



INSPIRE
PARTNERSHIP

Complaints Procedure





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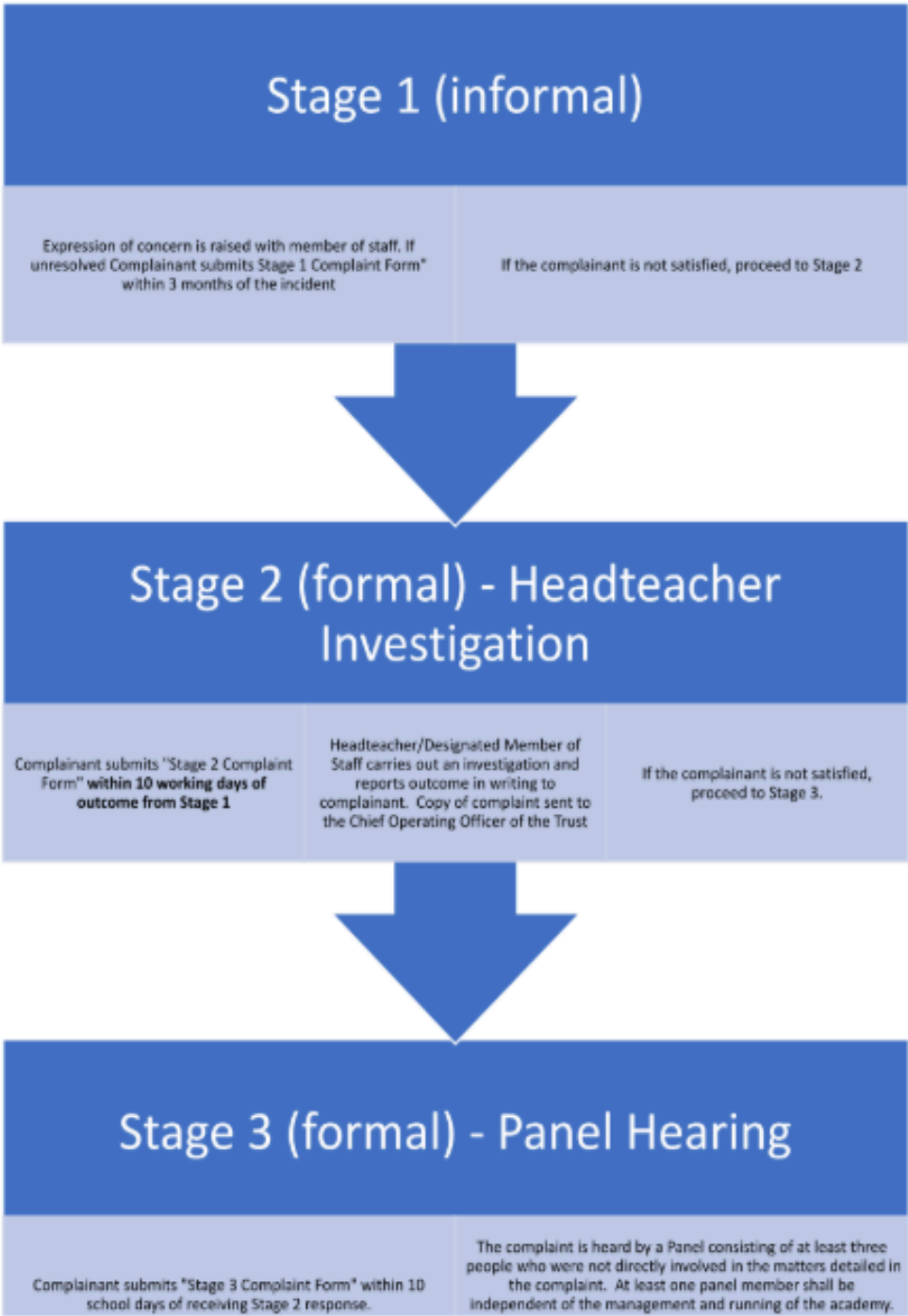
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1. PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH GENERAL COMPLAINTS

Each stage should be completed before progressing to the next stage.

There is no further right of appeal. If the complainant considers that the complaints procedure has not been followed correctly, they may contact the ESFA.





2. INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE & SCOPE

All schools are required, by Section 29 of the 2002 Education Act, to establish a complaints procedure and to publicise that procedure.

This policy is based on [guidance for schools on complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), including the model procedure, and model procedure for dealing with unreasonable complaints and sets out our approach to dealing with parental concerns and complaints. A copy is available from the Trust website.

All references to working days refer to days on which the school is open to pupils and for staff training days.

3. PART ONE – Parent & Carers

Inspire Partnership Multi Academy Trust is committed to ensuring that all students are provided with an excellent educational experience and that each Academy/School works in a productive and positive partnership with all parents and carers.

However, if a parent/carer feels that a situation has arisen that they are unhappy about then they have a right to make a complaint. Any and every complaint made will be taken seriously and dealt with swiftly and professionally.

Part 1 of this policy outlines how parents/carers of registered pupils currently attending academy schools within the trust can raise a concern or complaint.

Concerns or complaints from other persons will be dealt with in accordance with Part 2 of this policy.

Carers must provide in writing support from the local authority that has parental responsibility for the child. Without this consent, carers must proceed through part 2 of the policy.

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:

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools	The local authority admissions team
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under the Safeguarding Policy and in



	accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or Social Services.
Suspension and/or Permanent Exclusion of children from school	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at : https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion
Whistleblowing	The trust has a Whistleblowing Procedure for all employees.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be investigated under the academy grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Where appropriate, complaints about staff conduct will be investigated under the Trust disciplinary procedures. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs	Local Authority carrying out the assessment.
Complaints about services provided by external bodies using a school's premises or facilities	Providers should be contacted directly and have their own procedures for such eventualities.
Fixed penalty notices for attendance	Contact the Local Authority.
Anonymous concern or complaint	These will not be investigated under this procedure unless the complaint is about a potentially serious matter (e.g. child protection/criminal activity) and there is enough information to investigate.

Statutory Obligations

Complainants must be made aware that there is a complaints procedure and copies of this policy will be available on request.

If the policy results in an appeal to the Trust, this procedure is statutory.

Records will be made of any action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

General Principles

The relevant academy/school will try to resolve problems informally wherever possible. An effective response and appropriate redress will be provided to all complaints as quickly as possible dependent upon the complexity of the issues raised.



Where the timescales within this procedure cannot be adhered to, the complainant should be informed as to why this is the case, and given a revised timescale for dealing with the complaint. This should be done within the specified timescale.

Dealing with complaints

- a) At each stage, the person investigating the complaint will ensure that they:
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and unresolved issues
 - Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
 - Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
 - Keep appropriate notes of any interview(s) held.
- b) At each stage, the person investigating the complaint will seek ways to resolve the complaint satisfactorily. It may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following :
- An acknowledgement that the complaint is valid in whole or in part and/or acknowledgement that the situation could have been handled differently or better (this is not the same as an admission of negligence)
 - An apology
 - An explanation
 - An assurance and an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
 - An undertaking to review academy/school or Trust procedures in light of the complaint

Records

All complaints will be recorded by the academy/school, including informal complaints. The record will confirm the level at which the complaint is resolved, including whether it progresses to a formal hearing. The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that staff record all complaints and their outcome.

- Records relating to individual complaints are confidential, except where the secretary of state or a statutory body conducting an inspection requests access to them.
- The Trust Board will monitor the level and the subject matter of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis through the mechanism of performance and data reporting.

Inspire Partnership Academies/Schools

The officer with responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented in Inspire Partnership academies/schools is the Chief Operating Officer (COO). Complainants should be aware that headteachers will send a copy of the complaint at Stage 2 to the COO. Headteachers may also refer complaints received to the Chief Operating Officer because they consider the matter is one of such a nature that it should be investigated independently of the academy/school. Likewise, complaints may be retrieved and dealt with by Inspire for the same reason. Where a complaint is made direct to Inspire, it will



be logged by the Chief Operating Officer and forwarded to the academy/school unless it is retrieved as stated above.

