'They will soar on wings like eagles …'
Isaiah 40:31

collaborate | enrich | trust | innovate | aspire |nurture

AQUILA Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust

Multi Academy Trust Policy

Common Trust Policy, Use as Published

Complaints Policy

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This policy must be made available to parents in hardcopy on request and be published on the school website.

1. Aims

Aquila the Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust (hereafter referred to as the Trust) and their schools aim to meet their statutory obligations when responding to complaints. This policy has been written with a view to the Trust's values of Connect, Learn and Hope alongside the individual school values.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect
- Ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed. We will also limit the number of staff involved in any one complaint process. This will ensure that the process runs as smoothly as possible and communication with the complainant is as clear and efficient as possible.

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

Please note that any reference to 'a school' within this document means an academy within the Trust

"This you know, my beloved brethren but everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;"

James 1:19

Although the complaint may be raised about an individual school, we will respond with paperwork with the Aquila logo as we are all part of the same organisation. This does not mean the complaint is being handled at Trust rather than school level. Please check the policy and the paperwork you receive to understand the stage of your complaint.

2. Definitions and scope

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*'.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. The Trust and schools take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, they will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the school will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint.

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

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 about the Head of School should be made to the Executive Headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher or Executive 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, who will refer the matter to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or a trustee of the Trust, should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees, via the trust office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Trustees should be addressed to the Vice Chair, via the trust office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. The Complaints Form must be completed by the complainant to outline the details of their complaint(s) and desired outcome(s). If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask a third-party organisation for example like the Citizens Advice to help you.

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.

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation which will also follow the procedures and timescale of the Complaints Policy.

Time scales

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. We will only consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

If, during the process of a complaint being investigated, the complainant ceases to respond or communicate either by email, letter or telephone, following at least three attempts, the process and any arrangements will stop and the complaint will be deemed closed. All attempts will be made by the school and/or panel governance professional to facilitate the lines of communication, including sending recorded delivery letters before this action is taken.

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.

Scope of this complaints procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by each school, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the local authority.
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and 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.
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through this complaints procedure.*
• Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure.
• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures. See Aquila Staff Handbook.
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. 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.

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to any school within the Trust about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures such as those outlined above we will use this complaints procedure.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action against one of our schools in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned. The service provider concerned must ensure they inform the Head of Compliance, Data Protection and Administration at Aquila Trust of any such complaint as soon as possible.

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

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

We also intend to address complaints as quickly as possible. To achieve this, realistic and reasonable time limits will be set for each action within each stage. We will treat every concern with sensitivity as complaints will escalate if the person complaining feels humiliated, marginalised or that their concern has been minimised.

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

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, schools want to resolve the complaint. We will try to identify areas of agreement between the parties. We will also try to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

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.

An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

Withdrawal of a complaint

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

3. Stages of complaint.

At every stage notes will be kept of any interviews or conversations, including date and time. At the end of a meeting, or telephone call, the member of staff involved will try to ensure that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. A brief log of all the communications and actions taken about a complaint will be kept, together with a copy of any written response, or notes of meetings and telephone calls so that there is a complete record of the progress and resolution of any one complaint.

Stage 1: informal

It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and quickly resolved on an informal basis. It is important to clarify the nature of the concern and the outcome the parent is looking for at this stage.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or Headteacher. Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and

it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 of the procedure. If the first approach is made to a Governor, they must refer the complainant to the appropriate staff member and provide advice about the procedure for making a complaint.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the concern or complaint will provide a response. This may be through a face to face meeting or an informal written response within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. All concerns raised at Stage 1 will be logged using the online system Bromcom Communication Log and will be monitored by the Governing Body.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint using the attached Complaint Form identifying complaint(s) and desired outcome(s).

Stage 2: formal.

Formal complaints must be made via the school office or Trust office to the relevant person (see page 4). This may be given verbally initially and must be followed-up with the Aquila Trust Complaints Form also being completed. The complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents. The complainant must also state what they feel would resolve the complaint.

