Complaints Policy

ST CLARE
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

SAINT PATRICK'S
CATHOLIC VOLUNTARY ACADEMY

Rooted in Kindness, Guided by Faith, Reaching for Excellence

Reviewed by St Clare Trust Board; March 2026

Next review by St Clare Trust Board by; by 31st July 2027

The Trust notes that the Department for Education has announced forthcoming updated national guidance on school complaints. This policy will be updated in the light of that guidance once published

© The Key Support Services Ltd | For terms of use, visit thekeysupport.com/terms

Contents

1. Aims 2
2. Legislation and guidance 3
3. Definitions and scope 3
4. Roles and responsibilities 3
5. Principles for investigation 5
6. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the trust, CEO or trustees) 6
7. Complaints about the trust, CEO or trustees 9
8. Referring complaints on completion of the school and trust procedures 10
9. Persistent complaints 11
10. Record-keeping and confidentiality 13
11. Learning lessons 14
12. Monitoring arrangements 14
13. Links with other policies 14

1. Aims

Our trust aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at the 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

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.

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

© The Key Support Services Ltd | thekeysupport.com/terms

2. Legislation and guidance

The Trust notes that the Department for Education has announced forthcoming updated national guidance on school complaints. This policy will be updated in the light of that guidance once published

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.

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 trust's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements.

3. Definitions and scope

3.1 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"
- A **complaint** is defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action"

This policy covers the way in which the school will deal with complaints, where the complainant is seeking action.

Concerns are also treated seriously and schools will be guided by the informal stage of this policy when responding to a concern. The important factors here are ensuring that the concern has been listened to and understood and that the person raising the concern has had a response, which is likely to be an explanation and/or reassurance.

3.2 Scope

The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

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
- 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)

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

© The Key Support Services Ltd | thekeysupport.com/terms

*Where a complaint highlights issues that could come under the safeguarding policy or which may result in disciplinary action against a member of staff, the Head Teacher or person appointed to manage the complaint should seek advice before beginning any investigation. This is because there are additional responsibilities towards the member of staff and additional procedures related to safeguarding and disciplinary procedures, which should be followed from the beginning of any investigation if they are relevant.

In the case of a complaint which raises potential safeguarding concerns the Head Teacher or appointed manager should consult with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and there may need to be further consultation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Trust HR lead and/or independent HR or legal advice.

In the case of a complaint which raises issues which may lead to disciplinary action, the Head Teacher or appointed manager should consult with the Trust HR lead.

The purpose of this consultation is to determine whether any investigation should be conducted in line with Safeguarding policy and procedure or Disciplinary policy and procedure.

If it is determined that investigation of all or part of the complaint is appropriate under one of the above procedures, then it is likely that the time taken to respond to the complainant will be longer than the standard timescale noted in this policy, so the Head Teacher or appointed manager should contact the complainant to outline a different timescale, noting only that this is to allow for full and proper investigation.

If it is determined that the safeguarding or disciplinary policies are not relevant to the complaint, the complaint should be investigated and addressed under this policy. A note of the decision not to apply the safeguarding or disciplinary policy should be made, including a summary of the advice taken and the reason for the decision. This note should be kept with the complaint records.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 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

4.2 The investigator

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

- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- Prepare a comprehensive report to the headteacher or complaints committee, which includes the facts and potential solutions

4.3 The complaints co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator can be:

- The Head Teacher or CEO
- The designated complaints governor

© The Key Support Services Ltd | thekeysupport.com/terms

- 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 the investigator, headteacher and others as needed according to the nature and stage of the complaint including; staff members, chair of the local academy committee, 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

4.4 Clerk* to the local academy committee and trust board

The clerk will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings
- Arrange the complaints hearing
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing

Please note that all communications must go via the clerk; governors must not use personal emails

* Clerk refers to the person who carries out this role for an individual school. This is not necessarily the same as the person who clerks local academy committee or Trust Board meetings. For example, this role is sometimes carried out by the Business manager, an office manager or PA.

The contact details for the person who will carry out the role of clerk at this school are found in the appendix at the end of this policy.

4.5 Committee chair

The committee chair will:

- Chair the meeting, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect throughout
- Make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee, and are allowed to present their case

5. 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

5.1 Timescales

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.

© The Key Support Services Ltd | thekeysupport.com/terms

We will consider exceptions to this time frame 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 time scales 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

5.2 Complaints about our fulfilment of early years requirements

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.

6. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the trust, CEO or trustees)

We have adopted a 4-stage process for dealing with complaints:

- Stage 1 – informal resolution
- Stage 2 – formal investigation
- Stage 3 – local academy committee panel hearing
- Stage 4 – review by the trust board

6.1 Stage 1: informal

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. Details of how to contact school are included in the appendix at the end of this policy.

The school will acknowledge informal complaints within three school days. The school will normally investigate and provide a response within ten school days, though depending on the complexity of the complaint, the availability of the complainant to meet with the complaints manager and consideration for workload and availability of school staff, the school may need to extend this deadline. If this is the case, the clerk will inform the complainant as early as possible.

As part of the informal stage complainants will be given the opportunity to discuss their complaint with an appropriate member of staff.

