



NPAT Complaints Policy

Associated Policies:	Admissions policy Safeguarding and child protection Policy Staff Grievance Procedure Staff Disciplinary Procedure Whistleblowing policy
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1. POLICY STATEMENT

Northampton Primary Academy Trust (NPAT) is dedicated to providing the best possible education and support for all pupils within its schools. This means having a clear, fair and efficient procedure for dealing with any complaints to or against our schools, so that any issues that arise can be dealt with as swiftly and effectively as possible.

1.1 Northampton Primary Academy Trust aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at its school, and others

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non – adversarial
- facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- make sure any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- consider how the complaint can feed into school and Trust improvement evaluation processes.

1.2 We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed. The Trust will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full. To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on our website, and on the websites of our schools.

1.3 Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals

1.4 All staff will be made aware of this complaints procedure and are expected to review this policy regularly in order that they are familiar with our process of dealing with complaints and can be of assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.

2. WHO DOES THIS POLICY APPLY TO

2.1 Sections 8 and 9 of this policy applies to all students and parents/carers at schools under The Northampton Primary Academy Trust.

2.2 Concerns or complaints from persons other than parents/carers or pupils should be dealt with in accordance with Section 10.

3. UNDERSTANDING THIS POLICY

In order to investigate your complaint as fully as possible, we have implemented a staged approach. We anticipate that almost all complaints that arise will be resolved at Stage 1 or Stage 2.

We expect our members of staff to be addressed in a respectful manner and for communication to remain calm at all times. The procedure under section 11 will only be used on very rare occasions to deal with unreasonable persistent complainants or unreasonable complainant behaviour.

To enable a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than 3 months after the event being complained of will not be considered. We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If it becomes necessary to alter the time limits and deadlines set out within this procedure, you will be advised accordingly and given an explanation as to why this has been the case and provided with revised timescales. If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority safeguarding teams or tribunal/courts, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If a complainant commences legal action against the trust in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

In this procedure:

- ‘School days’ **excludes weekends and trust holidays;**
- ‘Parent’ means a parent, carer or anyone with legal responsibility for a child.

4. POLICY REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.1** The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the individual school's leadership team and remain under the review of the Northampton Primary Academy Trust.
- 4.2** This policy will be reviewed and updated as necessary if/when any changes are made to legislation that affect our Trust's practice. Otherwise, or from then on, this policy will be reviewed annually and shared with the full trust board.
- 4.3** The Executive Office Manager for Northampton Primary Academy Trust will retain responsibility for review of this policy

5. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

- 5.1** This document meets the requirements set out in Part 7 of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils in our Trust.
- 5.2** It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations, and refers to good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures from the Department for Education (DfE).
- 5.3** This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.
- 5.4** In addition, it addresses duties set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework with regards to dealing with complaints about the Trust's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements.

6. DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE

- 6.1** The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint;

A concern is defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A complaint is defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'

This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)

- Safeguarding matters
- Suspension and permanent exclusion
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline
- Withdrawal from the curriculum (parents and carers can withdraw their child from any aspect of religious education, including the daily act of collective worship. They do not have to explain why.)
- National Curriculum content
- Appeals relating to internal assessment decisions for external qualifications.

Please see Appendix 1 and our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use Trust premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

7. PRINCIPLES FOR INVESTIGATION

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify;

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

7.1 The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this timeframe in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If at any point we cannot meet the timescales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

7.2 We will investigate all written complaints relating to the Trust's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days

of receiving the complaint. Schools will keep a record of the complaint (see Section 10) and make this available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers can notify Ofsted if they believe that a school is not meeting EYFS requirements by:

- calling 0300 123 4666
- emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- using the online contact form available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted#org-contacts>

Schools will notify parents and carers if they become aware that they are to be inspected by Ofsted. Schools will also supply a copy of the inspection report to parents and carers of children attending the setting on a regular basis.

