Complaints Policy and Procedures

Approved by:	People Committee	**Date:** June 2026	
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1 Aims and application

1.1 The aims of the procedure are to deal with complaints and concerns:

- about a school, the school Trust ("Trust") or any individual connected with it by following the correct procedure;
- thoroughly; and
- in an open, honest, and fair manner.

1.2 This complaint procedure is based on the model DFE policy and is not limited to parents or carers of children who are registered at one of the schools within the Trust. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to an individual school within the Trust, or the Trust itself, about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Part 1 of this policy outlines how parents/carers of registered pupils currently attending 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. Complaints from registered pupils should be raised by their parents/carers.

1.3 This procedure does not apply to concerns and complaints relating to the matters listed in Annex 1.

1.4 Anonymous concerns or complaints will not normally be investigated under this procedure. The Headteacher or Chair of the Local Governing Board (LGB) of a school, or the Chief Executive Officer (as appropriate), will determine whether there are exceptional circumstances to justify conducting an investigation into the issues raised anonymously.

1.5 All staff will be made aware of this complaint procedure and are expected to review this policy regularly in order that they are familiar with our process of dealing with complaints and can be of assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.

1.6 In this procedure:

- 'complaint' means an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action;
- 'concern' means an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought;
- 'meeting' means an in person or virtual meeting (i.e. telephone or video conference where all parties can participate verbally), although virtual meetings will only be held if all parties have access to appropriate equipment to attend and are happy to do so;
- 'parent' means a parent, carer or anyone with legal responsibility for a child;
- 'School days' excludes weekends and school holidays and periods of partial or total school closure;
- 'Trust' means the school Trust (Synergy Multi-Academy Trust).
- stage 3 panel consists of either Trustees, external experts, LGB members, Senior Leaders, or combination thereof.

1.7 The timeframes referred to in this policy are our usual timeframes, and the school/Trust will seek to adhere to these timeframes where possible.

1.8 Reasonable adjustments will be made to this procedure where required to ensure that all complainants can access and complete this complaints procedure. For example, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint, or holding meetings in accessible locations.

2 Key principles

2.1 The Trust expects all complainants to make reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution.

2.2 The Trust encourages parents and others to approach the school with any concerns and refrain from airing concerns about the school and its staff on social media sites. Posting negative comments on social media/group chats can cause damage and upset and is often counter-productive to pupil education.

2.3 To investigate your complaint properly and fairly, we have implemented a staged approach. We anticipate that almost all complaints that arise will be resolved at Stage 1 or Stage 2 outlined below.

2.4 We expect our members of staff to be addressed in a respectful manner and for communication to always remain calm. The procedure under Part 3 will only be used on very rare occasions to deal with repetitious and/or vexatious complaints or complaints pursued in an otherwise unreasonable manner.

2.5 Concerns or complaints should be brought to our attention as soon as possible. Any matter raised more than 3 months after the incident being complained of (or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within 3 months of the last of these incidents) will not be considered unless the Headteacher / Chair of the LGB of a school accepts that there are good reasons to explain the delay or the complaint is about a particularly serious matter.

2.6 Where a complaint is received outside of term time, we will consider it to have been received on the first school day following the holiday period.

2.7 On rare occasions, a school or the Trust may receive complaints from several individuals relating to the same or similar issue. To deal with these complaints efficiently, the school/Trust will follow the procedure set out in Part 4.

2.8 If it becomes necessary to alter the time limits and deadlines set out within this procedure, you will be advised accordingly and given an explanation as to why this has been the case and provided with revised timescales. If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority safeguarding teams or tribunals/courts, 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. Where a complaint is raised but we do not have clarity from the complainant on the issues and/or desired outcomes, we will inform the complainant what information we need to progress the complaint and pause this procedure until reasonable clarity is achieved.

2.9 Complainants should not approach individual LGB members or Trustees to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis, and it may prevent them from considering complaints at later stages.

2.10 If a complainant commences legal action against the Trust in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether it would be appropriate to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

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

2.12 Complainants are expected to engage reasonably with the Trust's complaints procedure. This includes responding to correspondence, providing information necessary to progress the complaint, and participating in meetings (where appropriate) within the timescales set out in this procedure.

