



Schools for Every Child

Concerns & Complaints Policy

We are an education Trust that is committed to running dynamic, ever-improving schools. We work to make sure that every child feels they belong in their school where they feel safe and inspired by learning. For us, learning is an adventure. It is a privilege and a responsibility for all who work with us to ensure that the journey through school is exciting, challenging, caring and enriching, and that every child experiences joy, wonder, calm and success.

Approval Level	Board
Author	Lee Faris
Approval Date	September 2023
Trust/Template/School level	Trust
Review cycle	Annual

"The purpose of governance is to provide confident, strategic leadership and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance". (DfE)

Approval History

Committee Approval	Status	Next Review Date
Meeting Name Meeting Date	Review in progress Submitted for Ratification Live Policy	September 2024

This procedure works in conjunction with the following Schools for Every Child policies and procedures that are all available on the Schools for Every Child website

- **Equalities strategy**
- **Wellbeing strategy**
- **Capability management procedure**
- **Disciplinary procedure**
- **Grievance procedure**
- **Staff code of conduct**

Schools for Every Child is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive, or threatening.

Contents

1. Aims
2. Legislation and Guidance
3. Definitions and Scope
4. The Stages for Dealing with Concerns or Complaints
5. Formal registering of a complaint
6. Registering a complaint with the LSB or Trust review panel
7. Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedure
8. Managing persistent, serial, and unreasonable complaints
9. Record Keeping
10. Learning Lessons
11. Monitoring Arrangements

1. Aims

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

The school and/or 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 procedure and make it available on the school websites and the Trust website.

1. This policy statement sets out the school and/or Trust's approach to dealing with parental concerns and complaints.
2. We value good home/school relations and will, therefore, do everything we can to establish and maintain them. This includes seeking to resolve any concerns or complaints promptly, and to the satisfaction of all concerned.
3. As general practice we mediate when complaints involve the behaviours of children or families. We do not place families into an environment of confrontation.
4. We welcome feedback on what parents feel we do well, or not so well, as a school and/or Trust. We will carefully consider all feedback, whether positive or negative, and will review our policies and practices accordingly.
5. We will treat all concerns and complaints seriously and courteously and will advise parents and others of the school and/or Trust's procedures for dealing with their concerns. In return, we expect parents and other complainants to behave respectfully towards all members of the school community. In particular, any disagreement with the school and/or Trust should not be expressed inappropriately or in front of pupils.
6. All staff, teaching and non-teaching; and members of governance boards, will receive a copy of this policy statement and will be familiar with the procedures for dealing with parental concerns and complaints, to which they will have access as required.
7. The procedures will be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary.
8. Staff and members of governance boards receive training in handling parental concerns and complaints as appropriate.
9. Whilst we will seek to resolve concerns and complaints to the satisfaction of all parties, it may not be possible to achieve this in every case. We will, therefore, use our option to close a complaint before all the stages of our procedures have been exhausted, if this appears to be appropriate.
10. The DfE advocates resolution of parental concerns and complaints at school level wherever possible, in the interests of maintaining good home/school relations. The role of the DfE and Education and Skills Funding Agency in advising parents and schools on the handling of concerns and complaints is set out at the end of this procedure.
11. The three stages of dealing with concerns or complaints, and appealing outcomes are as follows.

Stage One – Informal Registering & investigation of a Concern to staff, then, appeal investigated by a Nominated Person

Stage Two – Formal Registering & investigation of a Complaint with the Headteacher, then, appeal investigated by the LSB chair

Stage Three – Registering a Complaint with the LSB or Board. Final decision.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to [the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which states that we must have and make available a written

procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils at our schools.

It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) 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 school's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.

3. Definitions and Scope

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint.

3.1 A **concern** is defined as "an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought". The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.

3.2 A **complaint** is defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction" however made, about actions taken or a lack of action in relation to their child/children. The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

3.3 There may be occasions when complainants decide that the informal method has failed to resolve their concerns and therefore wish to raise a formal complaint. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

3.6 This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Exclusion
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaints. Arrangements for handling complaints from parents of children with SEN about the school's support are within the scope of this policy. Such complaints should first be made to the class teacher or the Inclusion Lead; they will then be referred to this complaints policy. Our SEND policy and information report includes information about the rights of parents of pupils with disabilities who believe that the school has discriminated against their child.

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

3.8 Personal views regarding the strategic running of the school, such as curriculum approaches, will not be considered under the complaints policy.