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

On receiving the complaint the date it was received will be recorded and receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 school days.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole Governing Body in case a review panel needs to be organised at stage 3.

The clerk will communicate with the complainant to seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. A face to face meeting may be the most appropriate way of doing this which will be confirmed in writing within 5 school days of receipt of the complaint.

Investigation

Note: The Executive Headteacher or Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the investigator will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the investigator will provide a report and the Headteacher will send a formal written response within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the investigator is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the Headteacher with an update and the Headteacher will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The investigator will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

If the complaint is about:-

- the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or

- the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be escalated to the Governance Manager of the Trust.

If the complaint is about the CEO and / or Trustees, Stage 2 will be carried out by the Chair of the Trust Board. If the Chair of the Board is the subject of the complaint, Stage 2 will be carried out the Vice Chair of Trustees or Senior Independent Trustee.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and wishes to proceed to the next stage of this procedure, they should inform the clerk to the LGB or the Trust in writing within 10 school days. The Clerk will inform the Head of Governance upon receipt.

Stage 3: Panel Hearing.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a panel hearing consisting of at least three *people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint with one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school.* The panel members will all have completed the mandatory training. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure. It is not convened to rubber stamp previous decisions.

Where the Local Governing Body 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. Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole local governing body at any stage as this would compromise the impartiality of a panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious 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.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the school or Trust office, within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

Where there is a vacancy for the clerk to the LGB, Aquila will make arrangements for a suitable clerk to be available.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and send an acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint which may be a hard copy or email attachment within 3 school days. This may be in the form of a hard copy letter of email attachment.

The Clerk will then write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting within 5 school days of previous acknowledgement letter. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting and re-send the second letter with the confirmed date. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 3 will be heard by the trustees and an independent panel member.

If the complaint is about the Trust, CEO or Trustee, Stage 3 will be heard by a completely independent committee panel of three members. One of the Complaint Panel members will be independent of the management and running of the Academy Trust. This means that the independent Complaint Panel member will not be a Trustee or an employee of the Trust.

A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend and should they wish to speak at the hearing, prior permission must be given by the panel in advance of the hearing. 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 an employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 10 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 6 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

If the complaints panel hearing has to be postponed at this stage, neither the complainant nor the school may produce any further additional evidence.

The committee will also 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.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The panel will choose their own chair.

The terms of reference for the panel are to:

- Draw up its procedures;
- Hear individual complaints;
- Make one or more of the recommendations on policy as a result of complaints.

For transparency and open dialogue, school leadership teams and all parties will be present for the duration of the Panel Hearing, offering opportunities for all parties to give statements, present their evidence and allowing each party and the Panel to raise questions around that evidence.

With regard to teaching and support staff, the panel will need to be mindful of the concerns of a staff member who is the subject of a complaint by parents. The teacher or support staff may be nervous or apprehensive, particularly if the original informal process has failed because of conflict between the parents and staff members. The panel will need to consider how a reconciliation between the parents and the staff member can be achieved, as they will both continue to be part of the school community at the end of the complaints process.

In these circumstances, each teacher or support staff member will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence. The Panel will meet complainants and witnesses in turn. Therefore, a complainant will not question staff or witnesses, or be present when staff and witnesses are heard by the panel.

Checklist for the panel hearing –

- 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
- the hearing will meet the complainant and their witnesses in turn
- the chair will confirm with the complainant that they feel they have had a fair hearing
- the complainant and their witnesses will then leave
- the panel will meet with the headteacher or CEO and any witnesses to hear the school or Trust response to the complaint
- at each meeting the Chair will explain the timescales for all parties to hear from the panel
- the panel decides on the issues.

The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

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
- 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, where relevant, the person complained about and the school or the Trust with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 school days. Minutes taken at the panel hearing will be disseminated to all parties within 10 school days of such hearing taking place.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school or Aquila will take to resolve the complaint, regardless of whether they are upheld.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the school.

The complainant will receive the findings of the panel and the recommendations in writing. Where relevant, a copy of the findings and recommendations will be provided to the person complained about. A copy of the findings and recommendations of the panel will be kept by the school and by the Trust.

