: Complaint Panel Hearing. Further details of this procedure are set out in Appendix 3.

10.2 The roles and responsibilities of those involved in the Academy's complaints procedures are outlined at Appendix 8.

11 Expected standards of behaviour by those making complaints

11.1 Attention is drawn to the information included in 0, which has been developed having regard to:

11.1.1 Best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures (Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), March 2021);

11.1.2 Controlling access to school premises (Department for Education (DfE), November 2018).

12 Complaint meetings

12.1 The Academy may use recording devices to record complaints meetings at any stage in the Academy's complaints procedure where there are communication difficulties with the Parents. The recording will only take place if all parties confirm they do not have any objections.

12.2 The Academy may, at its discretion and having taken into account all the circumstances, permit the Parents to record meetings for the purposes of a reasonable adjustment or where it deems that there is a fair and reasonable purpose for allowing the Parents to record meetings. The recording will only take place if all parties confirm they do not have any objections.

12.3 Unless exceptional circumstances apply, the DfE will support the Academy if it refuses to accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without informed consent of all parties being recorded.

12.4 If the Academy has made reasonable attempts to accommodate the Parents with dates for complaints meetings at any stage of the Academy's complaints procedure and they refuse or are unable to attend, the Academy can:

12.4.1 arrange an initial meeting date will be offered with one other alternative (within 5 working days of the initial date)

12.4.1 Convene meetings in the Parents' absence.

12.4.2 Reach a conclusion in the interests of drawing the complaint to a close.

13 Record keeping and confidentiality

13.1 All records created in accordance with this policy are managed in accordance with the Academy's policies that apply to the retention and destruction of records.

13.2 The Academy Trust keeps a written record of all formal complaints, including the following:

13.2.1 whether they were resolved at Stage 2 or Stage 3.

13.2.2 the action taken by the Academy as a result of the complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

13.3 In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

13.4 The information created in connection with this policy may contain personal data. The Academy has a number of privacy notices which explain how the Academy will use personal data. The Academy's approach to data protection compliance is set out in the Overarching Data Protection Policy. In addition, colleagues must ensure that they follow the Academy's data protection policies and procedures when handling personal data created in connection with this policy; this includes the Academy's Data Protection Policy: Practical Guidance for Staff and the Information Security Policy.

13.5 Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where access is requested by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required in the course of an inspection or under other legal authority or court order.

14 Complaints to the Department for Education (DfE)

14.1 Parents who are dissatisfied with the way the Academy has handled their complaint may contact the DfE, which will consider the complaint on behalf of the Secretary of State.

14.2 The DfE cannot overturn the decision about a complaint. The DfE's role it to make sure the complaint is handled properly in line with the regulatory framework.

14.3 Further information about making a complaint to the DfE, including an online enquiry form, can be accessed on the DfE's website here - How DfE handles complaints about academies.

15 Training

15.1 The Academy ensures that regular guidance and training is arranged on induction and at regular intervals thereafter so that colleagues and volunteers understand what is expected of them by this policy and have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their roles.

15.2 The level and frequency of training depends on role of the colleague.

15.3 The Academy maintains written records of all colleague training.

Appendix 1 Stage 1 - Informal complaint

1 **Informal resolution of a complaint**

1.1 We hope and expect that most complaints can be resolved informally without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint's procedure. For example, dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care or a billing error should be able to be resolved by the relevant member of staff.

2 **Who to contact**

2.1 Where appropriate, complaints should initially be raised in person, in writing or via a phone call as follows:

2.1.1 **Educational issues:** if the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, please speak or write initially to the pupil's class teacher. Your complaint may be passed to a more senior colleague if appropriate.

2.1.2 **Pastoral care:** for complaints relating to matters outside the classroom, please speak or write to the Trust Headteacher

2.1.3 **Disciplinary matters:** a problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised first of all with the colleague who imposed it.

2.1.4 **Financial matters:** a query relating to fees or extras should be addressed in writing to the Academy Business Manager.

2.1.5 **Staff:** if the matter relates to the conduct of colleagues, please write or speak to the Trust Headteacher or someone they designate, such as a deputy

3 An informal complaint will be acknowledged by telephone, email or letter within **3 school days** of receipt, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescales. Such action may include an investigation and / or a meeting with the Parent.

