Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School
Educating Women of the Future
Founded in 1888

Complaints Policy

POLICY TITLE: **Complaints Policy**

STATUS: **Statutory**

REVIEWED BY: **Governing Board**

DATE REVIEWED: **October 2026**

NEXT REVIEW: **October 2027**

Contents

Table of Contents

1 Aims 2
2 Application 2
3 Definitions 3
4 Responsibility for this Policy 4
5 Timescales 4
6 Reasonable adjustments 5
7 Management of complaints 5
8 Expected standards of behaviour by complainants 5
9 Complaint meetings 5
10 Complaints to the Department for Education (DfE) 6
11 Record keeping and confidentiality 6
12 Publication, availability and feedback 7
13 Version control 7
Appendix 1 8
Appendix 2 9
Appendix 3 11
Appendix 4 14
Appendix 5 15
Appendix 6 17
Appendix 7 18
Appendix 8 19
Appendix 9 21

1 Aims

1.1 This is the Complaints Policy of Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School.

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

1.2.1 allows for their resolution informally and sets out the Trust's formal procedures where this is not achievable;

1.2.2 is easily accessible and publicised, simple to understand and use, and impartial and non-adversarial;

1.2.3 enables a full, fair and transparent investigation where appropriate;

1.2.4 respects people's desire for confidentiality;

1.2.5 addresses all the points at issue and provides an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;

1.2.6 provides information to the Trust's senior leadership / management team so that services can be improved and any systemic issues can be identified and addressed;

1.2.7 helps promote a whole school culture of safety, equality and protection.

1.2.8 ensures that no pupil is disadvantaged, or made to feel disadvantaged, because a parent or carer has raised a concern or complaint in good faith.

2 Application

2.1 This policy applies to the school as a Single Academy Trust.

2.2 The Trust has separate grievance and whistleblowing policies to cover concerns that a member of staff may have.

2.3 This Policy applies to complaints which concern the Trust Board and the Headteacher and any expression of dissatisfaction or concern about actions taken, or a lack of action, by the Academy.

2.3.1 Specific arrangements for complaints about the Headteacher, an individual Trustee, the Chair or Vice-Chair of Trustees, or the Trust Board collectively are set out in the relevant stages of this Policy. The Trust will ensure that such complaints are considered by a person or panel with appropriate independence and no prior involvement.

2.4 This Policy does not apply to matters for which there are separate statutory procedures:

2.4.1 Admission appeals [see Admissions Appeals policy];

2.4.2 Representations about exclusion [see Behaviour for Learning Policy];

2.4.3 Appeals in relation to Education Health Care Plans which are dealt with by Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST);

2.4.4 Subject access requests [see Data protection policy and privacy notices];

2.4.5 Freedom of Information requests which will be dealt with in line with guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office;

2.4.6 Safeguarding and welfare issues, [see Safeguarding and Child protection policy].

2.4.7 complaints about services provided by third-party providers using the Academy's premises or facilities, where the matter falls within that provider's own complaints procedure. The Academy will signpost complainants to the appropriate procedure where relevant.

2.5 This Policy applies to complaints from each of the following:

2.5.1 Parents of current pupils at the Academy;

2.5.2 Parents of former pupils at the Academy, 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 provided that the fact of the complaint relates to the time the pupil was registered at the Academy.

2.6 The scope and application of this Policy for Other Complainants is outlined at Appendix 4.

2.7 The Trust will not normally consider anonymous complaints, unless it is appropriate to do so.

2.8 Requests for financial awards, such as claims for compensation or damages are beyond the scope of this Policy.

2.9 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 staff or pupils other than their child, or measures in respect of other Parents, for data protection and confidentiality reasons.

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

3 Definitions

3.1 Where the following words or phrases are used in this Policy:

3.1.1 The Complaints Policy for complaints against the Trust and Academy is referred to as this Policy.

3.1.2 Trustees mean the company directors and charity trustees who sit on the Trust Board of the Trust;

3.1.3 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;

3.1.4 Parents mean the natural or adoptive parent(s) 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);

3.1.5 Other Complainants mean any third party other than Parents of registered pupils. The complaints procedures for Other Complainants are dealt with under this Policy at Appendix 4;

3.1.6 complainants (with a small "c") refer to Parents (as defined at paragraph 3.1.4) and Other Complainants (as defined at paragraph 3.1.5).

3.1.7 Investigator refers to the individual investigating the complaint by providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of it. The Trust may choose to appoint a suitable Investigator that is an external party if appropriate.