Complaints About the Trust

Where a complaint relates to a specific academy, this should be raised with the individual academy following their normal lines of communication and/or complaints policy. Any complaints that have not been raised with an individual academy will be referred to that academy in the first instance. Please note, complaints about the Trust should not be viewed as another stage of the complaints policy. If your concern relates to the running or organisation of the Trust, please direct it to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). This concern will be dealt with in an informal way, involving others as necessary and the CEO may delegate the matter to staff as appropriate and depending on the nature of the concern. If after this informal process has concluded you are still not satisfied, you can lodge a formal complaint which should be addressed to the CEO

Complaints About the CEO

In the event of a complaint in respect of the CEO, the following modifications to the procedures apply:

- Stage two - a formal complaint should be submitted to the Chair of the Board of Trustees, Inspire Partnership MAT, Maypole Centre, High Street, Gawthorpe, Wakefield, WF5 9QP. The Chair will either investigate the matter or nominate another Trustee to investigate the complaint.
- Stage three - the Stage Three Appeal will consist of three other members of the Board of Trustees who have not previously been involved with the complaint

Dealing with Complaints – Initial Concerns

It is important to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint.

- A concern may be defined as *‘an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought’*.
- A complaint may be defined as *‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action’*.

Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints. It is in everyone’s interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. All our schools take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

The policy which follows deals with complaints but the underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases the class teacher or the individual delivering the service, will receive the first approach.



Dealing with Complaints – Formal Procedures

The formal procedure will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the concerns are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

Framework of Principles

Our Complaints Procedure:

- encourages resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- is easily accessible and publicised;
- is simple to understand and use;
- is impartial;
- is non-adversarial;
- allows swift handling within agreed time-limits for action and keeping people informed of progress;
- ensures a full and fair investigation;
- respect people's desire for confidentiality;
- addresses all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
- provides information to the Academy's senior management team so that services can be improved.

Investigating Complaints

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint makes sure that they:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
- clarifies the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meets with the complainant or contacts them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarifies what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interviews those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conducts the interview with an open mind and is prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keeps notes of the interview;

Social Media

In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, we request 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 also observe confidentiality. Defamatory, offensive or otherwise inappropriate comments on social media will be reported to the appropriate authorities. The academy reserves the right to stop the complaint procedure if complainants do not observe confidentiality. Interviews should be recorded and signed and dated by the individual as soon as they have been typed up.



Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure the Academy/School will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review Academy policies in light of the complaint.

It would be useful if complainants were encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the Academy could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

Vexatious Complaints

This procedure should limit the number of complaints that become protracted.

However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Local Governing Body or CEO is able under this policy to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Duplicate Complaints

After closing a complaint at the end of the complaints procedure, we may receive a duplicate complaint from:

- a spouse
- a partner
- a grandparent
- a child.

We will review the submission to establish whether there are any new aspects to the complaint that have not previously been considered. If this is the case, these new aspects will be investigated and dealt with to the full extent of the complaints procedure.

If the complaint is about the same subject and raises no new aspects, we will inform the new complainant that the school has already considered that complaint and the local process is complete.

Complaint Campaigns

Occasionally, an Academy or the Trust may become the focus of a campaign and receive large volumes of complaints. These may be:

- all based on the same subject



- from complainants unconnected with the school.

Members of the Executive Team will determine whether complaints constitute a complaint campaign. In the event of a complaint campaign, we may take any or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- Refer the matter to the relevant member of the Executive Team.
- Send a template response to all complainants
- Publish a single response on the school/Trust website

Time-Limits

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. Complaints need to be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible using time limits published in this policy. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

Complaints Received Outside of Term Time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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



3A - STAGE ONE – Informal

Parents must feel able to raise concerns with members of staff without any formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing. On occasion, it may be appropriate for someone to act on behalf of a parent. A parent/carer may request a preliminary discussion about an issue/concern to help decide whether he or she wishes to take the matter further. The academy/school will try to respect the views of a complainant who indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the matter will be referred to another staff member. Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the complainant can be referred to the Chair of Governors.

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

Where the first approach is made to a Governor, the next step would be to refer the complainant to an appropriate member of staff and advise them about the procedure. Governors should not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.

If the complainant feels their issues/concerns are unresolved then they can submit a written complaint under stage one, as follows :

1. Complaints should be made via the Stage 1 Complaint Form (Appendix 1) unless the complainant is unable to express the complaint in written form. (A scribe from school or of your own choosing can be asked to support the complainant to complete the stage 1 form). The Stage 1 Complaint Form must be **submitted within 3 months of the incident occurring**. Complaints after this period will not be considered.

