The Aylesbury Vale Academy Trust

The Aylesbury Vale Academy

RESPECT | ASPIRATION | RESILIENCE

Complaints & Resolution Policy

Policy Reference:	AVA.024
Description:	This document provides a framework for complaints to be dealt with promptly and fairly by
Status:	Statutory Policy
Policy Audience:	Students, Parents/Carers & Community
Academy Trust Contact:	Academy Principal
Other related AVA policies and procedures:	Admissions Policy, Attendance Policy, Rewards and Attitudes Policy, SEND Policy, SEND Information Report, Child Protection Policy, Staff Grievance Procedure, Whistleblowing Policy, Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy, Data Protection Policy, Records Management Policy, Equality Policy.
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Signed:	
Date of Signature:	20.10.26

In reviewing this policy, the Governing Board has had regard to the Equality Act 2010 and carried out an equality impact assessment. It is satisfied that no group with a protected characteristic will be unfairly disadvantaged by this policy.

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1. Aims

Our Academy aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of students at the Academy.

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**
- **Respect confidentiality where necessary**
- **Treat complainants with respect**
- **Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process**
- **Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes**
- **Ensure that any decisions made under this procedure are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate.**

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The Academy 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 the Academy website.

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

2. Legislation and guidance

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 any person, including members of the public, who wish make a complaint.

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).

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

In addition, it addresses duties set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework with regards to dealing with complaints about the Academy's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.

3. Definitions

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”.

The Academy will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.

A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”.

4. Scope

The Academy intends to resolve concerns and complaints informally wherever possible via email or telephone and at the earliest opportunity. However, where this is not possible, the formal procedures outlined in this policy will be followed.

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- **Admissions**
- **Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)**
- **Safeguarding matters**
- **Suspension and permanent exclusion**
- **Whistle-blowing**
- **Subject Access Requests**
- **Staff grievances**
- **Staff conduct and discipline**

Please refer to the Academy's separate policies and procedures for complaints relating to these matters.

Complaints from parents and carers of students with SEND about the Academy’s support are within the scope of this policy. Such concerns should initially be raised with the SENDCo, Ben Currier, Assistant Principal (sendco@theacademy.me), who will seek to resolve the matter informally wherever possible before it progresses through the complaints procedure. The Academy’s SEND Policy and SEND Information Report provide further information about the rights of parents and carers, including where they believe discrimination may have occurred.

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

Where a complaint relates to matters that are being investigated by another agency, such as the police, social care, the local authority or a tribunal, the Academy may need to pause or adapt the complaints process until those investigations have concluded. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The Academy will make reasonable adjustments for complainants where required and will ensure that the complaints process is accessible to all.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1. The Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they explain the complaint in full as early as possible and:

- Follow the procedures outlined in this policy.
- Co-operate with the Academy throughout the complaints process and respond promptly to requests for information or clarification.
- Ask for assistance where required.
- Treat all those involved in the complaints process with respect and courtesy.
- Respect the confidentiality of the complaints process and the individuals involved.
- Do not approach individual governors directly regarding their complaint.
- Do not publish details of the complaint, or information relating to staff or students involved in the complaint, on social media or other public forums.

5.2. The investigator

The investigator is the individual appointed to investigate a complaint and establish the facts. They will:

- Carefully consider all relevant records, information and evidence.
- Keep accurate records of interviews and meetings, or arrange for an independent note-taker where appropriate.
- Remain mindful of the timescales set out within this policy.
- Conduct the investigation in an open, transparent, fair and impartial manner.
- Provide a comprehensive report to the Academy Principal, Primary Headteacher or secondary Headteacher which summarises the evidence gathered, establishes the facts and, where appropriate, recommends actions to resolve the complaint.
- Ensure that all parties are given the opportunity to present their views and relevant evidence.

5.3. The complaints co-ordinator

The Complaints Co-ordinator may be:

- The Academy Principal.
- The Secondary Headteacher.
- The Primary Headteacher.
- A designated governor.
- Any other member of staff providing administrative support for the complaints process.

