



MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

COMPLAINTS POLICY

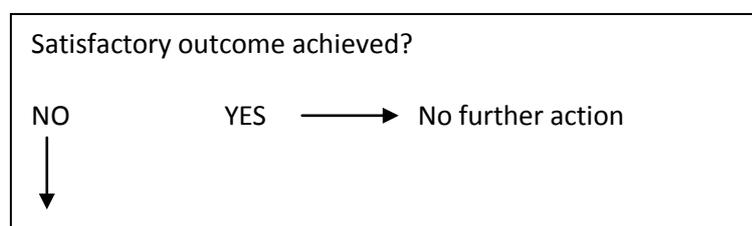
COMPLAINTS

A guide for Parent/Carer/complainant

The vast majority of concerns and complaints can be resolved informally. On many occasions such concerns are resolved by an initial contact with the teacher concerned, a Head of Department or Head of Year or, if necessary, a senior member of staff. This guide is intended to help people through the complaints process.

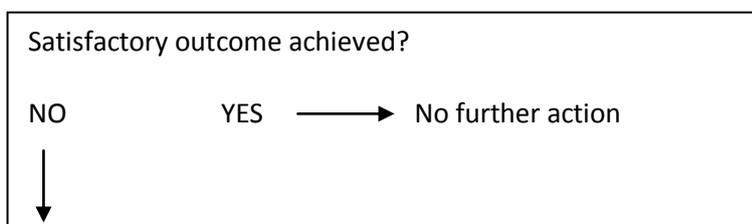
STAGE 1:

Parent/Carer/complainant raises concern with relevant member of staff. This can be the member of staff directly concerned with the issue or, if you feel uncomfortable with addressing the matter with that person, any other relevant member of staff of your choice (e.g. your child's Form Tutor or Head of Year/Head of House). This stage should be completed within 5 working days of the concern being raised.



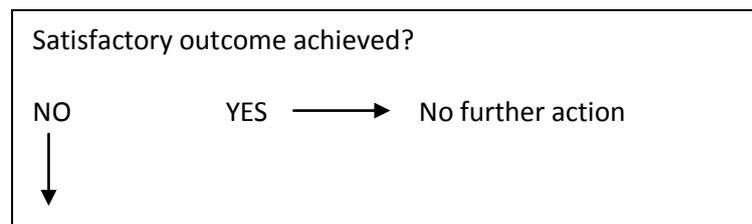
STAGE 2:

Parent/Carer/complainant raises concerns with the Principal. The Principal or other designated senior member of staff investigates the complaint and reports back to the parent. At this stage it is useful for you to put your complaint in writing. You may wish to use the complaint form to do this. This stage should be completed within 10 working days of the date of concern being raised.



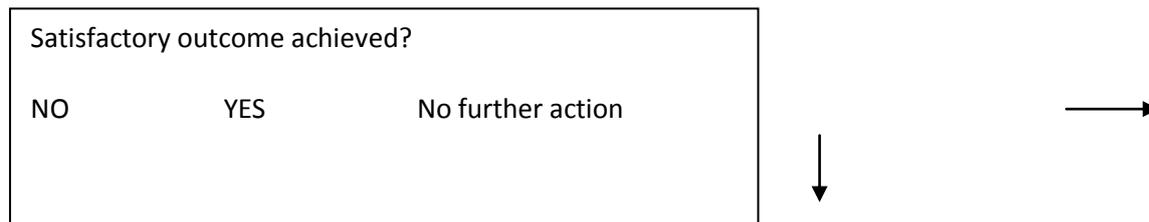
STAGE 3:

Parent/Carer/complainant raises concern with Chair of Academy Ambassadors/ Local Governing Body. The complaint is investigated and a report is made to the parent, as well as the Executive Principal and the CEO of the Trust. This stage should be completed within 5 working days of the date of concern being raised.



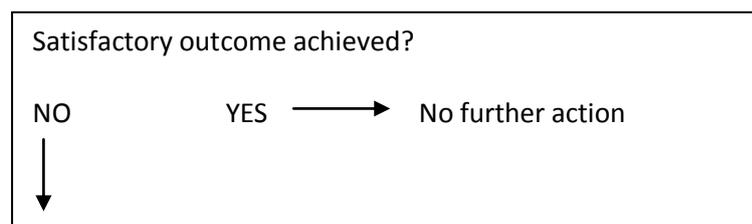
STAGE 4:

Parent/Carer/complainant makes complaint to the Executive Principal/Chief Executive Officer. You must do this in writing. A formal meeting will be arranged. This stage should be completed within 5 working days of the concern being raised.



STAGE 5:

Parent/Carer/complainant makes complaint to the MAT Board of Trustees. You must do this in writing. A Panel, including one member who is independent of the management and running of the academy or school meets with the parent, and other relevant staff. An acknowledgement of the complaint will be sent within 5 working days and the panel will be convened within 15 working days of the complaint being received. A written outcome will be provided within 5 working days of the panel meeting.



STAGE 6:

Parent/Carer/complainant /Community may choose to complain to the Department for Education.

The Department for Education will not usually investigate complaints until the Academy's own complaints procedure, including any appeal, has been exhausted.