8. STAGES OF COMPLAINT (NOT COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE TRUST, CEO OR TRUSTEES)

We have adopted a 3-stage process for dealing with complaints. Roles and responsibilities of key people in the process are detailed in Appendix 4. The three stages are as follows:

- Stage 1 – informal resolution
- Stage 2 – formal investigation
- Stage 3 – panel hearing

8.1 Stage 1: informal resolution

The Trust will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve that matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

The complainant should raise the complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member of school staff or the Headteacher, either in person or by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact their school office.

The school will acknowledge informal complaints within 5 school days, and investigate and provide a response within 15 school days of the acknowledgment.

Many enquiries and concerns can be dealt with satisfactorily by the class teacher or other member of staff without the need to resort to the formal procedure. We value informal meetings and discussions and encourage parents to approach staff with any concerns they may have and aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding.

It is always helpful if complainants can fully explain the nature of the concern and identify the outcome they are looking for. Complainants may be invited to an informal meeting with the member of staff most appropriate for dealing with that concern. The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure that you are clear on what action (if any) has been agreed. This may be put in writing if appropriate.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, complainants can write to the Headteacher under Stage 2 within 15 school days of the informal resolution.

8.2 Stage 2: formal investigation

The formal stage involves the complainant putting the complaint in writing, (unless the complainant has a sufficient reason to request a reasonable adjustment be made to amend this). This letter should provide details such as:

- The nature of the complaint
- Relevant dates and times
- The names of witnesses of events
- How the matter has been handled so far
- What the complainant feels would resolve the complaint.

Complainants may wish to use the Complaint Form provided in Appendix 2. The letter or Complaint Form should be submitted alongside copies of any relevant documents.

8.2.1 Addressing the complaint

Complaints not involving the Headteacher or a member of the local governing body should be directed to the Headteacher. This can be done by:

- email to the school office, for the attention of the Headteacher
- letter addressed to the Headteacher, delivered to the school office.

Complaints involving the Headteacher or a member of the local governing body should be directed to the Chair of the local governing body. This can be done by:

- email to the Chair of the local governing body (this can be found on the school website)
- letter addressed to the Chair of the local governing body, delivered to the school office.

Complaints involving the Chair of the local governing body should be directed to the Chair of the Trust Board. This can be done by:

- email to the Clerk to the Trust Board: rebecca.howell@npatschools.org

- letter: Chair to the Trust Board, Northampton Primary Academy Trust, Headlands Primary School, Bushland Road, Northampton, NN3 2NS.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the school office. Complainants can also ask third party organisations like Citizens Advice to assist.

8.2.2 Investigation

The complainant will receive written acknowledgement of their complaint within 5 school days of receipt. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the Trust's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response. This will normally be within 15 school days of the acknowledgement of receipt.

The Headteacher or the chair of the local governing body will then conduct their own investigation.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- the entire local governing body or
- the majority of the local governing body

the CEO or Trust Board will conduct the investigation.

The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 15 school days of the acknowledgment of receipt.

If the Headteacher / chair of the local governing body / CEO / Trust Board is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions to be taken to resolve the complaint.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and wishes to proceed to the next stage of this procedure, they should inform the Clerk to the local governing body/Trust Board in writing within 15 school days of the response.

8.3 Stage 3: panel hearing

Complaints will be escalated to the panel hearing stage if the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint at Stage 2: formal investigation.

The complainant will receive written acknowledgement of their request for review within 5 school days of receipt

The panel will be appointed by or on behalf of the Trust and must consist of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least 1 panel member must be independent of the management and running of the school. The panel cannot be made up solely of local governing body members, as they are not independent of the management and running of the school.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- the entire local governing body or
- the majority of the local governing body

the panel will be made up of trustees and an independent panel member.

The panel will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress.