3.1 Wherever appropriate, the Academy will ask the Parent at the earliest stage what they think might resolve the issue.

4 The Parent will receive a response to the complaint within **10 school days**.

4.1 If the Parent is dissatisfied with the response to the informal complaint or in the event that the complaint cannot be resolved by informal means, the Parent may make a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this procedure as set out in Appendix 2.

5 **Complaints about the Trust Head Teacher**

5.1 The procedure for dealing with an informal complaint about the Trust Headteacher is set out below:

Parents may choose to raise complaints directly with the Headteacher if they feel that the matter is capable of resolution informally. The complaint may be raised orally or in writing. If in writing, the Academy will not automatically treat the complaint as a formal (Stage 2) complaint and the Trust Headteacher will endeavour to resolve the complaint informally under Stage 1.

5.1.1 The Head Teacher will acknowledge informal complaints within **3 school days** and will seek to resolve the matter under this Stage 1 by means of direct conversation or a meeting with the Parents, to be held within **10 school days** of the initial complaint.

5.1.2 If the Parent is dissatisfied with the Trust Headteachers response to the informal complaint or in the event that the complaint cannot be resolved by informal means, the Parent may make a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this procedure as set out in Appendix 2.

5.2 Alternatively, Parents may choose to make their complaint about the Trust Headteacher in writing to the Chair of the Local Academy Committee via the Trust Compliance officer at complaints@stchads.uk In this case, the complaint will be treated as a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this procedure as set out in Appendix 2.

6 Complaints about Local Academy Committee

6.1 Complaints against individual Local Academy Committee members should be made in writing and addressed to the Trust Compliance Officer at complaints@stchads.uk Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

6.2 The Trust Compliance officer will then arrange for the complaint to be considered by the Chair of the Academy Committee who will confirm their decision in writing. A panel hearing in accordance with Appendix 3 will be requested if applicable.

6.3 Complaints against the Chair of the Local Academy Committee, the entire Committee or complaints involving both the Chair and Vice Chair should also be sent to the Trust Compliance Officer, who should then determine the most appropriate course of action which will be explained in writing.

Appendix 2 Stage 2 - Formal complaint

1 **How to make a formal complaint**

1.1 Complaints will usually only progress to Stage 2 after first being considered at the informal stage, and where the Parent indicates that they intend to escalate a matter to the formal stage.

1.2 The formal complaint must be in writing addressed to the Trust Compliance Officer at complaints@stchads.uk and should include:

1.2.1 a copy of any relevant documents and the Parent's name and full contact details; and

1.2.2 details of all the grounds of the complaint and the outcome desired.

1.3 The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone, email or letter within **3 school days**, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescales.

1.4 The complaint form in Appendix 7 can be used to submit a formal complaint to the Trust Compliance Officer who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

2 **Investigation**

2.1 The subject matter of the complaint will be investigated in the most appropriate manner, which may include some or all of the following steps:

2.1.1 Delegation of the investigation to a senior colleague or third party.

2.1.2 Involvement of one or more Local Academy Committee members

2.1.3 Request for additional information from the Parent, including what they think might resolve the issue (if not already requested at Stage 1); and

2.1.4 Request for a conversation and / or a meeting with the Parent personally and / or others with relevant knowledge of the circumstances to define the scope of the complaint and / or assist in the investigation.

Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Where the investigation has been delegated to a senior colleague, he / she will prepare a report on the investigation which will be considered by the Trust Headteacher. Personal data may be redacted, and names anonymised or cyphered in line with data protection principles.

3 **Decision**

3.1 The Trust Headteacher or designated colleague will notify the Parent by email or letter of his / her Stage 2 decision and the reasons for it within **15 school days** from receipt of the formal complaint.

3.2 The Trust Headteacher or designated colleague will follow up any recommendations with relevant parties within **5 school days.**

3.3 If the Parent is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response to the complaint, the Parent can request that the complaint be referred to a Complaint Panel under Stage 3 using the procedure set out in Appendix 3.

3.4 Early Years Foundation Stage (**EYFS**): Parents of pupils in the EYFS setting will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 calendar days of the complaint being received.

