



GST

Schools of Character
Making Great Leaders

COMPLAINTS POLICY



Document Control

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The Great Schools Trust
Complaints Policy

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Introduction

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the Great Schools Trust (GST). Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to the Trust or one of its academies about any provision of facilities or services that it provides. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

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 this complaint's procedure. GST and its academies 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 Principal will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Principal 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.

GST understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the Principal will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this Complaint's Procedure.

How to Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint

An informal 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.

Where an individual has a concern regarding a member of staff, it should, in most cases be raised with that member of staff directly. This should generally enable a concern to be resolved at the earliest possible stage and avoid any need for it to escalate into a formal complaint. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual Trustees/Academy 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 2/3 of the procedure.

Formal complaints against school staff (except the Principal) should be made in the first instance, in writing to the Principal. Correspondence should be marked as private and confidential and clearly marked for the attention of the Principal.

Formal complaints that involve or are about the Principal should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mr Shane Ierston, via the Director of Governance, Michelle Jones, m.jones@greatschoolstrust.com. Again, correspondence should be marked as private and confidential.

Complaints about the CEO/Chief Operations and Strategic Officer (COSO), any individual Trustee/Academy Governor or the whole Trust Board/Academy Council should be made in writing to the Director of Governance, Michelle Jones, m.jones@greatschoolstrust.com. All correspondence should be marked as private and confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact a school office. You can also ask third party organisations 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.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Principal, CEO or Chair of Trustees, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

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 consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply. Complaints made outside of term time will be acknowledged on the first school day after the holiday period.

Unreasonable Conduct by a Complainant

The Trust/Academy 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 the Trust/Academy. 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.

Complainants should limit the number of communications with the Trust/Academy while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email, or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

GST state that complainants (and/or anyone acting on their behalf) may be deemed by the Principal/CEO (or) COSO and / or the Chair of the Academy Council/Board to be unreasonable if they have behaved in any of the following ways (this list is not exhaustive):

- The complainant makes such frequent contact with the Academy that objective consideration of a “live” complaint is hindered
- The complainant makes a string of further complaints about a “live” investigation or changes aspect of the complaint, during the investigation
- The complainant exhausts all stages of the Academy’s complaints procedure but continues to pursue the same matter
- The complainant seeks an unrealistic outcome and persists in doing so despite being advised that this is the case
- The complainant’s communications are:
 - Malicious, abusive, or aggressive
 - Use threats, intimidation, or violence

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- Use offensive, abusive, or discriminatory language
 - Known by them to be false and/or contain falsified information
 - Publish unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers
 - The complainant makes insulting personal comments about, or threats towards, staff
 - The complainant makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seek to have them replaced
 - The complainant refuses to articulate their complaint or specify their 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 the complaint's procedure (please see page 7 for a list of other agencies)
 - The complainant 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.
 - The complainant insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or within good practice
 - The complainant introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
 - The complainant raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
 - The complainant changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds (new complaints raised will be referred to stage 1 of this procedure)
 - The complainant knowingly provides falsified information
 - The complainant publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

In these examples' "contact" may be in person, in writing, or by telephone or SMS text.

Whenever possible, the Principal/Complaints Coordinator (or CEO, COSO, Chair of the Academy Council/Board) will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an "unreasonable" marking to their communications.

Where a complainant continues to behave in an unacceptable fashion the Principal/Complaints Coordinator (or CEO, COSO, Chair of the Academy Council/Board) will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. The Trust/Academy may decide to deal with such complaints in one or more of the following ways, for example:

- a) Try to agree with the complainant a code of behaviour for the parties involved if the Trust/Academy is to continue processing the complaint
- b) To require contact to take place with a named officer only
- c) To restrict telephone calls to specified days and times
- d) To restrict contact with the complainant to one form of contact only
- e) To limit the number of times contact can be made per term

If this behaviour continues then the Principal/Complaints Coordinator (or CEO, COSO, Chair of the Academy Council/Board) may authorise staff to terminate contact with the complainant (except in matters directly related to the education and welfare of their child) and they may discontinue any further investigation being carried out. The complainant will already have been given a clear statement of the Trusts/Academy's position and have taken all

reasonable steps to address the complainant’s needs. Any further written contact from the complainant will be read and placed on file. Telephone calls relating to the complaint will be terminated and logged on the record. The Trust/Academy should usually review this position after 6 months.

Barring from the Academy Premises

If a parent’s behaviour is a cause for concern, the Trust/Academy can ask them to leave the premises. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the police may be informed.