3.9 Our staff are not able to consider complaints that are matters of dispute between parents pertaining to court orders that are in place for childcare arrangements.

4. The Stages for Dealing with Concerns or Complaints

It is always helpful to try to talk to someone at the school first. Many concerns can be resolved in this way and it helps to maintain a good relationship with the school.

However, if this does not enable the concern to be resolved the following procedures should be followed.

Stage One – Informal Registering of a Concern.

- Any worry or concern should be raised with members of staff without any formality either in person, by telephone, e-mail or in writing.
- Every effort should be made to resolve the matter at this point. At this level the complaint is termed a 'concern' and stays within the informal stage.
- Each school operates a line management system, initially the classteacher is responsible for resolving the issue, then their line manager and finally the School Leader.

The school will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

The complainant should raise the concern as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff or the Headteacher, either in person or by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant is unclear whom to contact or how to contact them they should contact the school office for further information.

If the complainant remains unhappy then they should write to the headteacher, who will appoint a nominated person to investigate. The school will acknowledge concerns within 3 school days and investigate and provide a written response within 10 school days.

The informal stage may involve a meeting between the complainant and the nominated person.

If the concern is not resolved informally by the nominated person, or the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome it can be escalated to a formal complaint (stage 2).

5 Stage Two – Formal Registering of a Complaint.

The procedure for a Headteacher review

Where the complainant considers that the nominated person's written response does not resolve their concern, the complainant may then make a formal complaint. The formal complaint must be made within **10 school days** of receiving the initial response from the nominated person.

5.1 The formal complaint must be addressed to the Headteacher (if the complaint is regarding the Head Teacher then the complaint should be sent directly to the Chair of the LSB.

Your complaint should include full details as outlined in section 5.4 including your full name, contact telephone number, email and postal address. The issue you are complaining about and the desired outcome you seek.

5.2 The head teacher will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the appeal in writing within **3 school days** and investigate the matter so that the complainant receives a formal written response within **10 school days**. On occasion, the complaint may be too complex to investigate within this timescale and, in these circumstances, the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining why it is not possible to work within the timescales laid down and to advise when a response will be issued.

5.3 If the complaint is against a member of the Central Team within the Trust the complaint should be sent to the CEO, who will assign an investigator. Or to the trustee chair if it is about the CEO.

Stage Three- Referring a formal complaint to the Chair of the LSB

5.4 Where the complainant considers that the formal written stage 2 response does not resolve the complaint, the complainant may ask the Chair of LSB to reconsider the Headteacher's response. This request must be made within **10 school days** of receiving the Head's response.

5.5 If the complaint is about the Headteacher then the complaint should be submitted directly to the Chair of LSB. Unless the complaint is about the Headteacher, the Chair of LSB will not consider the complaint unless the Headteacher has had the opportunity to seek to resolve the matter first, through Stages One & Two.

5.6 If the complaint is about the Chair of LSB, the entire Local Body or an individual LSB member, then the complaint form should be sent to the Clerk to the LSB

5.8 LSB chair review, procedure

If emailing the complaint, the complainant should only use the official email address for the Clerk, available from the school office and not use their personal email address.

In the subject field of the email, the complainant should write, 'Formal Complaint'. If delivering or posting a letter, the complainant must address it to the Chair of LSB at the school address and should write 'Formal Complaint' on the envelope. This will ensure that the complaint is dealt with promptly and enable the school to comply with the timescales set out in the policy.

5.9 The complainant should not share the complaint with other LSB members. A detailed knowledge of the complaint will preclude people from serving on a review panel if the complaint is not resolved by the Chair. Anyone receiving a complaint in this way should immediately refer it back to the Chair without considering the content.

5.10 The Chair of LSB will acknowledge the complaint form in writing within 3 school days of receiving it personally and investigate the matter so that the complainant receives a response within 10 school days. On rare occasions, the complaint may be too complex to investigate within this timescale and, in these circumstances, the Chair will write to the complainant explaining why it is not possible to work within the timescales laid down and to advise when a response will be issued.

5.11 As part of the investigation, the Chair will make early contact with the complainant and either propose a meeting or a substantial telephone call to consider the issues raised. If telephoning, the Chair should determine whether it is necessary to withhold any number that is not the school's telephone number.