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel. The clerk will aim to find a date within 20 school days of the acknowledgement of the request, where possible.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will set a date. The hearing will go ahead using written submissions from both parties.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending will be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

At the review panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish. We don't encourage either party to bring legal representation, but will consider it on a case-by-case basis. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by their union.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the school representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

The panel will then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide copies of the minutes of the hearing and the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint, and make a copy available for inspection by the Trust and Headteacher.

The panel can:

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

If the complaint is upheld, the panel will:

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

The panel will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 5 school days. The letter will set out the decision of the panel together with the reasons underpinning that decision. The letter will also include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if the complainant is dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the Trust.

9. COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE TRUST, CEO OR TRUSTEES

9.1 Stage 1: informal resolution

We make every effort to address any concerns or complaints early through informal measures.

The complainant should raise any concerns as soon as possible with the relevant member of the Trust's central team, or the chief executive officer (CEO).

If the concern regards the CEO, the complainant should contact the Chair of the Board of trustees.

If the complainant is unsure who to contact, or needs to contact the Chair of the Board of trustees, they should contact the Trust office by phone on 07741 654181 or admin@npatschools.org.

The process for responding to and investigating an informal complaint about the Trust or central staff is the same as that set out in Section 5.

9.2 Stage 2: formal investigation

If the complaint is not resolved satisfactorily at the informal stage, the complainant must submit a formal complaint in writing.

The complainant will receive written acknowledgement of their complaint within 5 school days.

The investigating officer will then investigate, in line with the process set out in Section 5 above, providing a written response to the complainant within 15 school days of the acknowledgment of receipt of the complaint.

9.3 Stage 3: panel hearing

Complaints will be escalated to the panel hearing stage if the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint at the second, formal stage.

A panel will be appointed by the Trust, and will consist of 3 members of the board not involved in investigating the complaint in the formal stage.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- the entire Trust Board or
- the majority of the Trust Board

the panel will be entirely made up of independent members.

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel. The clerk will aim to find a date within 20 school days of acknowledgement of the request, where possible.

If the complainant rejects the offer of 3 proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will set a date. The hearing will go ahead using written submissions from both parties.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting.

The complainant and representatives from the Trust, as appropriate, will be present at the panel hearing. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish.

The panel will ensure that the hearing is properly minuted.

9.3.1 At the meeting

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the Trust representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and Trust representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

The panel must then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide a copy of the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint, and make a copy available for inspection by the Trust.

The panel will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 5 school days of the panel hearing.

10. COMPLAINTS FROM PERSONS OTHER THAN PARENTS AND PUPILS

Sections 7 and 8 of this complaints policy applies solely to complaints made by parents or carers of current registered pupils of schools within the Trust. However, the Trust wishes to work closely with other members of the school and local community and will deal with concerns and complaints as follows:

- A concern regarding the school and/or its operations may be made to any member of staff. That member of staff will attempt to resolve the matter immediately or may, if appropriate, refer the matter to their line manager or member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) who is best placed to deal with the concern. It is expected that most concerns will be responded to orally or in writing within 5 school days. If a longer period is required, complainants will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation.
- Where a concern is not resolved at Stage 1, or complainants wish their concerns to be dealt with immediately as a formal complaint, they should put their complaint in writing and send this to the Headteacher of the

relevant school to investigate. The Headteacher may delegate the task of investigation and/or responding to the complaint to a member of the Senior Leadership Team or may escalate the complaint straight to Stage 3. A formal response to the complaint will usually be provided within 15 school days of acknowledgement of receipt of the letter of complaint although if a longer period is required to respond, complainants will be kept updated.

- If complainants are not satisfied with the response at Stage 2, they may request a review by writing to the Clerk to the Trust Board. Complainants should write to the Clerk within 10 school days of receipt of the letter at Stage 2. Requests received outside this timeframe will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. The Clerk will arrange for a governor to consider the complaint alone or may convene a complaints panel on the same terms as set out in this policy. The decision at this stage will usually be sent to complainants within 20 school days of acknowledgement of receipt of the request for a review. The decision at Stage 3 exhausts the Trust's complaints procedure.