3.1.8 Decision Maker refers to the individual appointed to make a decision on the complaint. The Trust may choose to appoint a suitable Decision Maker that is an external party if appropriate.

4 Responsibility for this Policy

4.1 The Trust has overall responsibility for all matters which are the subject of this Policy.

4.2 Trust leaders will: ensure the protocols of the policy are followed once their input level is triggered.

4.3 Trust staff will: follow the protocols of the policy and ensure all complaints are amicably resolved and informally wherever possible.

4.4 The Trust will be responsible for providing suitable training to all staff on all matters related to this Policy. The Trust ensures that regular guidance and training is arranged on induction and at regular intervals thereafter so that staff and volunteers understand what is expected of them by this Policy and have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their roles.

4.5 The level and frequency of training depends on the role of the individual member of staff. The Trust maintains written records of all staff training.

4.6 In order to achieve full and effective implementation of this Policy, the Trust has allocated the following tasks:

Task Allocated to When / frequency of review

Keeping the policy up to date Headteacher As a minimum annually, ideally and compliant with the law and termly, and as required best practice

Monitoring the Deputy Headteacher As a minimum annually, ideally implementation of the policy termly, and as required

Maintaining up to date records Headteacher’s PA As a minimum annually, ideally of all information created in termly, and as required relation to the policy and its implementation as required by the UK GDPR and the ISSRs

Seeking input from interested Deputy Headteacher As a minimum annually, ideally groups (such as pupils, staff, termly, and as required Parents, Trustees and Executive Officers) to consider improvements to the Trust's processes under the policy

Formal annual review of The Trust Annually complaints and implementation of any recommendations, to identify trends and recommend further improvement to policies and procedures

5 Timescales

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

5.2 A complaint must be raised by parents within three months of the concern arising or, where a series of associated concerns have occurred, within three months of the last of these concerns. We may consider complaints made outside of this timeframe where exceptional circumstances apply. A complaint raised outside this timeframe should therefore confirm the reasons for the delay in raising it. Complaints which are raised in the school holidays will be deemed to have been received on the first school day after receipt.

5.3 If complainants commence legal action against the Trust in relation to their complaint, the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those proceedings have been concluded.

5.4 Indicative timescales for each stage of the Trust's complaints procedure are set out below. It is expected that the management of every complaint will progress in a timely manner.

5.5 Where further investigations are necessary and timescales cannot be met, the Trust will notify complainants and inform them of the new timescales and explain the delay as soon as possible.

6 Reasonable adjustments

6.1 This Policy can be made available in large print or other accessible formats if required and the Trust will make other reasonable adjustments required to enable complainants to access and complete this procedure.

6.2 If assistance with making a complaint or participating in the Trust's complaints procedure is required, for example because of a disability, please inform the Clerk to the Trustees who will make appropriate arrangements where reasonable.

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

7 Management of complaints

7.1 Under this Policy complaints from Parents can be considered at three stages:

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

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

Stage 3: Review of formal complaint by a Complaint Panel Hearing. Further details of this procedure are set out in Appendix 3.

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

8 Expected standards of behaviour by complainants

8.1 It is the intention of the Trust to deal with concerns and complaints fairly and work constructively with complainants towards resolving them.

8.2 The Trust will handle concerns and complaints with appropriate confidentiality and will not discuss individual complaints publicly except where disclosure is required by law or is necessary for the fair handling of the complaint. Complainants are asked to respect the privacy of pupils, families and staff, and to avoid publishing information that could prejudice an investigation, breach confidentiality or identify children. A complainant will not be prevented from using this procedure solely because they have discussed or publicised their concerns.

8.3 A complaint should accurately represent the complainant’s own concerns and the outcome sought. A complainant will not be disadvantaged because they have received assistance in preparing their complaint, including help with translation, accessibility, literacy or digital tools. Where the wording of a complaint is unclear, the Trust may ask the complainant to confirm or clarify the issues to be investigated.

8.4 While the Trust will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school, attention is drawn to the information included in Appendix 5 on serial and persistent complaints.

9 Complaint meetings

9.1 The Trust may use recording devices to record complaints meetings at any stage in the Trust's complaints procedure where there are communication difficulties with the

complainants. The recording will only take place if all parties confirm they do not have any objections.