In many cases, the member of staff to whom the complaint is made may be able to resolve the matter immediately.

© The Key Support Services Ltd | thekeysupport.com/terms

If the complaint is not resolved informally, the complainant will be given informed how they can escalate to a formal complaint.

6.2 Stage 2: formal

The formal stage normally involves the complainant putting the complaint in writing (by letter or email) and we ask complainants to follow this approach wherever possible. The school will, however, accept complaints over the phone on in person. In this case, the person receiving the complaint will make a written record and check with the complainant that the complaint has been properly captured. The written complaint should provide details such as:

- Relevant dates and times
- The names of witnesses of events
- What steps the complainant has taken to try to resolve the complaint informally and the reasons that they are unsatisfied with the response.
- What the complainant feels would resolve the complaint

The written complaint should be submitted alongside copies of any relevant documents.

Details of how the complaint should be addressed and how it should be shared are covered in the appendix at the end of this policy.

Investigation

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

The headteacher, or investigator appointed by them will offer a meeting or telephone call with the complainant to clarify concerns and seek a resolution. Where there is an 'in person' meeting, the complainant may be accompanied if they wish, and should inform the school of the identity of their companion in advance.

The school may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest. In this case, the school will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange alternative accompaniment.

The headteacher or member of staff appointed by them as investigator, will then conduct an investigation.

The CEO or the trust board will conduct the investigation if the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- The entire local academy committee or
- The majority of the local academy committee

The written conclusion of the investigation will be sent to the complainant within ten school days from the meeting or phone call with the complainant.

If the headteacher or investigator appointed by them 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 any action is to be taken against a member of staff, to protect the rights of the staff concerned, the phrase 'Appropriate action has or will be taken' will be used.

The complainant will be advised that, if they are not satisfied with the response and they wish to take the complaint further, then they should notify the clerk to the local academy committee within 10 school working days of receiving the outcome.

6.3 Stage 3: review panel

Convening the panel

© The Key Support Services Ltd | thekeysupport.com/terms

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.

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 academy committee 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 academy committee or
- The majority of the local academy committee

The panel will be made up of directors and an independent panel member.

The panel will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress (see section 10).

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel. The clerk will aim to find a date within twenty school days 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 five school days before the date of the meeting.

At the meeting

At the review panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish. The school may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest. In this case, the school will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange alternative accompaniment.

If a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may be supported by their union if they wish.

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.

The aim of the meeting will be to resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that sometimes it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has at least been taken seriously.

The panel should remember that the complainant may be unused to dealing with groups of people in formal situations and that the meeting may be difficult for all concerned. It is therefore recommended that the Chair of the Committee ensures that the proceedings are as informal as the situation allows.

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 outcome

© The Key Support Services Ltd | thekeysupport.com/terms

The committee can:

- Uphold the complaint, in whole or in part
- Dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld, the committee will:

- Decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint. If any action is to be taken against a member of staff, to protect the rights of the staff concerned, only the phrase 'Appropriate action has or will be taken' will be used.
- Where appropriate, the panel may recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

The school will inform those involved of the decision in writing within ten school days.

6.4 Stage 4: review by the trust board

Where the school-based complaints procedure has been completed, and the complainant does not feel their complaint has been addressed to their satisfaction, they may contact the trust in writing to request a review of the complaint investigation.

They can do this by:

- Email: Via the contact form on the trust website https://www.stclarecmat.org.uk/contact-us/
- Post: St Clare Catholic Multi Academy Trust
  Hallam Pastoral Centre
  St Charles Street
  Sheffield
  S9 3WU

  The written request should include a summary of the complaint, along with any relevant dates, times and evidence.

The trust cannot overturn decisions on complaints made during the school's complaints procedure. However, it can assess whether the school considered the complaint appropriately.

7. Complaints about the trust, CEO or trustees

7.1 Stage 1: informal

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 trust board.

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 0114 4785220 or via the contact form on the trust website https://www.stclarecmat.org.uk/contact-us/

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 6.

7.2 Stage 2: formal

If the complaint is not resolved satisfactorily at the informal stage, the complainant should set out their complaint in writing (by letter or email) and we ask complainants to follow this approach wherever possible. The trust will, however, accept complaints over the phone on in person. In this case, the person receiving the complaint will make a written record and check with the complainant that the complaint has been properly captured.

© The Key Support Services Ltd | thekeysupport.com/terms

If the complainant is unsure who to contact, or needs to contact the chair of the trust board, they should contact the trust office by phone on 0114 4785220 or via the contact form on the trust website https://www.stclarecmat.org.uk/contact-us/

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

The investigating officer will then conduct an investigation, in line with the process set out in section 6 above, providing a written response to the complainant within ten school days.

7.3 Stage 3: panel hearing

Convening the panel

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 twenty school days 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 five 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 trust may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest. In this case, the trust will notify the complainant as soon as they are aware, so that the complainant has the opportunity to arrange alternative accompaniment.

The board will ensure that the hearing is properly minuted.

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 meeting will be conducted in line with the guidance set out in section 6.3

Following the meeting, the panel must 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 five school days.