2.13 Where a complainant fails to engage with the process despite reasonable attempts by the Trust to make contact, the Trust reserves the right to conclude the complaint.

2.14 Before taking such a decision, the Trust will:

- write to the complainant to explain the impact of the lack of engagement;
- give a reasonable opportunity for the complainant to re-engage; and
- confirm in writing if the complaint is concluded as a result of continued non engagement.

If the complaint is concluded for this reason, the Trust will record the outcome and provide details of any relevant next steps available to the complainant.

3 Records of complaints

3.1 A record will be kept of all written formal complaints, including at what stage they were resolved and action taken by us because of those complaints regardless of whether they were upheld. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where:

- access is requested by the Secretary of State;
- disclosure is required during a school inspection;
- an individual has a legal right to access their own personal data contained within such documentation; or
- under other legal authority.

Part 1: Complaints procedure for parents Stage

1: Informal concerns

1.1 An informal concern can be raised in person/email or by telephone. Concerns may also be raised by a third party acting on behalf of a parent, if they have appropriate authority to do so. Most enquiries and concerns can be dealt with satisfactorily by the class teacher, the head of year or other members of staff without the need to resort to the formal procedure. We value informal meetings and discussions and encourage parents to approach staff with any concerns they may have and aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding.

1.2 It is always helpful if you can fully explain the nature of the concern and identify the outcome you are looking for. Where appropriate, you may be invited to an informal meeting with the member of staff most appropriate for dealing with that concern. The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure that you are clear on what action (if any) has been agreed.

1.3 Where it is deemed appropriate by the class teacher/head of year or member of staff managing the concern, verbal interactions with complainants will be followed up with a written summary to provide clarity on the content of the conversation (even if the complainant at that stage has not formally complained). If the complainant disagrees with the summary, they can raise this at stage 2/3.

1.4 If the matter is brought to the attention of the Headteacher, they may decide to deal with your concerns directly at this stage. If the concerns are about the Headteacher, these should be referred directly to the Clerk of the LGB under Stage 2.

1.5 The school will respect the views of a parent who indicates that they would have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff. In this case, the Headteacher will refer the parent to another designated member of staff. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved in the circumstances leading to the concern feels too compromised to deal with it, the Headteacher may consider referring the parent to another member of staff. The members of staff may be more senior, but this is not essential.

1.6 Staff members should log all informal concerns in accordance with agreed internal procedures and inform the Headteacher of any serious concerns.

1.7 There is no suggested timescale for resolution at this stage given the importance of dialogue through informal discussion, although it would be expected that most issues will be resolved within 15 school days. Where no satisfactory solution has been found, you will be advised that if you wish your concerns to be considered further, you should write to the Headteacher under Stage 2 of this procedure within 15 school days.

Stage 2: Formal written complaints

2.1 If your concerns are not resolved under Stage 1, you are entitled to put your complaint in writing and send this to the Headteacher of the relevant school. You must use the complaints form at annex 2 – this is also available to download from the school/trust website and can be typed into. A complaint will not be deemed as "received" until this form is completed.

2.2 It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions that you would like us to take to resolve your complaint using the complaint form. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you. In all cases your written complaint must include:

- the nature of the complaint;
- details of how the matter has been dealt with so far;
- the names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events and copies of all relevant documents; and
- a clear statement of the actions that you would like us to take to resolve your complaint.

2.3 Your complaint will normally be acknowledged in writing within five school days of receipt. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the Trust's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This will normally be within 15 school days of receipt.

2.4 If appropriate, the Headteacher (or someone appointed by them) will (in all but the most exceptional circumstances) invite you to a meeting to clarify your complaints and to explore possible resolutions. If you accept that invitation, you may be accompanied by one other person, such as a friend, relative or interpreter, to assist you. Where possible, this meeting will take place within 10 school days of receipt of the written complaint.

2.5 If necessary, witnesses will be interviewed and statements taken from those involved. If the complaint centers on a pupil, the pupil will usually be interviewed. Pupils will normally be interviewed with their parent present, but if this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious or urgent complaint or if the pupil has specifically said that they would prefer that their parents were not involved, another member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable will be present. If the matter includes a complaint relating to a member of staff, the member of staff will have the opportunity to respond to the complaint.