9.2 Complainants are not allowed to openly or covertly record complaint meetings or discussions with members of staff about concerns. The Trust may, at its discretion and having taken into account all the circumstances, permit the complainants 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 complainants to record meetings. The recording will only take place if all parties confirm they do not have any objections and only where the Trust has agreed.

9.3 Unless exceptional circumstances apply, the DfE will support the Trust if it refuses to accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without informed consent of all parties being recorded. Covert recordings are not permitted under any circumstances.

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

9.4.1 convene meetings in the Parents' absence; and

9.4.2 reach a conclusion in the interests of drawing the complaint to a close.

10 Complaints to the Department for Education (DfE)

10.1 Complainants who are dissatisfied with the way the Trust has handled their complaint may contact the DfE, which will consider the complaint on behalf of the Secretary of State.

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

10.3 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.

11 Record keeping and confidentiality

11.1 The Trustees and Headteacher will review the records in order to evaluate all data recorded in order to meet their obligations under this Policy and establish trends (for example, in respect of particular socio-economic groups, or groups with a Protected Characteristic).

11.2 The information created in connection with this Policy may contain personal data. The Trust's use of this personal data will be in accordance with data protection law. The Trust has published on its website privacy notices which explain how the Trust will use personal data

11.3 All records created in accordance with this Policy are managed in accordance with the Trust's policies that apply to the retention and destruction of records.

11.4 The Trust keeps a written record of all complaints resolved at any stage under the Complaints Policy including what action was taken by the Academy and/or Trust as a result of the complaint.

11.5 Trust and Academy staff will ensure that they follow the Trust's data protection policies and procedures when handling personal data created in connection with this Policy. This includes

the Trust's data protection policy and information security policy. 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.

12 Publication, availability and feedback

12.1 This Policy is published on the Academy's website.

12.2 This Policy is available in hard copy on request, including in accessible formats.

12.3 A copy of the Policy is available for inspection from the Main Office during the school day and parents will be reminded of this on an annual basis.

12.4 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 Chief Inspector of Ofsted, or the Secretary of State. The Trust makes this available by request.

12.5 The Trust welcomes feedback on how the Trust can continue to improve this Policy, and this can be sent to the school office marking the subject line "Feedback on Complaints Policy".

13 Version control

Date of adoption of this Policy 06 October 2026

Date of last review of this Policy 06 October 2026

Date for next review of this Policy 06 October 2027

Policy owner (SMT) Stephanie Rodgers

Policy owner (Trust) Stuart Cotten

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 complaints procedure.

2 Who to contact

2.1 If Parents wish to make an informal complaint these should be raised initially with the most appropriate person at the Trust, who will work constructively with parents to resolve them, 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 tutor. Your complaint may be passed to a more senior member of staff if appropriate;

2.1.2 Pastoral care: for complaints relating to matters outside the classroom, please speak or write to the Head of Year;

2.1.3 Disciplinary matters: a problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised first of all with the member of staff who imposed it / the Head of Year;

2.1.4 Financial matters: a query relating to fees or extras should be addressed in writing to the Director of Finance;

2.1.5 Academy staff: if the matter relates to the conduct of staff, please write or speak to the Headteacher or someone they designate, such as a deputy.

2.2 If Parents wish to make an informal complaint about the Headteacher or a Trustee, Parents should write or speak to the Chair of Trustees who will respond in writing as to next steps.

2.3 If Parents raise the complaint in writing this will not be automatically treated as a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this Policy and the Trust will endeavour to resolve the complaint informally under Stage 1.

3 Timelines for dealing with informal complaints under Stage 1

3.1 The Trust will acknowledge an informal complaint 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 **15 school days** of the initial complaint. Wherever appropriate, the Trust will ask the Parents at the earliest stage what they think might resolve the issue.

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

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 only where the Parents wish to escalate the complaint or part of the complaint to the formal stage.

1.2 A request that a complaint be considered at Stage 2 must be in writing addressed to the Clerk to the Trustees (clerk@qegschool.org.uk) and should include:

1.2.1 the Parents' name(s) and full contact details;

1.2.2 details of all the grounds of the complaint and who it has previously been raised;

1.2.3 a copy of any relevant documents; and

1.2.4 the outcome desired.

1.3 Parents may alternatively use the complaint form in Appendix 7 to submit a formal complaint.

1.4 The Trust will aim to acknowledge the complaint within **3 school days**, indicating the action that is being taken, the likely timescales and who the Investigator and Decision Maker will be. However the timescales provided can be subject to change depending on the circumstances of the complaint, and Parents will be notified of any changes to these.