Concerns or complaints regarding the Headteacher or the Trust as a whole should be referred directly to the Clerk to the Trust Board, c/o Northampton Primary Academy Trust, Bushland Road, Northampton, NN3 2NS (or via email to rebecca.howell@npatschools.org) who will arrange for the stages above to be considered by an appropriate person.

11. REFERRING COMPLAINTS ON COMPLETION OF THE SCHOOL AND TRUST PROCEDURES

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school or Trust complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the ESFA. The ESFA will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly. The ESFA will not overturn the school or Trust's decision about a complaint but will intervene if a school or Trust has:

- breached a clause in its funding agreement
- failed to act in line with its duties under education law
- acted (or is proposing to act) unreasonably when exercising its functions.

If the complaints procedure is found not to meet regulations, the Trust will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

We will include this information in the outcome letter to complainants.

12. PERSISTENT OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following this complaints procedure
- makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive
- insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaint's procedure, beyond all reason
- pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaint's procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the timeframes it sets out
- makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time
- seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value.

The school/Trust will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of the school's/Trust's position and their options. The school/Trust will maintain the role of an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when meetings are held with individuals. The school/Trust will follow this complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

A complaint will not be labelled as persistent or 'serial' where the three stage complaints process outlined within this policy has not been completed.

If the complainant continues to contact the school/Trust in a disruptive way, communication strategies may be put in place. The school/Trust may:

- give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as Citizens Advice
- put any other strategy in place as necessary.

The school/Trust may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- the school/Trust has taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- the complainant has received a clear statement of the school's/Trust's position and their options
- the complainant contacts the school/Trust repeatedly, and the school/Trust believes their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience.
- the complaint is deemed to be vexatious.

The school/Trust will inform the individual that they intend to stop responding and explain that any new complaints will still be considered.

A vexatious complaint is defined within the Department for Education guidance where it;

- is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious;
- insists upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason;
- insists upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- is designed to cause disruption or annoyance;
- demands redress that lacks any serious purpose or value.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the school/Trust will immediately inform the police and communicate these actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school/Trust site.

12.1 Duplicate complaints

If the school/Trust has resolved a complaint under this procedure and received a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, the school/Trust will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information that needs to be considered.

If the school/Trust is satisfied that there are no new aspects, it will:

- tell the new complainant that the issue has already been investigated and responded to, and that the local process is complete
- direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with the original handling of the complaint.

If there are new aspects, this procedure will be repeated.

12.2 Complaint campaigns

Where the school/Trust receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school/Trust may respond to these complaints by:

- publishing a single response on the school/Trust website
- sending a template response to all of the complainants.

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's/Trust's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

13. RECORD KEEPING AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about:

- actions taken at all stages
- the stage at which the complaint was resolved
- the final outcome.

The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes related to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and stored securely in the school office, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

In the case of complaints about the Trust or central staff, these records will be managed by the Trust governance professional, and will be stored securely in the Trust's offices under restricted access.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and records management policy.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole local governing body of the school (or the entire Trust Board) in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the local governing body is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the school will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the local governing body, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

14. LEARNING LESSONS

The local governing body will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

The Trust Board will receive regular reports on the types of complaints received in each school in order to support the development of appropriate support structures, and to inform any improvements to procedures or practice.

15. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

The local governing body will monitor the effectiveness of the school complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly.

The local governing body will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in the Section 13, 'Learning lessons.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the school's business manager.

The COO will monitor the effectiveness of the complaint's procedure Trust-wide.