2.6 Once the relevant facts have been established as far as possible, you will be provided with a written response to the complaint, including an explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. This will normally include what action will be taken to resolve the complaint (if any). You will be advised that if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint, you may request that your complaint be heard by the stage 3 panel under Stage 3 of this procedure.

2.7 If in the early stages of the investigation, the Headteacher considers that the complaint is best dealt with immediately at Stage 3, it will be passed to the Chair of the LGB, and you will be informed of this action without delay.

2.8 The Trust may engage an independent, external person to carry out the investigation into the Stage 2 complaint or to review the investigation and response at Stage 2. This may be appropriate where the complaint is particularly complex or involves legal issues.

Q. What if the complaint is about the Headteacher or the Headteacher has already considered your complaint under Stage 1?

In these cases, your complaint should be sent to the Clerk of the LGB (Local Governing Board) at the school's address who will arrange for the Chair or another member of the LGB to carry out the Stage 2 procedure as appropriate.

Q. What if the complaint is about a member of the Local Governing Board (LGB)?

Complaints about the Chair of the LGB or any individual LGB member should be addressed to the Clerk of the LGB via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential. The Clerk will arrange for another LGB member or Trustee (as applicable) to investigate the concerns in accordance with Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the Clerk of the LGB or the LGB as a whole, you should send your complaint to the Clerk of the Trustees c/o clerk@synergymat.co.uk who will then determine the most appropriate action with regards to Stage 2 and Stage 3.

Q. What if the complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer or other Trust officer

If the complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer or other officer of the Trust, or if they have been closely involved at Stage 1, your complaint should be sent to the Clerk of the Trustees c/o clerk@synergymat.co.ukwho will arrange for a Trustee to carry out all the Stage 2 procedures.

Q. What if the complaint is about a Trustee, Clerk of the Trustees or a member of the Trust?

If the complaint is about a Trustee or member of the Trust, you should contact the Clerk of the Trustees at clerk@synergymat.co.uk who will arrange for another Trustee to investigate the concerns in accordance with Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the Clerk of the Trustees, your complaint should be sent to hr@synergymat.co.uk

If your complaint is about the Trust board as a whole, you should send your complaint to the Clerk of the Trustees at clerk@synergymat.co.uk who will arrange for the matter to be considered by the Chair of Trustees, thereby giving the Chair the opportunity to clarify and explain the matter after which, if the complainant is not satisfied, the clerk will arrange for the matter to be escalated to the CEO at stage 2. Stage 3 will be heard by the appropriate senior leaders and an independent panel member.

Please be aware that where your complaint relates to an employee a copy of the complaint may be shared with them in order to investigate the issues raised.

Stage 3: Referral to the Stage 3 Panel

3.2 If you are dissatisfied with the decision under Stage 2, you may request that a Stage 3 Panel be convened to consider your complaint. This is not a re-run of the original complaint, rather a consideration of the validity of the stage 2 outcome. The Stage 3 Panel will principally consider how the complaint was handled at the previous stages but has discretion to review other aspects of the complaint as it sees fit. The Stage 3 Panel will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

3.3 To request a hearing before the Stage 3 Panel, you should write to the Clerk of the Trustees ("**Clerk**") at clerk@synergymat.co.uk within 15 school days of receiving notice of the outcome of Stage 2. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. You should ensure that you provide copies of all relevant documents and state all the grounds for your complaint and the outcome that you are looking for.

3.4 Your written request will be acknowledged within five school days of receipt.

3.5 The Clerk will arrange for a Stage 3 Panel to be convened, made up of at least three people, including:

- Trustees or members of a LGB with no prior involvement in the matter; and,
- Senior leaders from the Trust or professional experts from outside of the Trust
- One person who is independent of the management and running of the school that is the subject of the complaint and the Trust. (This can be a member of an LGB of another school within the Trust, provided they have no conflict or prior knowledge of the complaint.)
- An individual from another Trust may be appointed as the independent panel member.

Should a school not have an LGB, a panel will be convened from others across the Trust, and the Clerk shall appoint one of the panel members to be Chair of the panel.