4 Complaints about the Trust Headteacher

The procedure for dealing with a formal complaint about the Trust Headteacher is set out below:

4.1.1 The complaint should put in writing to Chair of the Local Academy Committee via the Trust Compliance Officer at complaints@stchads.uk . The written complaint should include a copy of all relevant documents and full contact details and details of all the grounds of the complaint and the outcome desired.

4.1.2 The Chair of the Local Academy Committee via the Trust Compliance Officer will acknowledge the complaint by telephone, email or letter within **3 school days** of receipt and indicate the action that is being taken and the likely timescale. Such action may include an investigation and / or a meeting with the Parent. The Parent will receive a response to the complaint within **15 school days**: and

4.1.3 if the Parent is dissatisfied with the response to the complaint, the Parent can request that the complaint be referred to a Complaint Panel under Stage 3 using the procedure set out in Appendix 3.

Appendix 3 Stage 3 - Complaint Panel Hearing

1 Complaint Panel Hearing

1.2 If a Parent is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response to the complaint, the Parent can request a Complaint Panel Hearing (**Panel Hearing**).

1.3 The primary purpose of the complaint panel is to perform an independent and impartial review of the complaint and the academy's previous handling of the matter at stage 1 and 2. The complaint panel will determine whether the academy's actions were reasonable, followed the complaints policy, and achieved a fair outcome. The complaint panel will not reinvestigate the complaint and will make findings and recommendations based on the following:

a) The documents provided by both parties

b) The representation made by the parties

The role of the complaint panel is

a) Reconciliation

b) Resolution which considers where things may have gone wrong

2 How to request a Panel Hearing

2.1 A request for a Panel Hearing must be put in writing to the Trust Compliance Officer at complaints@stchads.uk and will usually only be considered if the procedure at Stage 2 has been completed.

2.2 The written request should usually be made within **15 school days** from receipt of the Stage 2 decision and include:

2.2.1 a copy of any relevant documents and full contact details.

2.2.2 details of all the grounds of the complaint about which the Parent remains dissatisfied and the outcome desired.

2.2.3 a list of the documents which the Parents believe to be in the Academy's possession and wish the Complaint Panel to consider; and

2.2.4 whether the Parent proposes to be accompanied to the Panel Hearing (see paragraph 5.5 below).

2.2.5 If assistance with the request is required, for example because of a disability, please inform the compliance officer who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.

2.2.6 The Trust Compliance Officer will acknowledge the request for a Panel Hearing in writing within **3 school days** of receipt.

2.2.7 Every effort will be made to enable the Panel Hearing to take place within **15 school days** of receipt of the request.

2.2.8 Parents may withdraw their request for a Panel Hearing at any point up to and including the intended date of the Panel Hearing.

5 **Planning the Panel Hearing**

5.1 The Trust Compliance Officer will endeavour to send written notification to each party of the date, time and place of the Panel Hearing at least **10 school days** before the date of the Panel Hearing.

5.2 Copies of any additional documents that the Parent wishes the Complaint Panel to consider should be sent to the Trust Compliance Officer to be received at least **7 school days** prior to the Panel Hearing.

5.3 The Trust Compliance Officer will endeavour to circulate a copy of the bundle of documents to be considered by the Complaint Panel to all parties at least **3 school days** prior to the Panel Hearing. The bundle of documents will include all records held in the complaint file following Stage 1 and / or 2, together with all correspondence and documents received from the Parent following notification of the formal response at Stage 2.

5.4 The Parent may be accompanied at the Panel Hearing, for example by a relative or friend. The Panel Hearing is an internal process, not legal proceedings, and legal representation is unnecessary.

5.5 If the Parent wishes to be accompanied by a relative or friend who is legally qualified, the Parent is required to notify the Trust Compliance Officer in the initial request for a Panel Hearing. The Parent should note that the Complaint Panel will wish to speak to that person directly prior to the Panel Hearing, and they will not be permitted to act as an advocate or address the Complaint Panel at the Panel Hearing unless invited to do so by the Chair of the Complaint Panel.

5.6 A person will be appointed to take a minute of the Panel Hearing.

6 **Composition of the Complaint Panel**

6.1 The Complaint Panel will comprise at least three individuals who have no detailed prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint.

6.2 The complaints panel will include at least one person who is independent of the management and running of the academy, i.e. they will not be a Trustee, a Local academy committee member at any of our academies or an employee of the Trust at any of our academies.