- The focus of that conversation should be to:
- Consider any gaps on the complaint
- Consider any aspects of the complaint where additional clarification is required;
- Consider the extent to which any evidence is available that has not been mentioned in the complaint;
- Establish the complainant's view as to witnesses who might need to be interviewed;
- Establish what would provide for the complainant an acceptable resolution to the complaint;
- Establish whether there is any pressing reason for the matter to be investigated more quickly than the published time scale allows for;
- Discuss with the complainant whether there is anything that might help resolve matters outside the complaints procedure, for example, alternative dispute resolution methods.

5.12 Complainants must make sure they do not covertly record any conversations about complaints and they should make sure they obtain informed consent from all parties present before recording conversations or meetings.

5.13 The key elements of the Chair's investigation are likely to include:

- Achievement of a shared understanding with the complainant of the nature of the complaint and of what it is that remains unresolved;
- Establishing what has happened and who was involved;
- Interviews and/or written statements from those adults and children whose information and views, in the opinion of the Chair of LSB, need to be taken into account; although the final decision of whom to interview rests with the Chair, it is expected that the voice of affected children will be appropriately heard and be given sufficient weight;
- Sensitivity and thoroughness when conducting interviews;
- A detailed report that will provide a clear record that will be helpful for any subsequent review;
- A clear analysis of the information and conclusions reached;
- An authoritative outcome that is based on the evidence and does not merely state acceptance of evidence;
- Recommendations to resolve the complaint.
- The conclusions and the reasons for decision making should be communicated in writing to the complainant and any relevant person complained about.

Expected Outcomes

The Chair will report in writing on the extent to which they consider the complaint is fully, or in part:

- Substantiated - i.e. where there is sufficient evidence to uphold the complaint;
- Malicious – i.e. where it is proven that the complainant has no case and where, also, there is evidence that the complainant deliberately tried to deceive the school, made the complaint as part of a deliberate attempt to cause distress or otherwise acted with malice;
- False – i.e. where there is sufficient evidence to prove that there was not legitimate basis to the complaint, or
- Unsubstantiated – i.e. where there is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion.

In terms of future actions there are two possible outcomes from a complaint. These are:

- Action taken by the school to put matters right. This might include one or more of the following:
 - a review of policy or procedure;
 - changes to routines;
 - action to remedy a health and safety concern;
 - restorative work involving a pupil and a member of staff;
 - risk assessment to determine the likelihood of similar problems recurring;
- an apology;
- action towards a member of staff (on the rare occasions that this is of a disciplinary nature, no further information can be shared as this is a matter of employment contract law for

employees and a straightforward matter of privacy for volunteers).

- a decision with a full explanation, that no action is necessary or justified.
- We will not normally award financial compensation unless required to do so by virtue of legislation.

Role of the Clerk to the LSB

The Chair of LSB will appoint the Clerk to LSB to:

- act in a 'progress chasing' role to track the complaint and to ensure that timescales set out within the policy are being adhered to wherever possible;
- ensure that the complainant is kept up-to-date, including where timescales have not been met and the reasons why;
- receive any concerns that the complainant might have and advise the LSB Body about the operation of the process;
- inform LSB of any shortcomings in the delivery of its complaints procedure, both during the process and subsequently;
- arrange for the outcome of the investigation to be communicated to all parties (the complainant and where relevant the person complained about) so they receive it at the same time. This will be in the form of an email or letter from the Chair of LSB.
- Ensure that a written record of the complaint along with details of whether they were resolved following the formal procedure or progressed to a panel hearing;

The Clerk will ensure that correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints are stored confidentially.

- Complaint documentation does not form part of the child's educational record.
- The letter from the Chair of LSB represents the conclusion of the Chair's consideration of the complaint. Neither the Chair nor any member of staff should respond to the complainant after this point. The Clerk should thereafter handle all correspondence. The complainant will be advised in the outcome letter that the matter is closed except for the possibility of a review by a LSB panel.

5.1 Roles and responsibilities

5.1.1 The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Follow these procedures
- Cooperate with the school throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Do not publish details about the complaint on social media

5.1.2 The investigator

- An individual will be appointed to look into the complaint and establish the facts.
They will: Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes of findings and facts.
- 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

5.1.3 The complaints co-ordinator

- The complaints co-ordinator can be:
- The Headteacher
- The designated complaints governor
- 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 staff members, the headteacher, chair of governors, clerk or 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

5.1.4 Clerk to the governing 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

5.1.5 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

5.2 Principles for Investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

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

Where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set, and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline with an explanation for the delay. This is likely if the complaint requires or is being investigated by an external body such as the police.

5.3 Time scales

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.