The Complaints Co-ordinator will:

- Keep the complainant informed of progress at each stage of the complaints procedure.

- Ensure the complaints process operates smoothly and within the published timescales.
- Liaise with relevant staff, the Academy Principal, the Primary Headteacher, the Secondary Headteacher, the Chair of Governors, the Clerk to Governors and any other individuals involved in the process.
- Be aware of issues relating to:
    - Sharing third-party information.
    - Additional support required by complainants, including interpretation services, accessibility requirements or support for children and young people.
- Ensure that accurate records of complaints are maintained.

5.4. Clerk to the governing board

If a complaints panel is convened, the Clerk to the Governing Body will:

- Act as the main point of contact for the complainant and the complaints panel.
- Circulate relevant documentation and evidence to all parties in advance of any complaints hearing.
- Ensure all parties involved are aware of their rights and responsibilities under relevant legislation, including the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- Arrange the date, time and venue of complaints hearings, ensuring that arrangements are reasonable and accessible where required.
- Ensure that all relevant documentation is distributed within agreed timescales.
- Take minutes and maintain an accurate record of panel proceedings.
- Record and circulate the outcome of any hearing.

5.5. Committee chair

If a complaints panel is convened, the Chair of the Complaints Panel will:

- Chair the hearing, ensuring that all participants are treated with respect and courtesy throughout.
- Ensure that all parties understand the purpose of the hearing and have a fair opportunity to present their case.
- Ensure that panel members act independently, impartially and with an open mind.
- Ensure that no panel member has had prior involvement in the complaint or has any conflict of interest in the outcome.
- Ensure that the hearing is conducted fairly, proportionately and in accordance with the principles of natural justice.
- Lead the panel in reaching findings and recommendations based on the evidence presented.

5.6. 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**

We also intend to address complaints as quickly as possible. To achieve this, realistic and reasonable time limits will be set for each action within each stage.

Where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline with an explanation for the delay.

5.7. Time scales

The complainant should raise a complaint within **3 months of the incident** about which they are complaining. Where the complaint relates to a series of related incidents, it should be raised within **3 months of the last incident**.

Complaints received during Academy holidays or outside term time will be deemed to have been received on the **first Academy day following the holiday period**.

If, at any stage of the complaints process, the Academy is unable to meet the timescales set out in this policy, we will:

- Set revised timescales with the complainant where appropriate.
- Inform the complainant in writing of the revised deadline.
- Provide an explanation for any delay.

Where other agencies or bodies are investigating aspects of a complaint, such as the police, local authority, safeguarding partners, social care services, tribunals or other regulatory bodies, this may affect the Academy's ability to comply with the timescales set out in this policy. In such circumstances, the complaints process may be paused or extended until those investigations have concluded.

Where a complainant commences legal proceedings against the Academy in relation to the matters that are the subject of the complaint, the Academy will consider whether it is appropriate to suspend the complaints procedure until those proceedings have been concluded.

6. Complaints about our fulfilment of early years' requirements

The Academy will investigate all written complaints relating to its fulfilment of the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements** and will notify the complainant of the outcome within **28 days** of receiving the complaint.

The Academy will maintain a written record of all EYFS complaints and their outcomes and will make this available to Ofsted upon request.

If parents or carers remain dissatisfied following the Academy's response, they may contact Ofsted:

- Telephone: **0300 123 4666**

- Email: **enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk**

The Academy will notify parents and carers if it becomes aware that an Ofsted inspection is due to take place and will provide access to the inspection report following publication.

7. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the Academy Principal, Headteachers or a Governor)

The Academy has adopted a four-stage complaints procedure:

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

Stage 3 – Review by the Academy Principal

Stage 4 – Complaints Panel Hearing

The Academy is an all-through school comprising both a Primary Phase and a Secondary Phase, each led by a Headteacher and overseen by the Academy Principal. Complaints will normally be addressed at the lowest appropriate level before progressing through the formal stages of this procedure.