6.3 The Parent may ask the Compliance Officer to inform them who has been appointed to sit on the Complaint Panel ahead of the Panel Hearing. Fair consideration will be given to any reasonable objection to a particular member of the panel.

6.4 The Complaint Panel members will appoint one of their number to be the Chair of the Complaint Panel throughout the proceedings.

7 **Role of the Complaint Panel**

7.1 The role of the Complaint Panel is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering:

7.1.1 The documents provided by both parties; and

7.1.2 Any representations made by the parties

7.1.3 and to review the decision reached at Stage 2 and to consider, on a balance of probabilities, as to whether or not to uphold each complaint.

8 **The Panel Hearing**

8.1 Unless prior to the commencement of the Panel Hearing, a parent confirms they are satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, the Panel Hearing will proceed notwithstanding that the Parent may decide not to attend. In these circumstances, the Complaint Panel will consider the Parent's complaint in his / her absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint.

8.2 The panel will usually hear representations from the Stage 2 decision-maker and the Parent(s).

8.3 During the Panel Hearing, the parties shall have the opportunity to ask questions and make comments in an appropriate manner. The Panel Hearing is not a legal process, and the Complaint Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and / or may take written statements into account.

8.4 All statements made at the Panel Hearing will be unsworn. The parties will be entitled to write their own notes for reference purposes.

8.5 All those present during the Panel Hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the Panel Hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chair. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the Panel Hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and his / her comment will be minuted.

8.6 The Chair may, at his / her discretion, adjourn the Panel Hearing if he / she considers it appropriate to do so. This may include an adjournment for welfare reasons, to enable additional information to be obtained and / or considered or for the parties to take legal advice on a specific issue arising.

8.7 A Panel Hearing before the Complaint Panel is a private proceeding. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in or arising from the proceeding shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media (including social media).

8.8 When the Chair of the Complaint Panel is satisfied that sufficient consideration has been given to the documentation provided and any representations made by the parties, he / she will conclude the Panel Hearing.

9 **Decision**

9.1 The Complaint Panel will make findings about each complaint on the balance of probabilities and may make recommendations.

9.2 It is not within the powers of the Complaint Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on the Academy's colleagues, pupils or other Parents, although the Complaint Panel may make recommendations.

9.3 The minutes of the Panel Hearing, together with the Complaint Panel's findings and any recommendations will be provided in writing to the Parent and, where relevant, the person complained about, within **5 school days** of the Panel Hearing.

9.4 The Complaint Panel's findings and any recommendations will be shared with the relevant parties by the Chair of the panel within **5 school days** and also be made available for inspection on the Academy's premises by the Local Academy Committee and the Trust Headteacher.

9.5 The decision of the Panel is final. There will be no further opportunity within the Academy for consideration of the complaint. The completion of Stage 3 represents the conclusion of the Academy's complaints procedure.

9.6 If a duplicate complaint is received by a new complainant following completion of the Stage 3 procedure, the Academy will inform the new complainant that the matter is closed.

Appendix 4 Complaints procedure for persons other than Parents

1 The Academy encourages persons other than Parents (**Complainants**) (see paragraph 0 of the Academy's Complaints Policy) who have concerns about the Academy's operation or site to raise them with the Academy.

2 They should do so by writing to the Trust Headteacher setting out their concerns and the action sought. Any concerns raised will be investigated and responded to under Stage 2 of this procedure as set out in Appendix 2.

3 If the Complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response to the complaint, the Complainant can request a review of the decision by writing to the Trust Compliance Officer The review will be carried out by a Local Academy Committee member who will confirm their decision in writing.

4 A request for a review must be put in writing and will usually only be considered if the complaints procedure at Stage 2 has been completed.

5 The written request should usually be made within **15 school days** from receipt of the Stage 2 decision and include:

5.1 A copy of any relevant documents and full contact details.

5.2 Details of all the grounds of the complaint about which the Complainant remains dissatisfied and the outcome desired: and

5.3 A list of the documents which the Complainant believe to be in the Academy's possession and wish the Local Academy Committee Member to consider.