2. The Academy/School will ensure that a written acknowledgement is provided to the complainant within 5 school days of receiving a complaint. The appointed member of staff leading the complaint will be in contact to arrange a suitable time to meet to discuss your complaint, if this is appropriate. This meeting will take place within 10 school days of the written complaint being received. They will then gather further supplementary evidence to support the investigation. The investigating officer at this stage may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken. Following the investigation the investigating member of staff will contact you with a written response of their findings. The academy aims to complete this process within 15 school days since your original fact finding meeting.

3. A written response should contain an outline of the complaint and a summary of the response to the complaint including the decision reached and the reasons for it. Where



appropriate this should also include what response the Academy will take to resolve the complaint. This may be by way of a general description e.g. Action taken within the Disciplinary Procedure.

4. This letter should also inform the complainant that should he/she wish the complaint to progress to the next stage of this procedure then he/she should send a written request stating this to the Headteacher within 10 school days of receiving the response.

5. If no further communication is received from the complainant within 10 school days it is deemed that the complaint has been resolved and should end.



3B - STAGE TWO – Formal Complaints

6. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at stage 1 they may go to Stage 2. Complaints should be made via a “Stage 2 Complaint Form” (Appendix A) unless the complainant is unable to express the complaint in written form. The “Stage 2 Complaint Form” must be submitted within 10 school days of receiving the response at Stage 1.

The complainant’s “Stage 2 Complaint Form” should be acknowledged in writing within 5 school days of receipt. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the school’s complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. **This will normally be within 10 school days.** Where this is not possible, a letter will be sent to the complainant explaining the reasons for the delay and giving a revised response date.

A copy of the Stage 2 Complaint Form will be sent to the Chief Operating officer at Inspire Partnership Multi Academy Trust.

The Headteacher or appointed officer will investigate the complaint appropriately.

Once all relevant facts have been established, the Headteacher/appointed officer will produce a written response to the complainant and may also wish to meet the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter directly. A written response should contain an outline of the complaint and a summary of the response to the complaint including the decision reached and the reasons for it. Where appropriate this should also include what response the academy/school will take to resolve the complaint. This may be by way of a general description e.g. Action taken within the Disciplinary Procedure.

7. This letter should also inform the complainant that should he/she wish the complaint to progress to the next second stage of this procedure then he/she should send a written request stating this to the Headteacher within 10 school days of receiving the response.

8. If no further communication is received from the complainant within 10 school days it is deemed that the complaint has been resolved and should end.

Where the original complaint is against a Headteacher, Stage Two should be conducted by the Chair of Governors. If the complaint progresses to the formal stage this will be conducted by the Vice Chair or other nominated governor or member of the Trust Board. Where the complaint concerns the CEO or a Trustee, the complaint will be referred to the Chair of the Trust Board to investigate. Where the complaint concerns the Chair, the Vice Chair of the Trust Board will investigate the complaint.

Where the complaint is against the Chair of Governors the first stage should be conducted by the Vice Chair of Governors, or another governor nominated by him/her.



If the complaint progresses to the formal stage this will be conducted by another nominated governor or member of the Trust Board.



3C - STAGE THREE – (Final Stage) Panel Hearing

Guidelines

All complaints that reach this stage will have done so because the complainant has not been satisfied by the responses received at Stages 1 and 2.

The complainant should complete and submit a “Stage 3 Complaint Form” (Appendix B) to request that their complaint is put before a Complaints Panel. The Chair, or, where the complaint is against the Chair, to the Vice-Chair or other nominated governor, will then convene a meeting of the Review Panel. The complaint form should state the original complaint and the reasons for on-going dissatisfaction. The Chair of Governors, Vice Chair or nominated governor, may decline to accept a complaint into the Review Stage where s/he, acting reasonably, believes that the complaint has been wholly upheld at the Formal Stage and in all the circumstances there is no merit in the matter proceeding further.