1.5 The Investigator and Decision Maker may be the same person but can be different people if appropriate for example where the investigation has been delegated by the Decision Maker to another member of staff or third party.

1.6 If the complaint is about the Headteacher or a Trustee, including the Chair of Trustees, or Vice Chair, a suitably skilled Trustee will be appointed as the Decision Maker.

1.7 If the complaint concerns the Chair and Vice-Chair of Trustees together, or the Trust Board collectively, the Clerk will arrange for an appropriately independent person or panel to consider the complaint, with no person involved at an earlier stage taking part in the decision. Where necessary, the Trust may seek an external investigator or decision-maker.

2 Investigation

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

2.1.1 involvement of one or more Trustees;

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

2.1.3 request for a conversation and / or a meeting with the Parents personally and / or others with relevant knowledge of the circumstances to define the scope of the complaint and / or assist in the investigation.

2.2 Where appropriate, the Decision Maker may delegate the investigation to another member of staff of a third party.

2.3 The Investigator will establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

2.3.1 providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:

(a) sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved;

(b) interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint;

(c) consideration of records and other relevant information;

(d) analysing information; and

2.3.2 liaising with the Parents as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

2.4 The Investigator should:

2.4.1 ensure each and every ground of complaint is identified;

2.4.2 review all relevant documentation;

2.4.3 conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;

2.4.4 ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal;

2.4.5 be mindful of the timescales to respond; and

2.4.6 where the investigation has been delegated, prepare a comprehensive report for the Decision Maker that sets out their findings on the facts and lists all documents considered and interviews held as an appendix to their report.

2.5 Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Personal data may be redacted and names anonymised or cyphered in line with data protection principles.

3 Decision

3.1 The Decision Maker will carefully consider the investigation findings and will determine whether to uphold, partially uphold or dismiss the complaint based on these and all of the evidence that has been considered as part of the investigation.

3.2 The Decision Maker will notify the Parents via the Clerk to the Trustees by email or letter of their Stage 2 decision and the reasons for it within **15 school days** from receipt of the formal complaint, unless further time is deemed necessary.

3.3 If the Parents are dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response to the complaint, the Parents 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

1.1 If Parents are dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response to the complaint, the Parents can request a Complaint Panel Hearing (Panel Hearing).

1.2 A Panel Hearing is a hearing to consider those elements of the Stage 2 response to the Parents' complaint with which the Parents remain dissatisfied. The Complaint Panel is not obliged to consider any new complaints which have not been previously raised.

2 How to request a Panel Hearing

2.1 A request for a Panel Hearing must be put in writing to the Clerk to the Trustees. Where Parents remain dissatisfied after Stage 2 has been completed, they may request consideration at Stage 3 in accordance with this Appendix.

2.2 The written request should usually be made within **5 school days** from receipt of the

Stage 2 decision and include:

2.2.1 the Parents' name(s) and full contact details;

2.2.2 a copy of any relevant documents;

2.2.3 details of all the grounds of the complaint about which the Parents remain dissatisfied and the outcome desired;

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

2.2.5 whether the Parents propose to be accompanied to the Panel Hearing (see paragraph 3.5 below).

2.3 In the event that the request is received late, the Trust will not consider the complaint unless there are exceptional circumstances for the delay. It will be at the discretion of the Trust whether to consider it taking into account the reasons for the delay and the extent of the delay, and the Trust's decision on whether to consider the complaint late will be final.

2.4 The Clerk to the Trustees will aim to acknowledge the request for a Panel Hearing in writing within **3 school days** of receipt unless further time is deemed necessary.

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

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

3 Planning the Panel Hearing

3.1 The Clerk to the Trustees will endeavour to send written notification to each party of the date, time and place of the Panel Hearing at least ten school days before the date of the Panel Hearing.

3.2 Copies of any additional documents that the Parents wish the Complaint Panel to consider must be sent to the Clerk to the Trustees to be received at least seven school days prior to the Panel Hearing.

3.3 The Clerk to the Trustees will endeavour to circulate a copy of the bundle of documents to be considered by the Complaint Panel to all parties at least three school days prior to the

Panel Hearing where possible. 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 Parents following notification of the formal response at Stage 2.