Appendix 1 Matters excluded from scope of this policy

Excluded Matters	Signposting
Admissions	The process for challenging admissions decisions is set out in our admissions policy in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.
Child protection matters	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our safeguarding and child protection policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
Exclusions and suspensions	The process for challenging exclusions decisions is set out in the DfE's statutory guidance and information can be found at https://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions
National Curriculum content	Please contact the Department for Education at www.education.gov.uk/contactus
School re-organisation Proposals	Where concerns are not adequately addressed by the Trust complaints can be raised directly with the Department for Education.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Concerns about statutory assessments of special educational needs should be raised directly with the local authority.
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus . Volunteer staff who have concerns should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain directly to the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of the complaint.

Appendix 2 **Stage 2 Formal complaint form**

Your name:	
Your child's name:	
Your relationship to the child:	
Your address including postcode:	
Daytime telephone number:	
Evening telephone number:	
Email address:	

1. Please provide full details of your complaint, including relevant dates and persons concerned where possible in the box below. If you have more than one complaint, please number these. Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

2. What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (Who did you speak to and what was their response?). Continue on a separate sheet, if necessary.

3. What would you like as an outcome from your complaint(s)? Continue on a separate sheet, if necessary.

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

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Signed:

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Date:

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All functions of the complaints procedure must adhere to the requirements of the *Data Protection Act 2018* and the *Freedom of Information Act 2000*.

Thank you for completing the form and providing us with details of your complaint. Please complete and return to either the school office or Trust headquarters (as appropriate depending upon the stage of the complaint) in a sealed envelope addressed to the Headteacher or Clerk to the Trust Board (as appropriate).

Office use

Date received

Date acknowledgement sent

Responsible member of staff

Appendix 3 Summary of complaints procedure

Stage 1: Informal	Parent brings complaint to attention of member of staff
	Issue to be resolved within 15 school days of complaint
	Where no satisfactory solution has been found, parent to be advised that they should proceed to Stage 2
Stage 2: Formal	Parent to put complaint in writing using the Complaint Form within 15 school days of the informal resolution
	Complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school days
	(Optional) Meeting with parents within 10 school days of acknowledgement of receipt of complaint
	Response to the complaint sent within 15 school days of acknowledgement of receipt of complaint
Stage 3: Panel hearing	Parent to request hearing within 15 school days of receiving notice of the outcome of Stage 2
	Request to be acknowledged within 5 school days
	Hearing to take place within 20 school days of acknowledgement of receipt of request
	Notification of date, time and place of the hearing and details of the panel members present sent at least 5 school days before the hearing
	Trust representative and parents to submit evidence in support of their case to the Clerk at least 3 school days before the hearing
	Complaints Panel decision sent not more than 5 school days after the hearing

Appendix 4 Roles and Responsibilities

The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- follow these procedures
- co-operate with the school or Trust throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved with respect
- not publish details about the complaint on social media.

The investigator

An individual will be appointed to look into the complaint, and establish the facts.

They will:

- interview all relevant parties, keeping notes, to include sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
- consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the Headteacher or complaints panel that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

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

Complaints co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator can be:

- the Headteacher or CEO
- the designated complaints governor
- any other staff member providing administrative support

The complaints co-ordinator will:

- keep the complainant up to date at each stage in the procedure
- make sure the process runs smoothly by liaising with staff members, the Headteacher, Chair of governors/trustees, clerk, CEO and Chair of trustees
- be aware of issues relating to:
 - sharing third party information
 - additional support needed by complainants, for example interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

Clerk to the governing body and trust board

The clerk will:

- be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints panel, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints panel meetings
- arrange the complaints hearing
- record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing.
- notify all parties of the panel's decision.

Panel chair

The complaints panel chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy

complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person

the remit of the panel is explained to the complainant

written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting

both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself

the issues are addressed

key findings of fact are made

the panel is open-minded and acts independently

no member of the panel has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure

the meeting is minuted

they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Panel Member

Complaints panel members should be aware that:

the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so. No governor/Trustee may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.

the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant

We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

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

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

Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

The complaints panel should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child/young person is the complainant, the panel should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the panel should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend. However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the panel considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.