The Trust/Academy can notify a parent, in writing, that their implied licence to be on the premises has been temporarily revoked; however, the parent will be able to formally express their views on the decision to bar, in writing.

The decision to bar will be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the parent, and will either be confirmed or lifted. If the decision to bar is confirmed, the parent will be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place, which in some cases may be an unlimited period of time.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by GST and its academies, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below:

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs School re-organisation proposals 	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Birmingham City Council (specifically SENAR for statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>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)</p> <p>MASH 0121 303 1888</p> <p>LADO 0121 675 1669</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusions can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school’s complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school’s complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school’s internal grievance procedures.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>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.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Curriculum – content <i>(parents can only withdraw their children from some aspects of religious education)</i> 	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>

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

Resolving complaints

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

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

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

The Procedure

Stage 1- Informal Resolution

Where an individual has a concern regarding a member of staff, it should in most cases be raised with that member of staff directly. This should generally enable a concern to be resolved at the earliest possible stage and avoid any need for it to escalate into a formal complaint.

Members of staff dealing with such concerns should keep a written record of the concern and the steps taken to deal with it and inform the Principal/Complaints Coordinator, who will in turn record the concern. This is particularly important where the concern is raised (and resolved) verbally. Staff members may wish to use the record template at Annex 2. If minutes are taken of conversations/meetings with the complainants, they should be checked for accuracy with all parties involved as soon after the conversation/meeting as possible.

If an acceptable resolution is not reached, the member of staff should direct the individual to this procedure.

The Trust does recognise that there may be circumstances in which:

- It would be difficult for a particular complainant to discuss a complaint with a particular member of staff
- The member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with the complaint

In these cases, the complaint should be directed to the Principal/Complaints Co-ordinator, who can refer the complainant to another staff member (or, in the case of a complaint concerning the Complaints Co-ordinator, the CEO for informal resolution. If the concern is about the CEO, the complaint should be referred to the Chair of Trustees, via Michelle Jones, the Director of Governance (m.jones@greatschoolstrust.com). Such alternative members of staff may be more senior, however do not have to be, as they are simply required to consider the complaint objectively and impartially.

Where a complaint about a school or a school member of staff is received, which does not appear to have explored this stage of the procedure (such as where the first approach is made to the Principal, CEO/COSO, Academy Governor or Trustee) and which does not indicate that there is good reason (as indicated above) why this has not been done, the usual next step would be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about this procedure.

Stage 2- Formal Stage

Formal complaints must be made to the Principal/Complaints Coordinator (unless they are about the Principal). Formal complaints should be submitted in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form (annex 1)). If the complaint is made verbally, the Principal/Complaints Coordinator may ask the complainant to submit their complaint in writing.

The Principal/Complaints Coordinator will record the date that the complaint is received and will **acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days**. Within this response, the Principal/Complaints Coordinator will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. They can also consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The Principal/Complaints Coordinator 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 Principal/Complaints Coordinator (or 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 (annex 2- record template)

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Principal/Complaints Coordinator will provide a formal written response to the complainant within 20 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the Principal/Complaints Coordinator is unable to meet this deadline, they 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 Trust/Academy will take to resolve the complaint.

The Principal/Complaints Coordinator 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 Principal/Complaints Coordinator, the complainant should submit their complaint, in writing to the CEO, via Michelle.

If the complaint is about the CEO/COSO or a member of the Trust Board/Academy Council (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled Trustee/Academy Governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

Complaints about the Principal/Complaints Coordinator, the CEO/COSO or a member of the Trust Board/Academy Council (including the Chair or Vice-Chair) must be made to Michelle Jones, via email m.jones@greatschoolstrust.com. Alternatively, if the complainant does not have access to an email account they can seek assistance from the Office Manager at any of the Academy sites.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Trust Board/Academy Council or
- the majority of the Trust Board/Academy Council

Stage 2 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the Trust Board. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage 3- Appeal

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 meeting with the Trust Boards Complaints Panel, which will be formed of two GST Trustees/Governors and one person who is independent of the management and running of the Trust. This cannot be a member of trust staff or a Trustee but could be an Academy Governor from another school within the Trust. If not enough impartial Trustees/Governors are available, the Trust will seek Panel members from other schools or the local authority. The Trust will make sure the Panel members sourced are suitably skilled and can demonstrate that they are independent and impartial. This is the final stage of the Complaint's Procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to Michelle Jones, via email m.jones@greatschoolstrust.com or in writing marked private and confidential for the attention of Michelle Jones to any of the Office Managers at GST Academies, within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response.