The Complaints Review Panel hearing is the last stage of the complaints procedure and is not convened merely to rubber-stamp previous decisions. Their remit is to

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- Uphold the complaint in whole or part;
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- Recommend changes to the Academy/School systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

The Complaints Review Hearing is independent and impartial. Only Governors/Trustees who have had no prior knowledge or involvement in the case can sit on the Complaints Review Panel. The Panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one panel member shall be independent of the management and running of the academy. The Chief Operating Officer will support the Panel and attend the hearing to ensure all procedures are adhered to.

It is important that individual Governors do not become embroiled in complaints at earlier stages because of potential prejudice. If individual Governors are approached about a complaint they should not respond but should refer the complainant to the complaints procedure and/or the appropriate member of school staff.

As Stage 3 is the last chance for a solution or compromise to be reached, every effort will be made to reach agreement through conciliation or mediation. Parents/carers are also encouraged to seek advice at this stage if they have not previously done so.

It is important that the panel views the complaint as being against the school rather than an individual staff member whose actions may have led to the original complaint.

Procedures



A Complaints Panel hearing should be requested by submitting a “Stage 3 Complaint Form” unless the complainant is unable to express the complaint in written form. The “Stage 3 Complaint Form” should be **submitted within 10 school days following receipt of the response from Stage 2**, unless the complainant has valid reasons.

Following receipt of a Stage 3 request, the procedures outlined below will be followed:

- (i) The school will write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written request **within 5 school days**.
- (ii) The acknowledgement will inform the complainant that a panel will consider the complaint **within 25 school days**. Where this is not possible, the reason for delay should be explained to the complainant along with a suggested revised target date.
- (iii) The letter will ask the complainant (if they have not already done so) to submit, as soon as possible, a written statement setting out clearly the aspects of the complaint that they wish to be considered. The Headteacher and/or appropriate member of staff will also be invited to provide a written statement.

The letter will also explain that the complainant and the Headteacher have the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint. Both parties should send such documentation to the Chair of the Complaints Review Panel **at least ten school days** before the complaint hearing.

The letter to the Complainant and Headteacher should also inform them of their right attend the final panel hearing and to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend/advocate/ interpreter if they wish.

The delegated officer will aim to find a mutually convenient date for all at the panel stage but if, despite best efforts, it is not possible to find a mutually convenient date and time for a hearing within a reasonable timeframe, the Chair of the Panel may determine that the hearing proceeds on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

A copy of the Stage 3 Complaint Form will be sent to the Chief Operating officer at Inspire Partnership Multi Academy Trust.

Hearing the Complaint at the Meeting

The aim of the meeting will be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the Academy/School and the complainant.

In the interest of natural justice, the introduction of previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses would be a reason to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence.

The recommended conduct of the meeting is as follows:



- a. The Chair of the panel will welcome the complainant, introduce the panel members and explain the procedure.
- b. The Chair of the panel will invite the complainant to explain the complaint.
- c. The Committee members may question the complainant about the complaint and the reasons why it has been made.
- d. The Headteacher will be invited by the Chair of the panel to question the complainant about the complaint and why it has been made.
- e. The Chair of the panel will invite the Headteacher to make a statement in response to the complaint. At the discretion of the Chair of the panel the Headteacher may invite members of staff directly involved in the complaint to supplement his/her response.
- f. The Committee members may question the Headteacher and/or members of staff about the response to the complaint.
- g. The Chair of the panel will allow the complainant to question the Headteacher and/or members of staff about the response to the complaint.
- h. Any party has the right to call witnesses, subject to the approval of the Chair of the Committee.
- i. The Committee, the Headteacher and the complainant have the right to question any such witness.
- j. The Headteacher will be invited by the Chair of the panel to make a final statement.
- k. The complainant will be invited by the Chair of the panel to make a final statement.
- l. The Chair of the panel will explain to the complainant and the Headteacher that the decision of the panel will now be considered and a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 working days. The Chair of the panel will then ask all parties to leave except for members of the Committee.
- m. The Committee will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and;
 - i. Reach a decision on the complaint and the reasons for it.
 - ii. Decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.
- n. The Governors sitting on the panel need to be aware of the complaints procedure before the meeting.