3.6 Every effort will be made to enable the hearing to take place within 20 school days of the receipt of your request. The Clerk will offer 3 alternative dates for a hearing, considering any pre-commitments and holidays, and it is expected that the complainant will make arrangements to be able to attend on their preferred date. As soon as reasonably practicable and in any event at least five school days before the hearing, you will be sent written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing, together with brief details of the panel members who will be present. Fair consideration will be given to any bona fide objection to a particular member of the panel. You will also be informed of the name of the person who will be presenting the case on behalf of the Trust (referred to in this policy as the 'Trust representative'). This may be the person who is the subject of the complaint, the person who undertook the investigation at Stage 2 and/or another person with sufficient knowledge of the matter. The Trust may decide to appoint an independent person to review the findings from stage 2 and present these to the panel.

3.7 If, despite best efforts, it is not possible to find a mutually convenient date and time for a hearing within a reasonable timeframe, the Clerk may, in consultation with the panel Chair, determine that the hearing proceeds on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

3.8 You have the right to be accompanied to the hearing by a friend, relative or interpreter. You should notify the Clerk in advance if you intend to bring anyone to the hearing. We do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the Stage 3 Panel meeting save in respect of matters of law and procedure. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend. The Panel itself may take legal advice and/or be supported by a legal advisor at the hearing on matters of law and procedure.

3.9 Stage 3 Panel meetings can be completed either in person or using video conferencing software or a blend of both (hybrid). Complainants may request or express a preference for one particular format, but the final decision for the format will be the Chair of the panel.

3.10 A copy of the complaint and any other documents provided by you in support of your complaint, or by the school representative in defence of the complaint, will be provided to the Stage 3 Panel as soon as practicable upon receipt. Relevant copies of these documents shall also be provided to you or school representative (as applicable) at least 3 school days before the hearing. The Panel reserves the right not to consider any documentation presented by either party less than 3 school days prior to the hearing.

The panel is under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account. The Panel will not normally accept recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

3.11 The hearing will be conducted to ensure that each party has the opportunity to address the Stage 3 Panel. The Clerk will ensure that sufficient notes are taken to record an accurate reflection of the points considered and any decisions taken or actions agreed. Electronic recordings of the hearing will not normally be permitted and, in any event, would require the consent of all those present.

3.12 Unless otherwise stated, the procedure for the Stage 3 hearing would normally be as follows:

- the parent and school representative will enter the hearing together;
- the Chair of the Panel will introduce the panel members and outline the process;
- the parent will explain the complaint;
- the school representative and panel members will question the parent;
- the school representative will explain the school/Trust's actions;
- the parent and the panel members will question the school representative;
- the parent will sum up their complaint;
- the school representative will sum up the school/Trust's actions;
- the Chair of the Panel will explain that both parties will normally hear from the panel within five school days;
- both parties will leave together while the panel decides;
- the Clerk, and any legal advisor assisting the panel (if applicable), will stay to assist the panel with its decision making.

3.13 The Clerk and or Stage 3 Panel reserves the right to modify the above procedure at their sole discretion, for example requiring the parent and the school representative to present their complaint/actions separately to the panel in the absence of the other party.

3.14 If the complainant has not arrived by the start of the Stage 3 Panel meeting, the Clerk will attempt to contact the complainant via telephone to ascertain if they are delayed, have chosen not to attend, or wish to withdraw their complaint. If the Clerk is unable to speak with the complainant, or if the complainant confirms that they have chosen not to attend, the hearing will proceed in the complainant's absence 30 minutes after the scheduled start time. Findings and recommendations will be based on the written submissions previously provided by both parties.

3.15 A Stage 3 Panel may be adjourned if the panel require further evidence or in exceptional circumstances (for example, if clarification sought by the panel is essential to the proceedings). The adjourned date must be as soon as possible.

3.16 After the hearing, the Stage 3 Panel will consider their decision and inform you and, where relevant, the person complained about of their decision, normally in writing within five school days. The letter will set out the decision of the panel together with the reasons underpinning that decision. The panel can (by a majority if necessary):

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school or Trust systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

Stage 4: Referral of complaint to the Department for Education

4.1 If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the Stage 3 Panel, you are entitled to refer your complaint to the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE will only investigate whether the complaint was handled properly and in accordance with education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

4.2 At the time of writing this procedure, details about the DfE complaints form are available at:

How DfE handles complaints about academies - GOV.UK

Or you can write to the DfE at the following address:

Department for Education
School complaints compliance unity
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Part 2: Concerns or complaints from other persons

Part 1 of this complaints policy applies only to complaints made by parents or carers of current registered pupils of the Trust. However, the Trust wishes to work closely with other members of the local community and will deal with their concerns and complaints as follows:

1 **Stage 1 -** a concern regarding a school 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 five school days. If a longer period is required, you will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation.