We will consider exceptions to this timeframe 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 timescales 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

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The school 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 the school is not meeting Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, by calling 0300 123 4666, or by emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. An online contact form is also available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/org-contacts>.

We will notify parents and carers if we become aware that the school is to be inspected by Ofsted. We will also supply a copy of the inspection report to parents and carers of children attending the setting on a regular basis.

5.4 The formal procedure

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the school office

The formal stage involves the complainant putting the complaint into writing, not email or text, usually to the School Leader* and/or the subject of the complaint. This letter should provide details such as relevant dates, times and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents. The complainant should also state what they feel would resolve the complaint.

- The school leader will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 10 school days.
- The School Leader (or other person appointed by the School Leader for this purpose) will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 10 days. The written conclusion is not the full investigation report which may contain confidential information.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and wishes to proceed to stage 3 of this procedure, they will be advised of their right to refer the matter to the Local School Board (LSB) and should inform the clerk to the governing board in writing within 10 school days.

- The LSB must consider the complaint, correspond with the complainant and discuss any resolution or further investigation, or alternatively confirm that the complaint will be escalated to Stage 3 (see below).
- All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to 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.

**If the complaint relates directly to the Headteacher (as opposed to a decision made by the school and put into place by the headteacher) the complaint should be raised with the Trust CEO. Who will appoint an investigating officer.*

**Any complaints relating to the CEO, LSB governors or Trustees should be referred to the Trust Governance Professional in the first instance.*

6 Stage 3: Registering a complaint with the LSB (or Trust review panel if related to the CEO)

6.1 Convening the panel (Written submissions only)

- 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 consist of 2 LSB members, the CEO (or their proxy), 1 Trustee(Chair of the Trust appointed) and 1 SLT member from another school within the Trust (CEO appointed) . At least 1 panel member must be independent of the management and running of the individual school.
- 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 25 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 10 school days before the date of the meeting.
- Any review will be conducted in writing only
- face-to-face hearings can be emotive and stressful for complainants and staff; while being potentially stressful, there is nothing inherent in a face-to-face hearing that can add value to consideration of the complaint;
- There should be no new evidence in support of the complaint that cannot be aired in writing;
- The only points for consideration will be the complainant's concern about how the complaint had been handled and all such points can be written down and considered without the need for a hearing.
- The panel must then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide a summary of their 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 proprietor and School Leader.
- The school will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 10 days.

6.2 The Potential Outcomes

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
- Where appropriate, 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 10 school days.

7. Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedure.

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).

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

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

8. Managing persistent, serial, and unreasonable complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and we will treat them seriously. However, there are rare circumstances where we will elect to deviate from this Complaints Procedure. Generally, this would be because the complaints fall under one of the following three categories;

- Vexatious Complaints
- Serial, Duplicate and Multiple Complaints or Complaint Campaigns
- Non-compliant Complaints

8.1 Vexatious Complaints

These occasions include, but are not necessarily limited to;

- where the complaints are deemed to be obsessive, persistent, harassing or repetitious. • where the complainant's behaviour towards staff, Governors or Trustees is unacceptable, for example, is abusive, offensive or threatening;
- where, because of the frequency of their contact with the Trust/academy, the complainant is hindering the consideration of their or other people's complaints and/or the proper running of the Trust/academy;
- where the complaint has patently insufficient grounds; or
- 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 by the Trust.

8.2. Serial, Duplicate and Multiple Complaints (Complaint Campaigns)

These occasions include, but are not necessarily limited to;

- If a complaint is received by the Trust from the same person about the same or similar subject once the initial complaint has been completed.
- New complaints, as additions as part of an ongoing and open complaint.
- If the Trust receives a large volume of complaints that are based upon the same subject.

8.3. Non - Compliant Complaints

- These occasions include, but are not necessarily limited to where the complainant
- Refuses to articulate their complaint or the outcomes sought despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways outside of the complaints procedure.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information and insists they are acted upon.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff dealing with the complaints.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Refuses to accept the findings of a properly implemented and completed process. • Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Uses falsified information.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

8.4 Steps we will take to address the above

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

8.4.1 If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put the following communications strategies in place. We 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

8.4.2 We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
 - We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience
- Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.
- In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from our school site.

8.4.3 If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and that the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint
- If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

8.4.4 Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

9. Record keeping

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, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally. It will be viewed only by those involved in

investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

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 through a subject access request 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 our data retention policy.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole governing board in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the governing board 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 governing board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.