Complaints and Resolutions Policy

ODBST Level 1 Policy:	**ALL** Schools require this policy with **no changes** allowed to core text. No changes are necessary to personalise this with school name and branding, as this is a Trust level policy for use, without change, by all schools, **except** where a school contact is required as identified in the content of the policy. LGBs will **note** adoption in LGB meetings. Review will take place at Trust level, and schools will be notified of updates and review dates as necessary.
Other related ODBST policies and procedures:	Dealing with Abusive and Violent Visitors Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Data Protection and Privacy Policy Whistleblowing Policy Staff Code of Conduct SEN policy and Information report Behaviour Policy Exclusion Policy Anti-bullying Policy Whistleblowing Policy Disciplinary, Capability and Grievance Privacy notices Admissions Policy
Committee responsible:	SEC
Approved by:	SEC
Date Approved:	October 2025
Review Date:	Autumn term 2026

1. Policy Statement

Oxford Diocesan Bucks Schools Trust (ODBST) is committed to working in partnership with parents, carers, and the wider community to provide the best possible education and care for all pupils. We value feedback and recognise that concerns and complaints, when handled effectively, provide valuable opportunities for improvement.

This policy sets out a clear, fair, and transparent process for addressing concerns and complaints. We aim to resolve issues quickly and informally wherever possible, but provide a formal procedure when needed.

All schools face complaints at some stage, and they are required by law to have a procedure for dealing with them. It is in everyone's interest that complaints about a school are resolved at the earliest possible stage and a school must be clear about the procedures they will apply when they receive a complaint.

A thorough and straightforward complaints procedure should minimise time spent dealing with complaints in schools by providing a clear process from which they can be efficiently dealt with. Complaints must still be dealt with thoroughly and schools should aspire to ensure that all parties are satisfied with the outcomes.

2. Scope and Application

2.1 Who Can Complain

This policy applies to complaints from parents and carers of pupils currently registered at ODBST schools. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. The Trust will handle complaints from other parties respectfully and expediently, though they are not required to follow the full procedure outlined here.

2.2 Complaints Not Covered by This Policy

Certain types of complaints are covered by separate statutory procedures and should be directed accordingly. This policy is not intended to cover matters for which there is a specific statutory process to object, complain or appeal.

Complaint Type and Appropriate Procedure:

Pupil admissions: School Admissions Code and Appeal process

Pupil exclusions: Statutory exclusion procedures and Independent Review Panel

Special Educational Needs (SEN): SEN Code of Practice and SEND Tribunal

Staff grievances or conduct: Internal HR procedures (confidential to staff)

Safeguarding concerns: Designated Safeguarding Lead and Local Authority procedures

Whistleblowing: ODBST Whistleblowing Policy

Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation: Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and relevant statutory guidance.

If a complaint falls outside this policy, the school will signpost the complainant to the appropriate procedure.

NOTE: Government guidance states that if a parent raises a complaint about the school's SEN support, they must do so while their child is still registered at the school. This includes making a complaint that the school has not provided the support required by their child's SEN plan or by their education, health and care plan (EHCP).

3. Principles of Complaint Handling

ODBST will ensure that complaints are handled according to these key principles:

• **Accessibility:** The process is clear, straightforward, and accessible to all. Schools should make their procedures as accessible as possible; parents and other relevant third parties should not be put off from making a complaint because they are not sure how to do so.

• **Impartiality:** Complaints are investigated fairly and without bias

• **Timeliness:** Complaints are resolved in a timely way and as far as quickly as possible within stated timescales

• **Confidentiality:** Information is shared only with those who need to know. Complainants are required to adhere to the requirement for confidentiality

• **Respect:** All parties are treated with courtesy and respect

• **Transparency:** Decisions and processes are clearly explained

• **Learning:** Lessons from complaints inform continuous improvement

• **Resolution:** At every stage of the process, informal and formal complainants should be asked what resolution they are seeking and the individual investigating the complaint at that stage should consider whether the school is able to offer that solution. Even where a formal complaint is required, resolution should be sought at every stage of the process, including at the local governing body review.