2 **Stage 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 school to investigate. The Headteacher may delegate the task of investigation and/or responding to the complaint to a member of SLT or may escalate the complaint straight to Stage 3. A formal response to the complaint will usually be provided within 15 school days of receipt of the letter of complaint although if a longer period is required to respond, you will be kept updated.

3 **Stage 3** - if you are not satisfied with the response at Stage 2, you may request a review by writing to the Clerk of the Local Governing Board (LGB) of the school. You should write to the Clerk of the LGB within 15 school days of receipt of the letter at Stage 2. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. The Clerk of the LGB will usually arrange for the Chair of the LGB or another LGB member as appropriate to consider the complaint alone or may refer the matter to the Clerk of the Trustees to convene a Stage 3 Panel on the same terms as set out in Part 1 of this complaints policy. The decision at this stage will usually be sent to you within 15 school days of receipt of the request for a review or within five school days of the panel hearing (as applicable).

4 **Stage 4** - if you are dissatisfied with the decision of the Stage 3 Panel, you are entitled to refer your complaint to the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE will only investigate the complaint in limited circumstances.

Concerns or complaints regarding the Headteacher or the Trust should be referred direct to the Clerk of the Trustees clerk@synergymat.co.ukwho will arrange for the stages above to be considered by an appropriate person.

Part 3: Repetitious and vexatious complaints and complaints pursued in an otherwise unreasonable manner

There are rare circumstances where we will deviate from the Complaints Procedure set out in Parts 1 and 2. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

1 Repetitious, including serial and/or persistent, complaints

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 and we have:

- taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns; and
- given the complainant a clear statement of our position and their options,

We will write to the complainant to advise that the complaints procedure has been exhausted and that we will not be responding to any further correspondence in relation to these matters. The complainant will be referred to Stage 4.

2 Vexatious complaints

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines the characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaint as:

- complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific 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; and
- demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- refusal to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refusal to co-operate with the complaints investigation process;
- refusal to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure;
- insistence on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introducing trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on;
- raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- seeking an unrealistic outcome, such as the inappropriate dismissal of staff;
- making 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 providing falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information on social media/group chats or other public forums.

3 Complaints pursued in an otherwise unreasonable manner

Where the complainant's behaviour or language towards staff, Local Governing Board members, 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 in (2) and (3) 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 Stage 3 Panel on the papers only i.e. not hold a 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 school, e.g. requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters/emails only), requiring contact to take place with a named person only, restricting telephone calls to specified days and times or number of contacts or banning the complainant from the school's premises in line with our Code of Conduct for Parents & Carers.

Where the complainant's behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, Local Governing Board members, 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.

Part 4: Complaint campaigns

For the purposes of this policy, a complaint campaign is defined as a complaint from three or more separate individuals (whether or not connected with the school) which are all based on the same subject.

Depending on the subject in question, we may deviate from the procedure set out in this policy and instead:

- send a template response to all complainants; and/or
- publish a single response on the school's website (as applicable).

Annex 1

Matters excluded from the scope of this policy

Excluded Matters	**Signposting**
Admissions	The process for challenging admissions decisions is set out in our admissions policy in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.
Child protection matters	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 or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
Data protection matters	Complaints about data protection matters are handled under our data protection policy and in accordance with relevant guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the ICO directly, but the ICO will usually expect you to have raised your concerns with our Data Protection Officer in the first instance.
Exclusions	The process for challenging exclusions decisions is set out in the DfE's statutory guidance and information can be found at: School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Freedom of information matters	Complaints about our compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 are handled under our freedom of information policy and in accordance with relevant guidance from the ICO. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the ICO directly, but the ICO will usually expect you to have raised your concerns with us in the first instance.
Local Governing Board member and Trustee grievances	Complaints from Trustees and local school governing board's will be dealt with by the Chair of Trustees under the Trust's internal governance procedures. This does not preclude Trustees and local governing board members from raising complaints in their capacity as a parent.
National Curriculum content	Please contact the Department for Education at www.education.gov.uk/contactus
School re-organisation proposals	Where concerns are not adequately addressed by the school, complaints can be raised direct with the Department for Education.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.