6 The role of the Local Academy Committee Member is to:

6.1 Establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering the documents provided by the Complainant.

6.2 Review the decision reached at Stage 2; and

6.3 Consider, on a balance of probabilities, as to whether or not to uphold each complaint.

7 The Local Academy Committee member will make findings about each complaint, on the balance of probabilities, and may make recommendations.

8 Any recommendations will be provided in writing to the Complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, within **15 school days** from receipt of the written request for the review.

9 The findings and any recommendations will also be made available for inspection on the Academy's premises by the Academy Trust and the Trust Headteacher.

10 The decision is final. The completion of the review represents the conclusion of the Academy's complaints procedure for Complainants. There will be no further opportunity within the Academy for consideration of the complaint.

11 If, at the conclusion of the review, a duplicate complaint is made the Academy will inform the Complainant that the matter is closed.

On receipt of a complaint from a Complainant the Academy may amend the procedure set out in Appendix 4 and may attempt an exploration of an informal resolution if appropriate. If this is not possible, there may be an investigation and determination of the complaint with the right to request a review of the decision made at the informal stage.

12 Complainants who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint may contact the Department for Education (**DfE**), which considers complaints about academies on behalf of the Secretary of State. Further information about making a complaint to the DfE, including an online enquiry form, can be accessed on the DfE's website here - How DfE handles complaints about academies.

Appendix 5 Serial and persistent complaints

1 Serial and persistent complaints are taken seriously by the Academy as they put a strain on valuable resources and hinder the progress of proper investigations.

2 If a parent/complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the Academy will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.

3 If the parent/complainant contacts the Academy again on the same issue, the correspondence may be viewed as "serial" or "persistent" and the Academy may choose not to respond.

4 The Academy will not mark a complaint as "serial" before the parent/complainant has completed all stages of the complaint's procedure.

5 Under no circumstances will a parent/complainant be marked as "serial" for exercising their right to refer their complaint to their MP, regardless of which stage the complaint has reached.

6 The Academy may consider a complaint to be "frivolous" or "vexatious" if:

6.1 Complaints are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious.

6.2 There is insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and / or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason.

6.3 There is insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner.

6.4 Complaints are designed to cause disruption or annoyance: or

6.5 Demands for redress lack any serious purpose or value.

7 Parents/Complainants should try to limit their communication with the Academy about the complaint while it is being progressed, as it is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) which is likely to delay an outcome being reached.

8 For parents/ complainants who excessively contact the Academy causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify particular methods of communication, provide a single point of contact and / or limit the number of communications which may be made with the Academy in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after three months.

9 The Academy will stop responding to a parent/complainant where:

9.1 The Academy has taken every reasonable step to address the concerns.

9.2 the parent/complainant has been given a clear statement of the Academy's position and their options; and

9.3 the parent/complainant contacts the Academy repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time.

10 The Academy's case to stop responding will be stronger if it agrees with any of the following statements:

10.1 the parents/complainant's letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive.

10.2 the parent/complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff; and / or

10.3 the Academy has reason to believe the individual is contacting the Academy with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience.

11 In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the Academy will immediately report this to the police for criminal investigation. The Academy may also withdraw the parent /complainant's implied permission to enter or be on the Academy site(s).

12 If the parent / complainant's behaviour is a cause for concern, the Trust Headteacher can ask them to leave the academy premises and bar individuals from entering. If the Academy makes the decision to bar a parent/complainant from the academy premises, it will provide the parent /complainant the opportunity to express formally their views on a decision to bar.

13 The Trust Headteachers decision to bar will be submitted to the Trust compliance officer and will be reviewed by the Chief Executive Office. If the decision is confirmed, the parent /complainant will be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place and when the decision will be reviewed.

Appendix 6 Complaint campaigns

1 Where the Academy becomes the focus of a campaign and receives a large volume of complaints all based on the same subject, particularly if these complaints come from complainants unconnected with the Academy, the Academy may respond by:

1.1 sending a consistent response to all complainants.

1.2 publishing a single response on the Academy website.