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.

Outcomes.

The outcomes of the panel hearing will be communicated by letter which reflects the agreed outcomes of the hearing and is signed by the panel chair.

The panel can:

1. dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
2. uphold the complaint in full or in part;
3. decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
4. recommend changes to systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

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

If the complainant believes the school / trust did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the ESFA after they have completed Stage 3.

The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Aquila. They will consider whether the Trust and/ or the school has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014**.**

The complainant can refer their complaint to the ESFA online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus**,** by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit

Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House

5 Quinton Road

Coventry

CV1 2WT

5. Repetitious, including serial and/or persistent complaints

Where a complainant tries to re-open the issue with the school after the complaints procedure has been fully exhausted and the school has done everything it reasonably can in response to the complaint, the Chair of Governors or Chair of Trustees (or other appropriate person in the case of a complaint about the Chair) will inform the complainant that the matter is closed.

If the complainant subsequently makes contact again about the same issue, the school can choose not to respond. The normal circumstance in which we will not respond is if (this list is not intended to be exhaustive):

- The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any)
- The complainant is contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time
- 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
- The complainant refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved
- The complainant refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure
- The complainant insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines the characteristics of the Independent Adjudicator defines the characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaints as: Complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific and/or 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 behaviour or language towards staff, governors, trustees or members is aggressive, abusive, offensive, discriminatory, or threatening or insulting personal comments are made about, or threats are made towards, staff,.

In the circumstances outlined above, we may:

- Inform the complainant that we consider their complaint to be vexatious or the manner in which they are pursuing their complaint to be unreasonable and why and ask them to desist
- Conduct the Complaints process on paper only i.e. no Hearing
- Refuse to consider the complaint any further and refer the complainant directly to Stage 4.

We may also 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 number of contacts or refusing the complainant access to the academy's premises.

Where the complainant's behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, governors, trustees or members 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.

Once the school has decided that it is appropriate to stop responding, the complainant will be informed in writing, either by letter or email and the complainant will be referred to Stage 4.

NB The school will take steps to ensure when making this decision that complainants making any new complaint are heard.

Complaint campaigns

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 response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

Barring from the Premises

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry to the school. Our school will, therefore, act to ensure the site remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of our community.

If a parent's behaviour is a cause for concern, the Headteacher can ask them to leave the premises. In serious cases, the Headteacher or the Trust can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on the premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the parent may wish to make. The school will always give the parent the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing. The decision to bar should then be reviewed by the Trust Chief Executive Officer (CEO), taking into account any representations made by the parent, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the parent should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place.

6. 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, and 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 such as a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requesting access to them) where it will be available for inspection on the school premises or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during an inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and record retention schedule.

Appendix 1 - Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the relevant person as described on p7 (either Headteacher / Clerk / CEO / designated governor) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Your name:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Pupil's name (if relevant):</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Address:
Postcode:
Day time telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Email address:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Stage reached in the complaints policy</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>The Complaints Form is to be completed by the complainant to outline the details of their complaint(s) and desired outcome(s),</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Please give details of your complaint. Please include as much information as possible about what specifically you are unhappy about and why

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

List of relevant documents enclosed with the complaint.

Declaration

The information included in this complaint form is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I agree to cooperate fully with the complaints procedures and acknowledge my ongoing obligation to treat the Academy and its staff in a reasonable manner at all times.

Signature:

Print name

Date:
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Action taken:
Date:

Appendix 2 - 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 CEO that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The Headteacher or CEO 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

(This could be the Headteacher or CEO / a designated governor or trustee or other staff member providing administrative support)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, Headteacher, CEO, Chair of Governors, Chair of Trust or the Clerk and 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 / Trust Board

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 / trustee 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.

There are several points which anyone sitting on a complaints panel needs to consider:

a) It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No member may sit on the panel if they have had prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make-up of the panel, due consideration will be given to ensure that it is a cross-section of representation and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.