3.4 The Parents 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.

3.5 If the Parents wish to be accompanied by a relative or friend who is legally qualified or a legal representative, the Parents must notify the Clerk to the Trustees in the initial request for a Panel Hearing. The Complaint Panel will decide whether it is appropriate for such person to participate in the meeting and if it is appropriate, the extent to which they will be allowed to participate. The decision on the Complaint Panel on this point will be final and will be entirely at their discretion.

3.6 A person will be appointed to take a written record of the Panel Hearing.

4 Composition of the Complaint Panel

4.1 The Complaint Panel will comprise at least three individuals who have no detailed prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint, including at least one person who is independent of the management and running of the Trust (i.e. they will not be a Trustee with prior knowledge, or an employee of the Academy Trust.

4.2 The Parents may ask the Clerk to the Trustees 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.

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

5 Role of the Complaint Panel

5.1 The role of the Complaint Panel is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that remain in issue by considering:

5.1.1 the documents provided by both parties; and

5.1.2 any representations made by the parties;

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.

6 The Panel Hearing

6.1 Unless prior to the commencement of the Panel Hearing, Parents confirm they are satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, the Panel Hearing will proceed notwithstanding that the Parents may decide not to attend. In these circumstances, the Complaint Panel will consider the Parents' complaint in their absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint.

6.2 The panel will usually hear representations from the Stage 2 decision-maker and the Parents.

6.3 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. The parties will be entitled to write their own notes for reference purposes.

6.4 All those present during the Panel Hearing are expected to show courtesy, respect and good manners or, after due warning, the Panel Hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chair of the Complaint Panel. 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 their comment will be noted.

6.5 The Chair of the Complaint Panel may, at their discretion, adjourn the Panel Hearing if they consider it appropriate to do so, for instance for welfare reasons or to allow additional information to be provided to the Panel.

6.6 The discussions during a Panel Hearing are private. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed can be published or otherwise made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media (including social media).

6.7 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, they will conclude the Panel Hearing.

7 Decision

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

7.2 The Complaint Panel cannot make any financial award or impose sanctions on the Trust or the Academy's staff, pupils or other Parents.

7.3 The Complaint Panel will aim to provide its written decision to the Parents and, where relevant, the person(s) complained about, within five school days of the Panel Hearing unless further time is necessary.

7.4 The Trust will ensure that the Complaint Panel decision is recorded appropriately and that any recommendations made in the course of a complaint are properly considered and actioned as appropriate.

7.5 The Complaint Panel's findings and any recommendations will also be made available for inspection on the Trust's premises.

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

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

Appendix 4

Complaints procedure for persons other than Parents - Other Complainants

1 The Trust encourages persons other than Parents (Other Complainants) (see paragraph

2.1.4 of the Trust's Complaints Policy) who have concerns about the Trust's operation or site to raise them directly with the Trust. They should do so by writing to the Chair of Trustees setting out their concerns.

3 A complaint must be raised by Other Complainants within one month of the concern arising or, where a series of associated concerns have occurred, within one month of the last of these concerns. We may consider complaints made outside of this timeframe where exceptional circumstances apply. A complaint raised outside this timeframe should therefore confirm the reasons for the delay in raising it. Complaints which are raised in the school holidays will be deemed to have been received on the first school day after receipt. On receipt of a complaint under this Appendix the Trust may attempt an exploration of an informal resolution if appropriate.

4 If these cannot be informally resolved, any concerns raised will be investigated and responded to under a single formal stage which will mirror Stage 2 of this procedure as set out in Appendix 2. However, following the conclusion of the single formal stage, there will be no further opportunity within the Trust for consideration of the complaint. The completion of the single formal stage for Other Complainants represents the conclusion of the complaints procedure, and there can be no request for further review at Stage 3 which does not apply to Other Complainants.

5 The Decision Maker will aim to send the decision within 20 school days from receipt of the request to resolve the complaint at the single formal stage unless further time is deemed necessary.

6 The decision letter is final and represents the conclusion of the complaints procedure for Other Complainants.

7 If, at the conclusion of the review, a duplicate complaint is made the Trust will inform the Other Complainants that the matter is closed.

8 Other Complainants who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint may contact the Department for Education (DfE) (see How DfE handles complaints about academies).

Appendix 5

Serial and persistent complaints

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

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

3 If a complainant contacts the Trust again making substantially the same points after the procedure has been completed, the repeated correspondence or complaint may be treated as "serial" or "persistent" and the Trust may decide not to respond further on that concluded matter.