8. Referring complaints on completion of the school and trust procedures

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

© The Key Support Services Ltd | thekeysupport.com/terms

- 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 school's complaints procedure is found to not meet regulations, the school will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

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

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy

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

The Trust notes that the Department for Education is working on new guidance on complaints and that this may change the way in which complaints are referred. We will update this policy to reflect any changes once the guidance is issued.

9. Persistent complaints & complaints campaigns

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, unreasonably persistent complaints and complaints campaigns can put significant pressure on the workload and wellbeing of staff and impact the education of other children.

The school and Trust are committed to working in partnership with parents to resolve concerns and complaints, but where complaints become unreasonable, we will consider alternative approaches to support staff wellbeing, workload and effective school operation.

Complainants should limit the number of communications with the school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent, whether it is by letter, phone, email or text, as this could delay the outcome being reached.

Complainants should also avoid complaining by multiple routes at the same time (e.g. a complaint to the school, Trust and Ofsted all at once). This is likely to result in slowing the management of the complaint.

9.1 Unreasonably persistent complaints

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 complaints 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 complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on
- 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 Key Support Services Ltd | thekeysupport.com/terms

Steps the school/trust will take

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.

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

Stopping responding

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

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.

9.2 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 taken into account.

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 ESFA if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

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

9.3 Complaint campaigns

A complaint campaign is a situation where a school or trust receives a large number of complaints about the same issue, often coordinated, sometimes from individuals unconnected to the school, and usually triggered by social media, petitioning, or organised groups rather than genuine personal grievances.

Features typical of a complaints campaign:

- Many complaints arrive in a short period of time
- Most complainants do not have direct involvement in the issue
- Messages often contain identical or near-identical wording (e.g., copied/pasted templates)
- The volume is intended to pressure the school rather than resolve a personal concern
- The complaints may follow an online call-to-action or coordinated parent-group message

© The Key Support Services Ltd | thekeysupport.com/terms

Where the school or Trust is subject to a complaints campaign the following approaches may be used:

- Publish a Single Public Response
- Send a Template Response to All Complainants
- Use a Communication Management Plan, e.g.:
    - Direct all communication through a single email address, usually via the clerk
    - Set clear limits (e.g., “We will provide no more than one response per week regarding this matter”)
    - Outline consequences if boundaries are not respected (e.g., restricting communication channels)
- Clarify that Complaints handled under this policy must be about how the issue affects the individual making the complaint

The school may stop responding to a complaints campaign when:

- All reasonable steps have been taken
- A clear statement of the school’s position has been provided
- Repeated contact appears intended to cause disruption

Example wording at this point; “As we have now provided our full response and no new information has been raised, further emails about this issue will not receive an individual reply.”

10. 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 company secretary, 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 record retention schedule.

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

Where the local academy committee 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 academy committee, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

© The Key Support Services Ltd | thekeysupport.com/terms

11. Learning lessons

The local academy committee will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the [headteacher or appropriate senior leader], 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 CEO and 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.

12. Monitoring arrangements

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

The local academy committee will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in the section entitled 'Learning lessons'.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the member of staff identified in the appendix at the end of this policy

The CEO will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure trust-wide.

This policy will be reviewed by the trust board every three years

At each review, the policy will be approved by the trust board

13. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Exclusions policy
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- SEN policy and information report
- Privacy notices

© The Key Support Services Ltd | thekeysupport.com/terms

Appendix – Information about how this policy is applied in our school

Contact details for raising a complaint at the informal stage

If you wish to raise a complaint, even at an informal stage, you should contact the school via; INSERT contact details for your school

How to address complaints at a formal stage

Complaints not involving the headteacher or a member of the local academy committee should be directed to [the headteacher, office manager, or other designated member of staff – Delete or amend as appropriate to procedures in your school]. This can be done by:

- Email: [insert email address of staff member, or a complaints inbox if you have one]
- Letter addressed to the headteacher, delivered to the school office
- Phone call to [insert phone number and role(s) of staff members who can receive complaints over the phone]

Complaints involving the headteacher or a member of the local academy committee should be directed to the chair of the local academy committee. This can be done by:

- Email: [insert email address for the chair of the local academy committee]
- Letter addressed to the chair of the local academy committee, delivered to the school office

Complaints involving the chair of the local academy committee should be directed to the [clerk to the local academy committee- please enter details for your school]. This can be done by:

- Email: [insert email address for relevant person]
- Letter: [insert information about addressee and the relevant postal address]

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the school office [details of how to contact school office – by phone/email].

Contact details of the clerk

INSERT name and contact detail of the person who has the role of clerk for complaints at your school

Note – this is the person who will act as the point of contact between the complainant and school staff and/or governors. All communication about the complaint must go through the clerk once it reaches a formal stage.

Person with responsibility for record keeping

INSERT details of the member of staff responsible for ensuring that complaints records are maintained (see section 10)

Additional Information about how complaints will be managed at our school [Delete if there is no additional information to add here]

Please note below any arrangements for managing complaints that are specific to your school and are not covered in the policy.

You should include details of links between this policy and any other policies at your school (that are not contained in the list under section 13)

© The Key Support Services Ltd | thekeysupport.com/terms