If the complainant remains unsatisfied, they may then take their complaint to the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Please note ESFA can only investigate the handling of the complaints process, not the decision made by the academy/school.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Role of the Chief Operating Officer

The person in charge of co-ordinating the complaints procedure at the academy/school is the Headteacher. Overall responsibility is retained by Inspire through the Chief Operating Officer. The role of governors/trustees arises only in respect of appeals where the complainant remains dissatisfied with attempts to resolve the issue of complaint and as set out above.

The Chief Operating Officer is the contact point for the complainant and is required to:

- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;



- meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- record the proceedings;
- notify all parties of the panel's decision.

The Chief Operating Officer may delegate elements of this role to relevant officers, but retains the responsibility of ensure that all of the above is completed in line with this policy.

The Role of the Chair of the Panel

The Chair of the Panel has a key role, ensuring that:

- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are made;
- parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- the panel is open minded and acting independently;
- no member of the panel has any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
- written material is seen by all parties.

Checklist for a Panel Hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence. Pupils may not appear as witnesses, but they may provide statements.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The Headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Headteacher is then invited to explain the Academy/School's actions and be followed by the Academy/School's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the Headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Headteacher is then invited to sum up the Academy's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The Chairman explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.



The panel must reach a unanimous or majority decision as to whether or not to uphold the complaint wholly or in part, and what action (if any) the school needs to take to resolve the complaint. This may include referring the matter to another formal process, whether in relation to a complaint against a governor or a member of the school staff. Normally the governors will reach a decision at this point but they may feel the need to take further advice. Where this is the case they should endeavour to reach a decision as soon as possible.

The outcome will be communicated to both parties in writing as soon as possible but, in any case, within five working days of reaching their decision. The response will detail whether the complaint is upheld wholly or in part and briefly summarise the basis on which governors arrived at this conclusion. The response should also include any lessons learnt and specify any action to be taken by the school as a result of the complaint and within what timescales

A report and any recommendations should be presented to the school's Governing Body at the next full meeting.

A written statement outlining the decision of the Panel must be sent to the complainant, Headteacher and any staff named in the complaint.

The Panel may wish to obtain legal advice on the content of the decision letter. If any disciplinary action is to be taken against a member of staff then, to protect his/her rights, only the phrase “**appropriate action has or will be taken**” should be used.

The complainant may contact the ESFA if they are dissatisfied with the way in which their complaint has been handled once the full complaints procedure with the academy/school has been completed. The ESFA will not normally re investigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the school/trust. They will consider whether the school/trust have adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint. At the time of writing this procedure, the ESFA procedure and the ESFA academy complaints form are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

Closure of Complaints

Very occasionally, the school will feel that it needs, regretfully, to close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied.

If a complainant persists in making representations to the school – to the Headteacher, designated Governor, Chair of Governors or anyone else, this can be extremely time-consuming and can detract from the responsibility to look after the interests of all the children.

For this reason, correspondence (including personal approaches, as well as letters and telephone calls) will be closed on a complaint where it is felt that all reasonable action to resolve the complaint has been taken and that the Complaints Procedure has been fully completed. Correspondence received from the complainant subsequent to closure



will be kept on file, indefinitely, as will notes of telephone calls and any further personal calls referring to the matter.

If deadlines set out within the Complaints Procedure are not met (without a valid reason), the complaint will be closed at the end of the last stage reached.

The Chair of Governors (or designated Governor) may decide, therefore, that every reasonable action has been undertaken to resolve the complaint and that a Complaints Appeal Panel would not help to move things forward.

If a complainant has completed the school's Complaints Procedures (with or without recourse to a Complaints Panel) and is still unhappy with the outcome or decision from the Governing Body, they have the right to refer their complaint to the ESFA.

4 - PART TWO - Concerns or Complaints from persons other than parents/carers of current registered pupils

Part 1 of this complaints procedure applies solely to complaints made by parents or carers of current registered pupils of academies/schools within the trust. The trust wishes to work closely with other members of the local community and will deal with concerns and complaints as follows:

1. A concern regarding an academy or its operations may be made to any member of staff. That member of staff will attempt to resolve the matter immediately or may, if appropriate, refer the matter to their line manager or member of the senior leadership team (SLT) who is best placed to deal with the concern. It is expected that most concerns will be responded to orally or in writing within 5 school days. If a longer period is required, you will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation.
2. Where a concern is not resolved at stage 1, or you wish your concerns to be dealt with immediately as a formal complaint, you should put your complaint in writing and send this to the Headteacher of the relevant academy/school to investigate. The Headteacher may delegate the task of investigation and/or response to the complaint to a member of SLT. A formal response to the complaint will usually be provided within 10 school days of receipt of the letter of complaint although if a longer period is required to respond, you will be kept updated.