7.1. Stage 1: Informal Resolution

The Academy aims to resolve concerns and complaints at the earliest possible stage through informal discussion and resolution.

The complainant should raise their concern as soon as possible, and within the timescales outlined in this policy, with the most appropriate member of staff. This may include:

Primary Phase

- Class Teacher
- Phase Leader
- Primary Headteacher

Secondary Phase

- Class Teacher/Form Tutor
- Achievement Director
- Curriculum Leader
- Senior Leader
- Secondary Headteacher

Concerns may be raised in person, by telephone, by letter or by email. If a complainant is unsure who to contact, they should contact the Academy Office on **01296 428551** or **enquiries@theacademy.me**, where they will be directed to the most appropriate member of staff.

The complainant should explain the nature of their concern and, where possible, indicate the outcome they are seeking.

The Academy will acknowledge an informal concern within **5 Academy days**, confirming how it intends to address the matter and providing an indication of anticipated timescales.

The informal stage may involve:

- Discussion with the relevant member of staff;
- A meeting with the Primary Headteacher or Secondary Headteacher, where appropriate;
- A meeting involving the member of staff who is the subject of the concern, where appropriate.

A written response will normally be provided within **10 Academy days** of receipt of the concern.

If the concern cannot be resolved informally, it may be escalated to a formal complaint under Stage 2.

7.2. Stage 2: Formal Investigation

Submitting a Formal Complaint

If a complainant remains dissatisfied following Stage 1, they may submit a formal complaint.

Formal complaints must be submitted in writing either by email or mail. Complaints submitted through a third party will not be considered.

The complainant should provide:

- Details of the complaint;
- Relevant dates, times and locations;
- Names of any witnesses;
- Copies of any supporting documentation;
- Details of the outcome sought.

Formal complaints should normally be submitted using the Academy's formal complaints form (Appendix 1) and directed to the relevant headteacher.

Where a complaint involves a Headteacher, the procedures outlined in Section 10 of this policy will apply.

The Academy will acknowledge receipt of the formal complaint within **5 Academy days**.

Investigation

The appropriate Headteacher will seek to clarify:

- The nature of the complaint;
- What remains unresolved;
- The outcome being sought by the complainant.

The Headteacher may investigate the complaint personally or appoint another suitably experienced senior leader to undertake the investigation. Responsibility for the final decision will remain with the Headteacher.

The investigation may involve:

- Reviewing written evidence;
- Interviewing relevant individuals;
- Gathering additional information;

- Holding meetings with those involved where appropriate.

Outcome

A written response will normally be issued within **10 Academy days** of acknowledgement of the complaint.

Where this is not possible, the complainant will be informed of the reasons for the delay and provided with a revised response date.

The written response will:

- Summarise the investigation undertaken;
- Explain the findings;
- Provide the reasons for the decision reached;
- Outline any actions the Academy proposes to take.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request escalation to Stage 3 within 10 Academy days of receiving the Stage 2 outcome. Requests should be submitted in writing to the **Academy Principal via the PA to the Principal, Dan Murphy, dmurphy@theacademy.me.**

7.3. Stage 3: Review by the Academy Principal

7.3.1. Requesting a Review

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage 2, they may request a review by the Academy Principal.

The request must be submitted in writing within **10 Academy days** of receiving the Stage 2 outcome and should clearly explain:

- Why they remain dissatisfied;
- Any aspects of the investigation they believe were not properly considered;
- The outcome they are seeking.

The request should be sent to the **Academy Principal via the PA to the Principal, Dan Murphy, dmurphy@theacademy.me.**

7.3.2. Review Process

The Academy Principal will review the complaint, the investigation undertaken by the relevant Headteacher, the evidence considered, the findings reached and any actions proposed. The purpose of the review is to determine whether the complaint has been investigated fairly, appropriately and proportionately and whether the conclusions reached were reasonable based on the available evidence.