4 The Trust may consider a complaint to be "frivolous" or "vexatious" if:

4.1 complaints are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;

4.2 there is insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and / or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason;

4.3 there is insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner;

4.4 complaints are designed to cause disruption or annoyance; or

4.5 demands for redress lack any serious purpose or value.

5 Complainants should try to limit their communication with the Trust 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.

6 Where the frequency, nature or method of contact is unreasonable and causes a significant level of disruption, the Trust may put in place proportionate arrangements such as a single point of contact, specified methods of communication and/or reasonable limits on frequency. Any such arrangements will be communicated in writing, will normally be reviewed after three months, and will take account of any reasonable adjustments required

7 The Trust will stop responding to a complainant where:

7.1 the Trust has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns;

7.2 the complainant has been given a clear statement of the Trust's position and their options; and

7.3 the complainant contacts the Trust repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time.

7.4 A decision to limit or cease responses about a concluded matter will not prevent the complainant from raising a genuinely new and legitimate concern. Any new matter will be considered on its own merits under the appropriate procedure.

8 The Trust is likely to stop responding if it agrees with any of the following statements:

8.1 the complainant's letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive;

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

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

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

10 If the complainant's behaviour is a cause for concern, the Trust can ask them to leave the Trust's site(s) and bar individuals from entering. If the Trust makes the decision to bar a complainant from the Trust's site(s), it will provide the complainant the opportunity to express formally their views on a decision to withdraw permission to access or remain on the Trust's site(s)1.

11 The Trust's decision to bar will be reviewed by the Chair of Trustees or a Trustee appointed by the Chair for this purpose. If the decision is confirmed, the 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 Trust 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 Trust , the Trust may respond by:

1.1 sending a consistent response to all complainants; and

1.2 publishing a single response on the Academy Trust's website.

1 The normal procedures will apply if the complainant is not satisfied with the Trust's response, depending on the type of complainant.

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 the person(s) that you wish to complaint about if relevant			
Date(s) when the concern(s) arose			
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			
Have you used AI to generate this complaint?			

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 Trust, the Academy and its staff in a reasonable manner at all times.

Signed:

Dated:

Appendix 8

Roles and responsibilities

1 Complainants

1.1 Complainants will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

(a) explain the complaint in full as early as possible;

(b) co-operate with the Trust in seeking a solution to the complaint;

(c) respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint;

(d) ask for assistance as needed;

(e) treat all those involved in the complaint with respect;

(f) refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

2 Clerk to the Trustees

2.1 The Clerk is the contact point for the Parents and the Complaints Panel and should:

(a) ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of the relevant policy and procedures;

(b) 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 meetings are accessible;

(c) collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example: stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the complainant and Decision Maker in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale;

(d) take an accurate record of the meetings;

(e) circulate the minutes of the meeting; and

(f) notify all parties of the Complaints Panel's decision.

3 Complaint Panel Chair

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

(a) 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;

(b) 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;

(c) Parents who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease;

(d) the remit of the Complaints Panel is explained to the Parents;

(e) written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual’s rights to data protection2;

(f) both the Parents and the Trust are given the opportunity to make representations and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself;

(g) the issues are addressed;

(h) key findings of fact are made;

(i) the Complaints Panel is open-minded and acts independently;

(j) 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;

(k) a record of the meeting is taken; and

(l) they liaise with the Clerk.

4 Complaint Panel Member

4.1 Complaint Panel members should be aware that:

(a) the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so no 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;

(b) the aim of the meeting is to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the Trust and the Parents. It is recognised that the Parents 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;

(c) many Parents may feel nervous and anxious in a formal setting, particularly when discussing an issue that affects their child;

(d) in the very rare circumstances where this will be appropriate, extra care needs to be taken when a child / young person is present during all or part of the meeting:

(i) careful consideration to how the meeting is conducted ensuring that the child is well supported and at ease and using language that is appropriate for their age, needs and understanding;

(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 will decide which parts of the meeting, if any, the child / young person can attend, and take into account the Parents' views on this, and consider the child / young person’s best interests and welfare.

Appendix 9

Regulatory framework

1 This Policy has been prepared to meet the Trust's responsibilities under:

1.1 Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014;

1.2 Children Act 1989;

1.3 Childcare Act 2006;

1.4 UK GDPR; and

1.5 Equality Act 2010.

2 This Policy has been developed having regard to:

2.1 Best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures (Department for Education, March 2021, as updated from time to time);

2.2 Controlling access to school premises (DfE, November 2018).