Minimal Involvement: As few people as possible should be involved in complaints at each stage, partly for confidentiality purposes, but also to ensure that individuals who could be called upon to review the situation do not become tainted. Governors called upon to review complaints should have minimal prior knowledge about the situation in order to ensure that they have not formed any biases that may influence their ability to be impartial.

The vast majority of complaints should be dealt with at the informal stage by school staff. There should not be a significant volume of complaints being dealt with by the local governing body. Governors, including the chair, should only be involved in complaints at the final stage of the procedure.

It is a statutory requirement that schools publicise their complaints procedures and ODBST expects schools to publish their policy in a prominent place on the school website. The school should also make hard copies available in reception.

4. Time Limits for Making a Complaint

Complaints should normally be raised within three months of the incident or issue occurring, or where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. The Trust may consider complaints made outside this timeframe in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Headteacher or CEO. What is meant by exceptional circumstances is where new evidence has come to light, where the complaint is

of an especially serious matter or where there is reasonable justification for why the complainant has been unable to raise the complaint before this time.

Complaints received outside of term time will be considered to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

5. Anonymous Complaints

The Trust will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or CEO may determine that an anonymous complaint warrants investigation if it raises serious concerns.

6. Audio or video evidence

We do not accept electronic recordings or video evidence obtained without consent when considering a complaint other than in exceptional circumstances**.** 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 must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

7. Social Media

In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, ODBST requests that complainants do not discuss complaints publicly via social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved, and we expect complainants to observe confidentiality also.

8. The Complaints Procedure

The complaints procedure has three formal stages:

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Objective:

Resolve concerns quickly and informally through direct communication

The majority of concerns can be dealt with without resorting to the formal procedure. Where you have a concern about any aspect of the school or your child's education or wellbeing, raise this with your child's class teacher or the member of staff most directly concerned via the phone or in person.

Who to Contact:

Most concerns can be resolved quickly by speaking to the relevant member of staff, such as:

- Educational matters: classroom teacher/subject leader
- Pastoral care: key worker/head of year/classroom teacher/tutor
- Behavioural matters: the staff member who initiated the sanction
- Financial/Administration matters: business manager/finance officer

• Complaint about a staff member's conduct: direct approach to the staff member themselves. Where this does not resolve the situation, their line manager should be approached.

If the concern relates to a more general school matter, parents should contact the school office who will direct them to the appropriate person.

Process:

1. The parent raises the concern directly with the relevant staff member by phone, email, or in person. The complainant should explain: an overview of the complaint, who has been involved, why the concern remains unresolved, and action they would like to be taken to put things right.
2. The staff member will attempt to resolve the matter informally **and will respond within 5** school days
3. If the concern cannot be resolved immediately, the staff member may need to investigate further
4. Where the complaint is about a member of staff or a school governor, the staff member will arrange an informal mediation meeting between the two parties to see if a resolution can be reached.
5. The staff member will provide written confirmation of the outcome of their investigation within 10 school days
6. A record of the concern and how it was resolved will be kept by the school and held centrally for twelve months

All concerns will be dealt with confidentially, although the staff member may need to take notes if they feel that the matter may need to be taken further or it may arise again in the future. Any such notes will be kept in accordance with data protection legislation. However, such notes would be able to be used as evidence if further investigation was required, or if the concern became a formal complaint.

Expected Timescale:

Most concerns at this stage should be resolved within 10 school days.

Next Steps:

If the concern is not resolved, or if the matter is serious, the parent may proceed to Stage 2. A Stage 2 request must be submitted within 10 school days of the complainant being contacted with an outcome.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint to the Headteacher

Objective:

Investigate and resolve the complaint through formal channels

Who to Contact:

- Complaints should be submitted in writing to the Headteacher. If the complaint is about the Headteacher, it should be submitted to the CEO.

- Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance to the Headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
- Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
- Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

How to Submit a Complaint:

The complaint should be submitted using the Complaints Form (Appendix A) or in a letter/email that includes:

- The complainant's name and contact details
- The name of the pupil (if applicable)
- Details of the complaint, including dates and any relevant background
- Any evidence that the complainant wants to be considered
- What has been done so far to try to resolve the issue
- What resolution the complainant is seeking

A complaint or concern can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Process:

1. The Headteacher will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 school days
2. The Headteacher will investigate the complaint, which may involve:
   - Interviewing relevant staff and witnesses through sensitive and thorough questioning
   - Reviewing documents and records
   - Meeting with the complainant to clarify concerns
   - Consideration of all relevant information
   - Analysing information
3. The Headteacher will provide a written response detailing:
   - The findings of the investigation
   - The decision reached and reasons
   - Any actions to be taken

- Information about how to escalate to Stage 3 if dissatisfied

The Headteacher can:

- Uphold the complaint and direct that certain action be taken to resolve it
- Reject the complaint and provide the complainant with details of the Stage 3 appeals process
- Uphold the complaint in part: in other words, the Headteacher may find one aspect of the complaint to be valid, but not another aspect

Expected Timescale:

The Headteacher will aim to complete the investigation and provide a response within 15 school days of receiving the complaint. If more time is needed, the Headteacher will inform the complainant of the revised timescale within 10 school days, explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised date.

Complaints that Result in Staff Capability or Disciplinary:

If at any formal stage of the complaint it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are necessary in order to resolve the issue, the details of this action will remain confidential to the Headteacher and/or the individual's line manager. The complainant is not entitled to participate in the proceedings or receive any detail about them.

Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.

Next Steps:

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may proceed to Stage 3 within 10 school days of receiving the Stage 2 response.

Stage 3: Review by Complaints Panel

Objective:

Provide an independent review of the complaint and the school's handling of it

Who to Contact:

Requests for a panel review should be submitted in writing to the Clerk to the Local Governing Body (contact details available from the school office or website) within 10 school days of receiving the Stage 2 response. The Request must identify in what way they feel that the Stage 2 investigation was flawed and therefore wrong. It must also identify any preferred outcome. Further evidence may be submitted at the discretion of the panel but only in so far as it is relevant to the original complaint.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

Panel Composition:

The panel will consist of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The panel must include:

- At least one person independent of the management and running of the school (e.g., an independent governor from another school or an external professional)

- Two governors or trustees who have had no prior involvement in the complaint

None of the three members of the Complaint Panel will have been involved in the incidents or events which led to the complaint, or have been involved in dealing with the complaint in the previous stages, or have any detailed prior knowledge of the complaint. No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.

Where the complaint is about a governor, the complainant may request that the appeal is heard by an entirely independent panel. It is at the discretion of the local governing body who will notify the clerk of their decision. Where an entirely independent panel is required, timescales may be affected while the school sources appropriate individuals for the review.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair, or
- The entire trust board, or
- The majority of the trust board

Stage 3 will be heard by a completely independent committee panel.

Process:

1. The Clerk will acknowledge the request within 3 school days and arrange a panel hearing
2. The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting
3. The panel hearing will be held within 20 school days of the request being received
4. At least 7 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:
   - Confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting
   - Request copies of any further written material to be submitted at least 7 school days before the meeting
   - Circulate any written material to all parties at least 5 school days before the meeting
5. The complainant will be invited to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by a friend or representative (but not a legal representative unless approved in advance). Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a trust employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.
6. The Headteacher or relevant staff member will also attend to present the school's response. Where the complaint is about a member of staff, the staff member who is the subject of the complaint will be invited. Where relevant, the staff member is also able to bring a companion with them.
7. Both parties will have the opportunity to present their case and ask questions
8. If the attendance of any pupils is required at the hearing, parental permission will be sought if they are under the age of 18. Extra care will be taken to consider the vulnerability of children where they are present at a complaints hearing.

9. The meeting will be held in private. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

10. The panel will consider all evidence and reach a decision. The committee will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

11. The Clerk will provide a written outcome to the complainant within 5 school days of the hearing

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of any written submissions from both parties.

Panel Decisions:

The panel can make the following decisions:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Make recommendations for action or improvement
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint and, where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and ODBST with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 school days. The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by ODBST.