The Academy Principal may:

- Uphold the findings of the Stage 2 investigation;
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- Request further investigation;
- Direct additional actions to resolve the complaint.

The Academy Principal may meet with the complainant and other relevant parties where this would assist in resolving the matter.

7.3.3. Outcome

The Academy Principal will normally provide a written response within **10 Academy days** of receiving the request for review.

The written response will:

- Summarise the review undertaken;
- Explain the conclusions reached;
- Outline any actions arising from the review; and
- Confirm whether the complaint is considered resolved.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request that the complaint is referred to a Complaints Panel Hearing under Stage 4.

Requests to proceed to Stage 4 must be submitted to the **Clerk to the Governing Body** within **10 Academy days** of receiving the Academy Principal's response.

7.4. Stage 4: Complaints Panel Hearing

Convening the Panel

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following Stage 3, the complaint may be referred to a Complaints Panel.

The panel will consist of **at least three individuals who have had no previous involvement in the complaint**. At least **one panel member will be independent of the management and running of the Academy**.

Where there are insufficient governors available to form an impartial panel due to prior involvement in the complaint, conflicts of interest or other exceptional circumstances, the Academy may appoint suitably skilled individuals from outside the Academy to sit on the panel.

The panel will have access to all documentation relating to the complaint and its progression through the earlier stages of the procedure.

The Clerk to the Governing Body will arrange the hearing and will normally seek to convene the panel within **15 Academy days** of the request being received.

Reasonable notice of the hearing date will be provided.

If a complainant refuses two reasonable proposed dates without good reason, the Clerk may proceed by arranging the hearing using written submissions from both parties.

All written evidence and documentation to be considered by the panel will normally be circulated to all parties at least **5 Academy days** before the hearing.

The hearing will be properly minuted, and records maintained in accordance with the Academy's record-keeping procedures.

The Hearing

Panel hearings will normally be held in private.

Electronic recording of proceedings will not normally be permitted unless agreed in advance as a reasonable adjustment. Where recording is agreed, the consent of all parties will be sought and recorded.

The complainant and Academy representatives will have the opportunity to:

- Present written and/or oral submissions;
- Submit supporting evidence;
- Call witnesses where appropriate;
- Respond to questions from the panel.

The complainant may be accompanied by a companion or supporter. The role of this individual is to support the complainant and not to speak on their behalf

Representatives of the media will not be permitted to attend.

The panel will consider all evidence presented before reaching its findings.

Outcome of the Panel Hearing

The panel may:

- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- Where a complaint is upheld, the panel may:
- Determine appropriate actions to resolve the complaint;
- Recommend improvements to Academy procedures or practices to help prevent similar issues arising in the future.

The panel's findings, decisions and any recommendations will be provided in writing within 5 Academy days of the hearing. The outcome letter will be sent to the complainant, the Academy Principal, and where appropriate the relevant Headteacher, Chair of Governors and individuals involved in the complaint. The outcome letter will set out:

- The findings of the panel;
- The reasons for the decision reached;
- Whether the complaint has been upheld in whole or in part;
- Any recommendations or actions arising from the complaint;
- Details of any further routes available to the complainant.

A written record will be maintained of all complaints and their outcomes, regardless of whether they are resolved at the informal stage or proceed to a panel hearing.

The Complaints Panel hearing is the final stage of the Academy's internal complaints procedure.

8. Complaints Against the Academy Principal, Headteachers or Governors

Complaints involving the Academy Principal, a Headteacher, a Governor, the Chair of Governors or the Governing Body will be handled separately from the standard complaints procedure to ensure impartiality and independence.

Complaints may be submitted in writing, by email, by telephone or in person. Where a complaint is made by a third party on behalf of a complainant, appropriate consent will normally be required.

8.1. Complaints Against a Headteacher

Complaints relating to either the **Primary Headteacher** or **Secondary Headteacher** should be submitted to the Academy Principal via principal@theacademy.me.

Where informal resolution is not possible, the complaint will progress to Stage 2 and a formal investigation will be undertaken by a governor or an individual who has had no prior involvement in the matter.