Michelle will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

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

Michelle will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, they will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

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

The Complaints Panel will have had no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as Chair of the Panel (this should be a GST Trustee/Governor). If there are fewer than three GST Trustees/Academy Governors available, Michelle will source any additional, independent Trustees/Governors through another local school or through the LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the Panel. Alternatively, an entirely independent Panel may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 3. This is only an option if GST representation cannot be made.

The Panel will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not allow either party to bring legal representatives to the Panel meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a school 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 complaint's 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, Michelle will:

- confirm and notify the Panel and the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, 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 Panel at least 5 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 Panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The Panel 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 consider the complaint and all the evidence presented.

The Panel's decision will usually be reached on the basis of the documentary evidence available, although the Panel may adjourn the hearing, if necessary, to conduct further investigation. The Panel's role is not to re-investigate the case, but to review the steps taken to date.

The Panel 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 Panel will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the Trust/Academies systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

The Chair of the Panel will provide the complainant and Trust/Academy with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 school days of a decision being reached. A copy of the findings and recommendations may also be provided to the person complained about where relevant.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the Trust or its Academy.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Trust Board or
- the majority of the Trust Board

Stage 3 will be heard by a Panel of independent Trustees/Governors.

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 Trust/Academy will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

A copy of the findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Principal.

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 (Member of the HR Team or other adequately trained person)

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 Principal or complaints Panel that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems

The Principal or Complaints Panel 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 Principal / designated member of staff or Trustee/Representative)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, Principal, Chair of Trust Board/Academy Committee, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the Complaint's 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 detailed records

Governance Professional to the Trust Board

The Governance Professional is the contact point for the complainant and the Panel 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 Panel's decision

Panel Chair

The Chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- Both parties are asked (via the Governance Professional) 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 Panel 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 Panel is open-minded and acts independently
- No member of the Panel 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)

Panel Member

Panel members should be aware that:

- The meeting must be independent and impartial and should be seen to be so. No Trustee/Governor may sit on the Panel 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 Panel 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 Panel 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 Panel

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 Panel considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.
- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

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 the school.

This policy also complies with our Funding Agreement and Articles of Association which can be found on our website www.greatschoolstrust.org.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the Trust or its academies 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 Department for Education after they have completed Stage 3.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the GST or its academies. They will consider whether GST or its academies has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at:

www.education.gov.uk/contactus by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Equality Impact Assessment

Under the Equality Act 2010 we have a duty not to discriminate against people on the basis of their age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil and it helps to promote equality at this school.

Race Disparity Audit

We acknowledge the findings of the Race Disparity Audit that clearly shows how people of different ethnicities are treated across the public services of health, education, employment and the criminal justice system.

The educational section of the audit that covers: differences by region; attainment and economic disadvantage; exclusions and abuse; and destinations, has a significant importance for the strategic planning of this school.

Who is Responsible for this Policy?

The Trust has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework or Trust framework. The Trust has delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy to Executive Leaders, the Principal of each secondary school and academy personnel.

The Local Academy Council and Senior Leadership Team at each trust secondary school has a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all members of staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout all Trust schools. The Trust will monitor the operation and effectiveness of arrangements referred to in this policy at each school.

This policy and procedure will be reviewed annually or more regularly in the light of any significant new developments or in response to changes in guidance.

A statement of the policy's effectiveness and the necessary recommendations for improvement will be presented to the Local Academy Council and/or the Trust Board for further discussion and endorsement if required.

Summary of Changes in this Version

Page Number	Paragraph Number	Information

Annex 1

Complaint Form

Your name:
Student's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the student (if relevant):
Address:
Postcode:
Day time telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

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

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Annex 2

Record keeping template for staff

Complete in as much detail as necessary and file accordingly. *(You may need to complete a separate form for different people you speak to or for different parts of your investigation)*

Your name:	
Complaint is relating to? <i>(school, staff member, trust)</i>	
Complainants Name:	
Date Complaint received:	
How complaint was received: <i>(Format)</i>	
Pupil name (if relevant):	
Details of complaint:	
<i>(Or attach copy of original complaint if made in writing)</i>	
Actions- A full investigation may need to take place. <i>What have you done? Who have you spoken to? What was said? Do you need witness statements? Include dates and times of your actions and provide a detailed account. Minute any meetings you may have and ensure that a record is kept centrally.</i>	
<i>Continue on a separate sheet if necessary</i>	
Outcome:	
Next Steps:	
Date complete:	