The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the headteacher.

Finality:

The decision of the Complaints Panel is final. The Trust has exhausted its internal complaints procedure at this stage. This is the final stage at which the school will consider the complaint.

8.1 Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, ODBST wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- An explanation
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better

- An assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- An explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- An apology

8.2 Timeframes

ODBST will endeavour to abide by timeframes stated under each stage but acknowledges that in some circumstances, this is not always possible due to the complexity of information needed to review a complaint or difficulties regarding individual's availability to deal with the complaint. If it becomes apparent that it is not possible to complete any stage of the complaints procedure within a given timeframe, the individual responsible for handling the complaint will contact the complainant as soon as possible and come to an agreed timeframe that works for all parties involved.

8.3 Safeguarding

Wherever a complaint indicates that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, the school is under a duty to report this immediately to the local authority. Any action taken will be in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy which can be found on the school website or a copy obtained from the main reception of the school.

8.4 Complaints About the Headteacher or Governors

Where a complaint regards the headteacher, the complainant should first directly approach the headteacher in an attempt to resolve the issue informally. If the complainant is not satisfied with this outcome they should notify the clerk to the governors. The Stage 2 process will then commence, but with the chair of governors as the individual responsible for the investigation rather than the headteacher or another member of the senior leadership team.

Where a complaint regards a governor, the same process applies as for the headteacher. Where a complaint concerns the chair of governors, the individual should contact the clerk to the governors. After an investigation by an independent party**,** informal resolution will be sought, but where this fails, the complaints procedure at Stage 3 will take immediate effect. The vice chair or an independent investigator will mediate any proceedings.

8.5 Complaints About the CEO and/or MAT

If a complaint is about the Headteacher or if a complainant wishes to complain directly about the trust, then the complaint should be sent to the CEO to be investigated. The CEO will write to the complainant acknowledging the complaint within 3 school days. Following the investigation, the CEO will write to the complainant confirming the outcome within 15 school days. If this time limit cannot be met, the CEO will write to the Complainant within 10 school days explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised date.

If the complaint concerns the CEO or a Trustee, the complaint should be investigated by the Chair of the Trust Board. If a formal complaint form is received about the Chair, the complaint will be referred to the Vice Chair for investigation. Where the Chair of the Trust

Board has investigated the complaint, they will write the letter of outcome to the Complainant and provide a copy to the CEO.

8.6 Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- Explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- Co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- Refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- Providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
    - Sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
    - Interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
    - Consideration of records and other relevant information
    - Analysing information
- Liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right

The investigator should:

- Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- Keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- Ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- Be mindful of the timescales to respond
- Prepare a comprehensive report for the headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems

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

Complaints Co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator (this could be the headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support) should:

- Ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- Liaise with staff members, headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- Be aware of issues regarding:
  - Sharing third party information
  - Additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- Keep records

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- Ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- Collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- Record the proceedings
- Circulate the minutes of the meeting
- Notify all parties of the committee's decision

Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- Both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- The meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- Complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- The remit of the committee is explained to the complainant

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

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

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

• The issues are addressed

• Key findings of fact are made

• The committee is open-minded and acts independently

• No member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure

• The meeting is minuted

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

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

• The meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so

• No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it

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

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

• Many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting

• Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child

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

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

• The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults

• If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend

• However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests

• The welfare of the child/young person is paramount

9. Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

10. Vexatious or Serial Complaints

The Trust is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially. However, we will not tolerate unreasonable complainant behaviour. This includes:

• Making the same complaint repeatedly after it has been addressed through the proper procedures

• Making excessive demands on school time and resources

• Using abusive, harassing, offensive, or threatening language or behaviour

• Demanding redress that lacks any serious purpose or value

• Making unfounded allegations designed to cause disruption or annoyance

• Refusing to accept the outcome of the complaints process and insisting on pursuing unmeritorious complaints unreasonably

• Insisting on pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner

• The complainant refuses to co-operate with the school's relevant procedures

• The complainant changes the basis of the complaint as the complaint progresses

• The complainant seeks an unrealistic outcome

• Excessive demands are made on the time of staff and school governors and it is clearly intended to aggravate

• The complainant acts in a way that is abusive or offensive

Where a complainant raises an issue that has already been dealt with via the school's complaints procedure, and that procedure has been exhausted, the school will not reinvestigate the complaint except in exceptional circumstances, for example where new evidence has come to light.