Concerns or complaints regarding the Headteacher or the trust as a whole should be referred directly to the Chief Operating Officer c/o Inspire Partnership Multi Academy Trust, Maypole Centre, High Street, Gawthorpe, Wakefield, WF5 9QP who will arrange for the stages above to be considered by an appropriate person.



5. PART THREE - Unreasonably persistent complainants and unreasonable complainant behaviour

There are rare circumstances where we will deviate from the Complaints Procedure set out in Part 1. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- where the complainant's behaviour or language towards staff, members of the academy/school or governors/trustees is abusive, offensive, discriminatory or threatening;
- where the complaint's behaviour is hindering our consideration of complaints and/or the proper running of the academy/school because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact, such as, if the complainant:
 - refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
 - refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process
 - refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
 - insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
 - introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
 - 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 trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
 - changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
 - seeks an unrealistic outcome, such as the inappropriate dismissal of staff
 - makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
 - knowingly provides falsified information
 - publishes confidential information relating to the complaint on social media or other public forums
- where the complainant's complaint is clearly frivolous, vexatious and/or has patently insufficient grounds. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines the characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaint as:
 - complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
 - insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
 - insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
 - complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
 - demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value
- where the complainant's complaint is the same, similar to or based on the same facts of a complaint which has already been considered in full.



In these circumstances, we may:

- inform the complainant that their behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonably persistent and ask them to change it;
- restrict the complainant's access to the academy e.g. requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only), requiring contact to take place with a named person only, restricting telephone calls to specified days and times or banning the complainant from the academy's premises. This will be reviewed after six months;
- conduct the Complaints Committee on the papers only i.e. not hold a hearing;
- refuse to consider the complaint & refer the complainant directly to Stage 3

In all cases we will write to tell the complainant why we believe his or her behaviour is unacceptable or unreasonably persistent, what action we are taking and the duration of that action.

We may take the decision not to respond to any further correspondence where:

- we have taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns
- the complainant has been given a clear statement of our position and their options
- the complainant contacts us repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time

The case for ceasing further correspondence is stronger where:

- letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive or make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
- we have reason to believe the complainant is contacting us with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, members of the academy council or trustees, we will consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.



6. Appendix A – Complaint Form for Stage 1 and Stage 2

This form should be completed and submitted within 3 months of the incident for the complaint to be considered.

Your name:
Level of Complaint : Stage 1 / Stage 2 (please circle)
Pupil's name (if relevant) :
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: Postcode: Daytime telephone number: Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint.
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork/evidence? If so, please give details.
Signature:
Date:
School use (a copy must be sent to the COO at Inspire)
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to Headteacher / Designated Member of Staff:
Date



7. Appendix B – Stage 3 Complaint Form

If you are not satisfied with the response received following stage 2 investigation of your complaint, then please complete this form and return it to the school. **The form should be completed and submitted within 10 school days of receipt of the stage 2 response for the complaint to be progressed.**

Your name:

Date stage 2 response received:

Please provide any further details that you would wish to share with the Panel hearing your complaint.

Signature:

Date:

School use (a copy must be sent to the COO at Inspire)

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to Designated Staff / Designated Governor:



FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY

COMPLAINT MONITORING FORM

Complainant's Name:	
Tel No:	Email Address:
Nature of Complaint:	
Stage 1 – Informal Concern	
List any action taken to resolve the informal concern:	
Complainant satisfied with the outcome: Yes / No	
Stage 2	
Date "Stage 2 Complaint Form" received in school:	
Date Headteacher's response sent to complainant:	
Complainant satisfied with the outcome: Yes / No	
Stage 3	
Date "Stage 3 Complaint Form" received in school:	
Date Chair of Governors' response sent to complainant:	
Complainant satisfied with the outcome: Yes / No	



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