The Department for Education will investigate complaints about

- Undue delay or non-compliance with published complaints procedures
- Allegations that the Academy has acted unlawfully or failed to comply with a contractual duty imposed on it under its Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State or any other obligation.

Complaints about academies should be made in writing to:

Ministerial & Public Communications Division
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

April 2018
LEAP

Complaints: Procedures

STAGE 1: COMPLAINT HEARD BY STAFF MEMBER

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate.

The school will consider the views of a complainant who indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the complaint may be referred to another staff member. However, a complainant cannot simply choose not to speak to the most relevant member of staff (e.g. Head of Year, Principal). Where the complaint concerns the head teacher, the complaint should be referred to the chair of Academy Ambassadors.

If the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, consideration should be given to referring the complainant to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

When an Academy Ambassador/ Local Governing body has been approached as first point of contact, the next step would be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure. Academy Ambassadors / Local Governing body are advised not to act on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.

STAGE 2: COMPLAINT HEARD BY PRINCIPAL (OR DESIGNATED SENIOR MEMBER OF STAFF)

If a complainant considers that they have not received a satisfactory response they can refer their complaint to the Principal (or chair of Academy Ambassadors/ Local Governing body if the complaint is about the head teacher). At this stage it is useful to ask the complainant to complete a complaints form or put their complaint in writing.

The Principal (or designate) should acknowledge the complaint orally or in writing within 3 school days of receiving confirmation that the complaint is now to be dealt with at stage 2. The acknowledgement should give a brief explanation of the school's complaint procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. All effort should be made to respond to a complainant within 10 school days. If, for any reason, it is considered that this will not be possible the complainant should be advised accordingly.

This stage should be completed within 2 working weeks of the date of the concern being raised.

STAGE 3: COMPLAINT HEARD BY CHAIR OF THE ACADEMY AMBASSADORS /LOCAL GOVERNING BODY

The next stage of the complaints procedure should the complainant remain dissatisfied is to address the complaint to the Chair of the Academy Ambassadors/Local Governing body. The Chair should acknowledge the complaint, orally or in writing within 3 school days and invite the complainant to meet with him/her and the head teacher to find a way forward.

Any relevant documentation, including information that the head teacher has in relation to the complaint to date should be provided for the Chair of the Academy Ambassadors/ Local Governing body prior to the meeting.

The Chair of the Academy Ambassadors/ Local Governing body should keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations, and other documentation relating to the complaint.

Once all the relevant facts have been established, from the original investigation and this further meeting, the Chair of the Academy Ambassadors/ Local Governing body should adjourn the meeting and produce a written response to the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter directly.

A written response includes a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this should include what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant is advised that should s/he wish to take the complaint further s/he should notify the Chair of the Academy Ambassadors/ Local Governing body within two weeks of receiving the outcome letter.

STAGE 4: COMPLAINT HEARD BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE TRUST OR EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL

The Chief Executive Officer/Executive Principal should acknowledge the complaint, orally or in writing within 3 school days and meet with the complainant as soon as mutually convenient.

All relevant documentation, including any further submissions from the complainant, will be available to all parties.

The meeting will be adjourned once all relevant facts have been established. The Chief Executive Officer/Executive Principal will then consider and determine the decision. This will be communicated both verbally and in writing to the complainant.

STAGE 5: COMPLAINT HEARD BY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The complainant needs to write to the Chief Executive Officer or Executive Principal advising of their wish to escalate their complaint.

The Board of Trustees appeal hearing is the last school-based stage of the complaints process, and is not convened to merely rubber-stamp previous decisions. Therefore, individual complaints should not be considered by the Board of Trustees as serious conflicts of interest can arise; for example, in exceptional circumstances a complaint may result in disciplinary action against a member of staff, and Board of Trustees may be required to give an unprejudiced hearing to an appeal by the member of staff concerned. Similarly, some Board of Trustees might have knowledge of the problem which led to the complaint and would be unable to give unbiased consideration to the issue.

The Board of Trustees may nominate a number of members with delegated powers to hear complaints at that stage, and set out its terms of reference. These can include:

- drawing up its procedures;
- hearing individual appeals;
- making recommendations on policy as a result of complaints.

The panel can be drawn from the nominated members and will include an independent member and may consist of three or five people. The panel may choose their own chair.

THE REMIT OF THE PANEL

The panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

There are several points which any Trustee sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember:

- It is important that the panel is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No Trustee may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make-up of the panel, Trustees need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of the Trustee and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.
- The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously. If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence.
- An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.
- Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child's parent is the complainant, it would be helpful to give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child needs to attend.
- The Board of Trustees sitting on the panel need to be aware of the complaints procedure.

NOTIFICATION OF THE PANEL'S DECISION

The chair of the panel needs to ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, with the panel's response; this is usually within 5 school days of the panel meeting. The letter needs to explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed. The school should ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept. These records should be kept separately from the pupil's personal records.

THE NEXT STAGES:

Parent/Carer/Community may choose to complain to the Department for Education.

The Department for Education will not usually investigate complaints until the Academy's own complaints procedure, including any appeal, has been exhausted.

The Department for Education will investigate complaints about

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Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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M1 2WD

LEAP

COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete this form and return it to the relevant member of staff who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Student's name:

Your relationship to the student:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.
(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?