If a complainant persists in raising the same issue, the headteacher will write to them explaining that the matter has been dealt with fully in line with the school complaints procedure, and therefore the case is now closed. The complainant will be provided with the contact details of the Department for Education if they wish to take the matter further.

In such cases, the CEO or Headteacher may decide to:

• Limit the complainant's contact with the school to specific times or methods

• Designate a single point of contact for the complainant

• Inform the complainant that further correspondence will not receive a response

- Apply the procedures outlined in the Dealing with Abusive and Violent Visitors Policy

The headteacher will use their discretion to choose not to investigate unreasonable complaints. Where they decide to take this course of action, they must inform the chair of governors that they have done so, explaining the nature of the complaint and why they have chosen not to investigate. If the chair deems it appropriate, they can redirect the headteacher to investigate the complaint. The full complaints procedure will commence from stage one on this direction.

If the chair upholds the headteacher's decision not to look into the complaint and the complainant deems this decision to be so unreasonable that no other rational body in the same position would have made that decision, then the complainant may write to ODBST and to the Department for Education.

11. Record Keeping

The Trust will maintain proper records of all formal complaints (Stage 2 and Stage 3), including:

- Details of the complaint
- Investigation findings
- Actions taken
- Correspondence
- Outcomes

Written records will be kept at each stage of the process to show:

- What the complaint was
- Any relevant evidence that was considered
- The outcomes including any action taken by the school throughout the process

A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

Records will be kept confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

12. Learning from Complaints

The Trust views complaints as valuable feedback. The CEO will review complaints data annually to identify trends or patterns in complaints, areas for improvement in policies or practice, staff training needs, and good practice to be shared across schools. The CEO will report to the Board on complaints.

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

13. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees. The review will consider compliance with statutory requirements, effectiveness of procedures, feedback from stakeholders, and best practice developments.

Local governing bodies and the trust board will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly. Local governing bodies and the trust board will track the number and nature of complaints and review underlying issues.

The complaints records in respect of trust schools are logged and managed by the school administrator of each school under the direction of the trust chief operations officer and in respect of the trust are logged and managed by the trust chief operations officer.

This policy will be reviewed by the trust chief operations officer every year. At each review, the policy will be approved by the trust board.

14. Further recourse

If the complainant believes the Trust has not handled their complaint properly or has not followed its own procedures, they may refer the matter to:

The DfE will consider complaints about academy trusts that fall into one or more of the following areas:

- Where there is undue delay or the trust did not comply with its own complaints procedure
- Where the trust is in breach of its funding agreement with the Secretary of State
- Where the trust has failed to comply with a legal duty

Contact: www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

Ofsted:

Parents can raise concerns about school standards or performance with Ofsted at any time. **Ofsted will also consider complaints about schools.** Contact: www.ofsted.gov.uk/schools/for-parents-and-carers

Relevant Legislation and Guidance:

- The Equality Act 2010 - http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents
- The Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 - http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/contents/made
- Education Act 2002 - http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents
- The Department for Education Best Practice advice for school complaints procedures - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures
- Academies are required by the Independent School Standards 2014 to have a publicised complaints procedure with clear timescales and an informal stage that is

available to parents and specifies that one member of any review panel must be independent from the school

<*Insert school name here***>** Formal Complaints Form

Name	
Name of pupil, year group and your relationship to them (where applicable)	
Contact address	
Contact telephone day	
Contact telephone mobile	
Contact email address	
Details of the complaint	
Action taken so far (including staff member who has dealt with it so far) or solutions offered	
The reason that this was not a satisfactory resolution for you	
What action would you like to be taken to resolve the problem?	

Signed:	
Dated:	

Please attach any paperwork you would like to share.