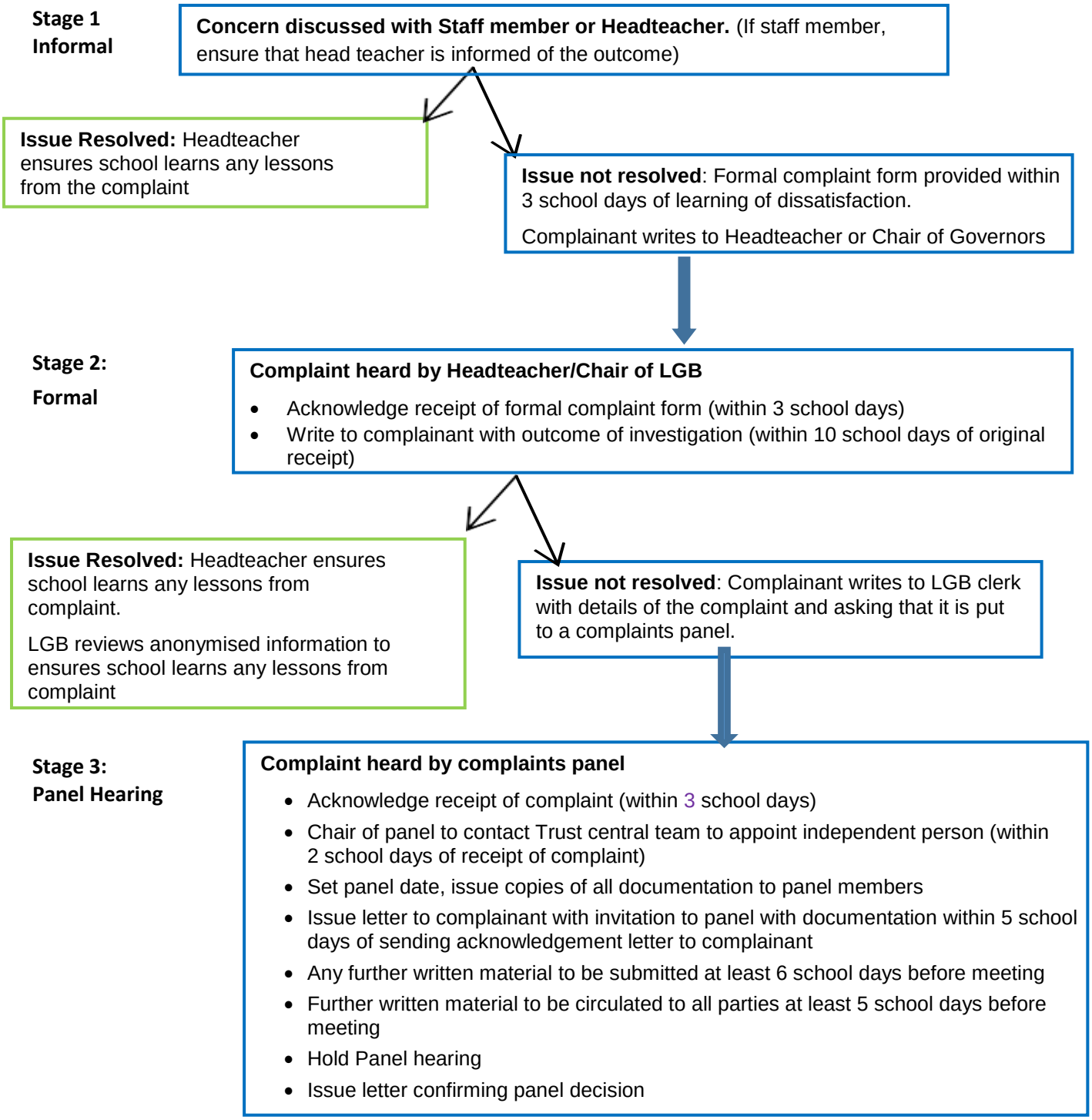
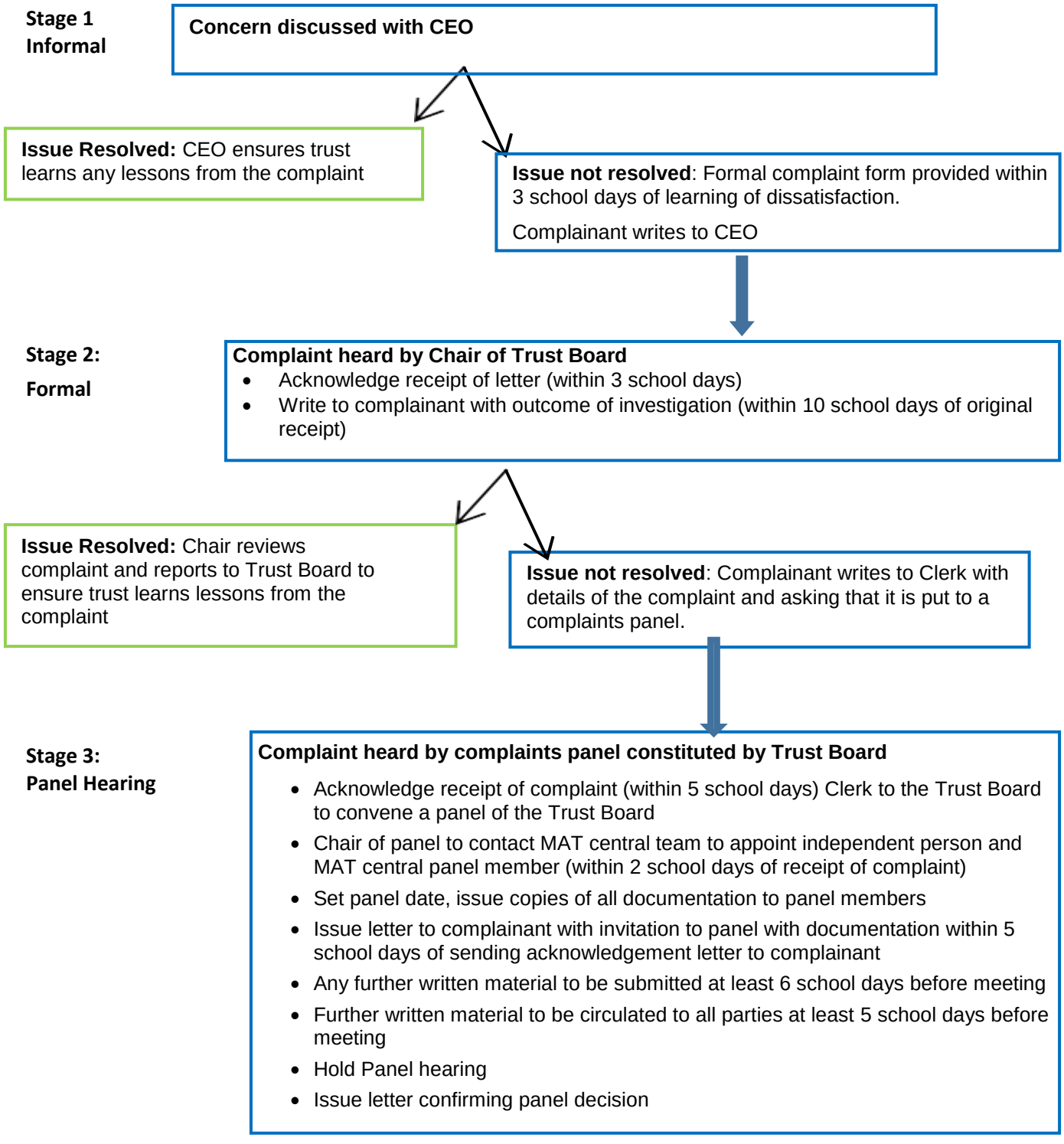
b) The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.

c) An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel Chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.

d) Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child's parent is the complainant, it would be helpful to give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child needs to attend.

e) The members sitting on the panel must be aware of this complaints procedure.

Appendix 3; Flow chart - Procedure for complaints about Schools



Appendix 3; Flow chart - Procedure for complaints about the Multi Academy Trust