2. The normal procedures will apply if the complainant is not satisfied with the Academy's response.

Appendix 7 Complaint form (please continue on additional pages if necessary)

Complaint Form			
Name of complainant(s)			
Address:	**Telephone:**	**Mobile:**	**Email:**
Name and role of who the complaint has been raised with **(Please include any relevant dates)**			
Reason for complaint **(Please include as much information as possible about what specifically you are unhappy about and why)**			
Desired outcome			
List of relevant documents enclosed with the complaint form			

Declaration

The information included in this complaint form is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I agree to cooperate fully with the complaints procedures and acknowledge my ongoing obligation to treat the Academy and its staff in a reasonable manner at all times.

Signed:

Dated:

Appendix 8 Roles and responsibilities

1 Parent / Complainant

1.1 The Parent or Complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

1.1.1 explain the complaint in full as early as possible.

1.1.2 co-operate with the Academy in seeking a solution to the complaint.

1.1.3 respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint.

1.1.4 ask for assistance as needed.

1.1.5 treat all those involved in the complaint with respect.

1.1.6 refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

2 Investigator

2.1 The individual investigating the complaint at Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

2.1.1 Providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:

2.1.2 Sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved.

2.1.3 Interviewing staff and children / young people and other people relevant to the complaint.

2.1.4 Consideration of records and other relevant information

2.1.5 Analysing information.

2.1.6 liaising with the complainant and the Trust Compliance Officer as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

2.2 The investigator should:

2.2.1 Ensure each and every ground of complaint is identified.

2.2.2 Review all relevant documentation.

2.2.3 Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.

2.2.4 Keep notes of all interviews or arrange for a note taker to record minutes of the meeting.

2.2.5 Ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal.

2.2.6 Be mindful of the timescales to respond.

2.2.7 Prepare a comprehensive Report for the Trust Headteacher that sets out all the grounds of complaints, the facts and where requested identifies appropriate solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems and lists all documents considered and interviews held as an Appendix to their Report.

2.2.8 The Trust Headteacher will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

3 Trust Compliance Officer

3.1 The Trust Compliance Officer should:

3.1.1 Ensure that the parent/ complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure.

3.1.2 Liaise with colleagues, the Trust Head teacher, Chief Executive Officer, Chair of Local Academy Committee, Chair of Trust or the Governance professional and to ensure the smooth running of the complaint's procedure.

3.1.3 Be aware of issues regarding:

3.1.4 Sharing third party information and / or required redaction

3.1.5 Additional support (e.g., interpretation support).

3.1.6 Keep Records

4 Governance Professional

4.1 The Governance Professional is the contact point for the complainant and the Complaints Panel and should:

4.1.1 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 UK General Data Protection Regulations (**UK GDPR**).

4.1.2 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.

4.1.3 Collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example: stage 1 paperwork, academy and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale.

4.1.4 Record the proceedings.

4.1.5 Circulate the minutes of the meeting.

4.1.6 Notify all parties of the Complaints Panel's decision.

5 Complaint Panel Chair

5.1 The Complaint Panel Chair, who is nominated in advance of the Panel Hearing, should ensure that:

5.1.1 Both parties are asked (via the Governance Professional) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting.

5.1.2 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.

5.1.3 Parents who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease.

5.1.4 The remit of the Complaints Panel is explained to the Parent.

5.1.5 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 UK GDPR.

5.1.6 Both the Parent and the Academy 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.

5.1.7 The issues are addressed.

5.1.8 Key findings of fact are made.

5.1.9 The Complaints Panel is open-minded and acts independently.

5.1.10 No member of the Complaints Panel has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.

5.1.11 The meeting is minuted.

5.1.12 They liaise with the Trust Compliance Officer.

6 Complaint Panel Member

6.1 Complaint Panel members should be aware that:

6.1.1 the meeting must be independent and impartial and should be seen to be so no Local Governor or Trustee may sit on the Complaint Panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.

6.1.2 the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the Academy and the Parent/complainant. It is recognised that they 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.

6.1.3 many parents/complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.

6.1.4 extra care needs to be taken when a child / young person is present during all or part of the meeting:

(i) careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child / young person does not feel intimidated.

(ii) the Complaints Panel should respect the views of the child / young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

(iii) the Complaints Panel should give the Parent/complainant the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child / young person needs to attend.

(iv) however, the Parent / complainant should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the child / young person are to attend a part of the meeting that the Complaints Panel considers is not in the child / young person's best interests.

(v) the welfare of the child / young person is paramount.