The complainant will receive a written outcome of the investigation. If they remain dissatisfied, they may request that the complaint be considered by a Complaints Panel in accordance with Stage 3 of this policy.

8.2. Complaints Against the Academy Principal

Complaints relating to the Academy Principal should be submitted to the **Chair of Governors** via the Clerk to the Governing Body and marked *Private and Confidential* where submitted in writing.

The Chair of Governors, or another suitably skilled and impartial person, will seek to resolve the matter informally in the first instance.

Where informal resolution is not possible, a formal investigation will be undertaken by a governor who has had no prior involvement in the matter.

The complainant will receive a written response outlining the findings of the investigation and any actions arising from it.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request that the complaint be considered by a Complaints Panel in accordance with Stage 3 of this policy.

8.3. Complaints Against an Individual Governor

Complaints against an individual governor should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body and marked *Private and Confidential*.

The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and refer it to the Chair of Governors. Where the Chair of Governors is the subject of the complaint, the matter will be referred to the Vice Chair of Governors.

The Chair (or Vice Chair where appropriate) will determine whether the complaint can be resolved informally. Where this is not possible, a suitably skilled and impartial governor with no prior involvement in the matter will investigate the complaint.

The investigator will provide a written response setting out:

- The investigation undertaken;
- The findings reached;
- The reasons for the decision;
- Any actions arising from the complaint.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request that the complaint is considered by a Complaints Panel in accordance with Stage 3 of this policy.

8.4. Complaints Against the Chair of Governors

Complaints against the Chair of Governors should be submitted to the Clerk to the Governing Body and marked *Private and Confidential*.

The Clerk will refer the complaint to the Vice Chair of Governors who will determine how the complaint should be handled.

Where appropriate, an independent investigator or suitably skilled governor with no prior involvement in the matter may be appointed to investigate the complaint.

The complainant will receive a written response following the completion of the investigation.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request that the complaint is considered by a Complaints Panel.

8.5. Complaints Against the Governing Body or the Entire Governing Board

Where a complaint concerns:

- The Governing Body as a whole;
- The majority of governors;
- Both the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors; or
- Circumstances where impartiality could reasonably be questioned,

the Clerk to the Governing Body will determine the most appropriate procedure to ensure the complaint is investigated fairly and independently.

This may involve:

- Appointment of an independent investigator;
- Appointment of governors from another school or trust;
- Appointment of suitably skilled individuals independent of the Academy; or
- Referral directly to an independent Complaints Panel.

Any panel established under these circumstances will comply with the requirements set out in Stage 3 of this policy and will include at least one member independent of the management and running of the Academy.

9. Unreasonable, Vexatious and Persistent Complaints

9.1. Unreasonable and Vexatious Complaints

Most complaints raised with the Academy will be valid and will therefore be treated seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable or vexatious if the complainant:

- Refuses to clearly articulate their complaint, specify the grounds of the complaint or identify the outcomes being sought despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of this policy.
- Insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this policy or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented upon.
- Raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are attempting to deal with the issues and seeks to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly raises the same complaint despite previous investigations concluding that the complaint has been addressed appropriately.
- Refuses to accept the findings of an investigation where the complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented.
- Seeks unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes.
- Makes excessive demands on Academy time through frequent, lengthy or complicated contact by telephone, email, letter or in person.
- Uses abusive, offensive, threatening or discriminatory language.
- Makes threats towards staff or governors.
- Knowingly provides false or misleading information.
- Publishes unacceptable or inappropriate information about the complaint on social media or other public platforms.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive. The Academy retains discretion to determine whether behaviour is unreasonable in the circumstances of each case.

Complainants should seek to limit communication with the Academy while their complaint is being considered, as excessive correspondence may delay the investigation and resolution process.

9.2. **Steps the Academy May Take**

The Academy will take every reasonable step to address a complainant's concerns and provide a clear statement of its position and available options.