Staff conduct	Certain complaints about staff may need to be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any informal or formal 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 (SEN)	Concerns about statutory assessments of special educational needs should be raised directly with the local authority.
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 whistleblowers 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 should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of the complaint

Annex 2

Complaints Form (An electronic form on the school website is available to type directly into)

Your name:
Pupil's name:
Your relationship to pupil:
Your address and postcode:
Your daytime telephone number:
Your evening telephone number:
Your email address:
Your complaint is: (if you have more than one complaint, please number these)

What action have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint(s) in accordance with Stage 1 of the school's complaints procedure? (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)
What would you like as an outcome from your complaint(s)?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, give details here:

Your signature…… Date ……

All functions of the complaints procedure must adhere to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Please complete and return to the school office in a sealed envelope addressed to the Headteacher, or this form can be emailed to the relevant school office / Headteacher.

Annex 3

Roles and Responsibilities

1. The role of the Clerk of the Trustees or other appointed clerk (the "clerk")

The Clerk of the Trustees is the contact point for the complainant and the Stage 3 Panel, and should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure;
- liaise with staff, Headteacher, the Chief Executive Officer, Director of People, Chair of the Local Governing Board of a school and Chair of the Trustee board (as applicable) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure;
- be mindful of the timescales to respond to complaints;
- 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);
- ensure that the Stage 3 Panel has access to legal advice, where appropriate;
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, taking reasonable steps to find a date that is convenient to all parties 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;
- minute the meeting;
- notify all parties of the Stage 3 Panel decision;
- assist the school/Trust in issuing a summary letter to the complainant.

2. The role of the Headteacher (or other party investigating as applicable in accordance with the procedure) at Stage 2

- to ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure;
- to ensure that the correct procedure has been followed;
- to ensure that an appropriate & proportionate investigation is carried out, and a report compiled;
- to meet the complainant, if appropriate;
- if the complaint is being referred to Stage 3, notify the Clerk of the Trustees to arrange the Panel Hearing.

3. The role of the Chair of the Stage 3 Panel

The Chair of the Stage 3 Panel has a key role, ensuring that:

- 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;
- the remit of the Stage 3 Panel is explained to the complainant;
- the written material of the complaint 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);
- key findings of fact are made, and that any issues not previously mentioned in writing should not be raised at the meeting and, if they are mentioned at the meeting, these should not be noted or considered by the Stage 3 Panel;
- both the complainant and the school/Trust 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 Stage 3 Panel is open-minded, acts independently and no panel member has an external interest in the outcome or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- the meeting is minuted.

Annex 4

Summary of Complaints Procedure for Parents & Carers (Part 1)

Stage 1: **Informal concerns**	Parent brings complaint to attention of member of staff
	Issue to be resolved (guide: within 15 school days)
	Where no satisfactory solution has been found, parent to be advised that they should proceed to Stage 2
Stage 2: **Formal Written Complaint**	Parent to put complaint in writing using Complaint Form within 15 school days
	Complaint to be acknowledged within five school days
	Meeting with parents within 10 school days (where appropriate)
	Response to the complaint sent within 15 school days
Stage 3: **Referral to Stage 3 Panel**	Parent to request hearing within 15 school days of receiving notice of the outcome of Stage 2
	Request to be acknowledged within five school days
	Hearing to take place within 20 school days of receipt of request
	Notification of date, time and place of the hearing and details of the panel members present sent at least five school days before the hearing
	School representative and parents to submit evidence in support of their case to Clerk of the Trustees at least 3 school days before the hearing
	Stage 3 Panel decision sent not more than five school days after the hearing
Stage 4: **Referral of complaint to Department for Education (DfE)**	Referral to the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE will only investigate the complaint in limited circumstances. For more information on the DfE's remit in relation to academy complaints, visit: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy/compl ain-about-an-academy