Where behaviour becomes unreasonable, the Academy Principal, Primary Headteacher, Secondary Headteacher or Chair of Governors may discuss these concerns with the complainant before formally applying an unreasonable behaviour designation.

If unreasonable behaviour continues, the Academy may:

- Require communications to be directed through a single point of contact.
- Limit the number of contacts permitted within a specified period.
- Require communications to be made in writing only.
- Ask the complainant to appoint a third party to act on their behalf.
- Implement any other reasonable and proportionate measures necessary to protect staff and ensure that Academy resources are used appropriately.

Where there is a serious incident involving aggression, intimidation, harassment, threatening behaviour or violence, the Academy may involve the police and take appropriate action to protect staff, students and visitors, including restricting access to Academy premises.

9.3. Serial and Persistent Complaints

Where a complainant continues to contact the Academy regarding the same issue after the complaints procedure has been exhausted, the correspondence may be considered serial or persistent.

The Academy may cease responding to correspondence about the same matter where:

- Every reasonable step has been taken to address the complaint.
- The complainant has received a clear statement of the Academy's position and available options.
- The complainant continues to contact the Academy making substantially the same points.

The decision to stop responding will be stronger where:

- Communications are repeatedly abusive, threatening or aggressive.
- The complainant makes insulting personal allegations about staff or governors.
- There is reason to believe that the sole purpose of the communication is to cause disruption, inconvenience or distress.

Where the Academy decides to cease responding, the complainant will be informed in writing.

The Academy will not refuse to consider genuinely new complaints or concerns simply because a complainant has previously been identified as a persistent complainant.

9.4. Duplicate Complaints

If the Academy has already investigated and responded to a complaint and subsequently receives a complaint on the same matter from another family member, partner or representative, it will consider whether:

- There are any new issues that have not previously been considered; or
- There is any new information which materially affects the complaint.

Where no new information is presented, the Academy will:

- Inform the complainant that the matter has already been investigated.
- Confirm that the Academy's complaints process has been completed.
- Direct the complainant to the Department for Education if they remain dissatisfied with how the complaint was handled.

Where significant new information is provided, the complaint will be considered in accordance with this policy.

9.5. Complaint Campaigns

Where the Academy receives a large volume of complaints relating to the same issue or topic, particularly from individuals who are not directly connected to the Academy, it may respond by:

- Publishing a single response on the Academy website; and/or
- Issuing a standard response to all complainants.

Where complainants remain dissatisfied, the normal complaints procedure will continue to be available.

10. Referring Complaints on Completion of the Academy's Procedure

Once all stages of the Academy's complaints procedure have been exhausted, the complaint will be considered closed.

If the complainant believes that:

- The Academy did not follow the procedures set out within its complaints policy;
- The Academy failed to comply with a legal obligation;
- The Academy acted unreasonably in exercising its duties;

they may refer the matter to the Department for Education.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of a complaint or overturn decisions properly taken by the Academy. However, it may consider whether the Academy handled the complaint in accordance with the published procedure and whether it acted lawfully and reasonably.

Details of how to contact the Department for Education can be found on the GOV.UK website.

11. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

The Academy will maintain a written record of all complaints, including:

- The actions taken at each stage.
- The stage at which the complaint was resolved.
- The final outcome.

- Copies of correspondence.
- Notes of meetings and telephone conversations.
- Any findings, recommendations or actions arising from the complaint.

Records will be stored securely and treated confidentially. They will only be accessible to those involved in the investigation, resolution or consideration of the complaint.

Information may be disclosed where required by law, including:

- Requests from the Secretary of State or an authorised representative.
- Subject Access Requests under the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- Freedom of Information requests where disclosure is lawful.
- Inspections by Ofsted or other regulatory bodies.

Records will be retained only for as long as necessary in accordance with data protection legislation, the Academy's Privacy Notices and Records Management Policy.

The details of individual complaints will not normally be shared with the full Governing Body in order to preserve impartiality should a panel hearing be required.

Where governors have prior knowledge of a complaint and there is a risk of perceived bias, the Academy will seek to appoint an independent complaints panel where reasonably practicable.

Complainants may request an independent panel where they believe there may be a conflict of interest or perceived bias. Such requests will be considered reasonably and on their individual merits.

12. Learning Lessons

The Governing Body will review any themes, trends or underlying issues arising from complaints alongside the Academy Principal, Primary Headteacher and Secondary Headteacher, where appropriate and while maintaining confidentiality.

The purpose of this review is to identify whether improvements can be made to:

- Academy procedures.
- Policies.
- Communication processes.
- Staff training.
- Operational practices.

Lessons learned from complaints will be used to support continuous improvement across both the Primary and Secondary phases of the Academy.

13. Monitoring Arrangements

The Governing Body will monitor the effectiveness of this complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled fairly, consistently, efficiently and in accordance with statutory requirements.

The Governing Body will:

- Monitor the number and nature of complaints received.
- Review trends and recurring themes.
- Monitor compliance with the timescales set out in this policy.
- Review any underlying issues identified through the complaints process.
- Consider whether any changes to policy, procedure or practice are required.

The complaints records will be maintained and managed by the **PA to the Principal**.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Governing Body.

At each review, the policy will be approved by the Governing Body.

14. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Admissions Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Rewards and Attitudes Policy
- SEND Policy
- SEND Information Report
- Child Protection Policy
- Staff Grievance Procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Exclusions Policy

Data Protection Policy
Records Management Policy
Equality Policy

APPENDIX 1

Formal Complaint Form (Stage 2)

Please complete and return to the Academy Office. The completed form will be forwarded to the appropriate Headteacher.

Complainant Details
Name:
Address:
Telephone Number:
Email Address:
Name of Student (if applicable):
Relationship to Student:

Details of Complaint

Please provide details of your complaint, including dates, times, locations and individuals involved.

What steps have you already taken to try to resolve the matter informally?

What documents or evidence are you providing in support of your complaint?

What outcome are you seeking?

Signature

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 2

Request for Review by the Academy Principal (Stage 3)

This form should only be completed if you remain dissatisfied following the outcome of the Stage 2 Formal Investigation.

The completed form should be submitted to the Academy Principal within 10 Academy days of receiving the Stage 2 response.

Complainant Details
Name:
Address:
Telephone Number:
Email Address:
Date of Stage 2 Outcome:
Headteacher who investigated the complaint:

Reasons for Requesting a Review

Please explain why you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

Aspects of the Investigation You Believe Were Not Fully Considered

What Outcome Are You Seeking?

Additional Information

Please provide any further information that you would like the Academy Principal to consider.

Signature

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 3

Request for a Complaints Panel Hearing (Stage 4)

This form should only be completed if you remain dissatisfied following the Academy Principal's review at Stage 3.

The completed form should be submitted to the Clerk to the Governing Body within 10 Academy days of receiving the Stage 3 outcome.

Complainant Details
Name:
Address:
Telephone Number:
Email Address:
Date of Stage 3 Outcome:

Grounds for Requesting a Complaints Panel Hearing

Please explain why you remain dissatisfied following the Academy Principal's review.

Please Indicate Which of the Following Apply

I believe:

□ Relevant evidence was not considered.

□ The investigation was not conducted fairly.

□ The conclusions reached were unreasonable based on the evidence.

□ Procedures within the Complaints Policy were not followed correctly.

□ Other (please explain below).

Desired Outcome

Please explain the outcome you are seeking from the Complaints Panel.

Attendance at the Hearing

I intend to attend the hearing:

□ Yes

□ No

If attending, I will be accompanied by:

Name: _____

Relationship to me: _____

Documentation

Please list any additional documents you would like the Panel to consider.

Declaration

I confirm that the information provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

For Academy Use Only

Date Received: _____

Stage 4 Requested Within Timescale:

□ Yes

□ No

Clerk to the Governing Body: