

Complaints Policy

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1. Introduction

This document sets the way in which the Inclusive Multi Academy Trust handles concerns and complaints. It is based on the Hertfordshire County Council model procedures for dealing with school based complaints.

Each day this school makes many decisions and tries hard to do the best for all the children.

Your comments - either positive or negative - are helpful for future planning.

You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of this school, though not actually make a complaint - you just want to get something 'off your chest'.

If you are dissatisfied about the way your child is being treated, or any actions or lack of action by us, please feel free to contact us using the details listed above.

2. This policy may be used by:

- a parent whose child attends or who has recently left an Inclusive Multi Academy Trust school
- members of the public
- governors or trustees where the school's Disciplinary Procedures are not appropriate
- employees of the Trust either regarding a Governor acting in a personal capacity, or against the action/decision of the Governing Body

3. Delegation of Responsibilities

- The Inclusive Multi Academy Trust has delegated responsibility for the operation and management of the school complaints procedure to the Headteacher in each school.
- Where the complaint relates to a school's Headteacher; the Chair of Governors assumes responsibility.
- Where the complaint relates to a Governor, the Chair of the Local Governing Committee assumes responsibility
- Where the complaint relates to the Executive Headteacher or Trustee, the Chair of the Board of Trustees assumes responsibility.
- Where the complaint relates to the Chair of the Local Governing Committee, the Chair of the Board of Trustees assumes responsibility.

4. Our aims

- Your complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.
- Your complaint will be looked into thoroughly and fairly.
- If your complaint is urgent we will deal with it more quickly.
- We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage.
- You will get an apology if we have made a mistake.
- You will be told what we are going to do to put things right.
- You will get a full and clear written reply to formal complaints within 28 school days (5½ weeks).

5. How to make a complaint

In the first instance – informal stage

If you have a concern about anything we do, or if you wish to make a complaint, you can do this by telephone, in person or in writing (by letter or email). We hope that most complaints can be settled quickly and informally, either by putting matters right or by giving you an explanation. If there is something you are not happy about, or you don't understand why we are doing something in a particular way, please come in and discuss it with the class teacher or another appropriate member of staff, such as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) if it is about Special Needs.

We know that it can feel uncomfortable to question or challenge something, but if you don't tell us what is worrying you we cannot explain what we are doing or try to put it right. If the member of staff you speak to in the first instance is unable to attempt to resolve the matter, you should make an appointment with the Headteacher. You should be able to sort out your worries but sometimes this is not possible. In this case there is a next step.

First - formal stage

Request a meeting with the Headteacher (or their Trust counterparts – see delegation of authority) who will investigate your complaint and aim to inform you of the outcome within 10 school days (2 weeks).

If your first contact is with individual Governors, they will advise you to take up your concerns with the appropriate member of staff or Headteacher. A Governor should not be made aware of a potential complaint as they may be required to sit on a Panel in the event of a formal hearing (Stage Two) and should be impartial.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should write to the Chair of Governors. If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) you might find it helpful to talk to our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) or your child's named Special Needs Officer at the Local Authority. The SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS – formerly Parent Partnership) may also be able to help you.

Second - formal stage

If you remain dissatisfied following Stage 1 and wish to take your complaint further, you will be asked to complete a form or write a letter addressed to the Chair of Governors (or their Trust counterparts – see delegation of authority). In the letter you should:

- Make it clear why you are complaining.
- Say who you have spoken to already.
- Explain what you want to happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair of Governors will arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated under the arrangements approved by the Governing Body. This should involve a Panel of Governors at a hearing where the complainant and the respondent are invited to attend. If the Chair of Governors or another Governor has been involved in discussions to help settle the matter at Stage 1, s/he should arrange for another Governor to take charge of the situation. Neither the Chair of Governors nor the Governor in charge should sit on the Panel themselves and they should instead ensure that a Panel is convened in line with the timeframes and guidance set out in the school's complaints procedure. The Governor in charge of investigating the complaint

may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. It is not advisable for a Panel to investigate and conclude matters without giving the Complainant and Respondent the opportunity to respond. Therefore a formal hearing with all in attendance is most preferable.

You should make sure that the Governors' Complaint Panel is provided with any written information or evidence you intend to use in a formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. The Chair of the Panel may invite any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. The Chair should tell you who this person is before the meeting. If any member of staff is required by the Governing Body to attend a meeting they will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named in a complaint may also choose to attend a meeting, even if not required to do so by the Governors. They may be represented. If this happens, we will inform you in advance.

When the Panel has fully investigated your complaint, the Chair of the Panel or the Governor in charge of the investigation will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the Governing Body. The Chair of Governors will then write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. Our Governing Body will aim to deal with your complaint within 28 school days (5½ weeks).

Further recourse

Academies operate independently of the Local Authority. As such, the Local Authority is unable to investigate complaints regarding academies even if the complaint relates to Special Educational Needs provision.

Almost all complaints are resolved by the process detailed above. Parents wishing to escalate a complaint about an academy which has not been satisfactorily resolved through the Trust's complaints procedure should contact the Secretary of State at the Department for Education and request that the complaint be passed to the Education Funding Agency. The contact details for the Secretary of State are as follows:

The Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT
Website: www.education.gov.uk
Telephone: 0370 000 2288

6. Useful contacts

Advisory Centre for Education

Education Advice & Training
72 Durnsford Road
London
N11 2EJ
Web: www.ace-ed.org.uk
Phone: **0300 0115 142**

POhWER

Hertlands House
Primett Road
Stevenage
SG1 3EE
Web: www.pohwer.net
Phone: **0300 456 2370**

Children's Legal Centre

Riverside Office Centre
Century House
North Station Road
Colchester
Essex
CO1 1RE
Web: www.childrenslegalcentre.com
Phone: **0345 345 4345**

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

North Egerton House
Tower Road
Birkenhead
Wirral
CH41 1FN
Web: www.nyas.net
Phone: **0345 345 4345**

Special Educational Needs & Disability Information Advice Support Service (SENDIASS)

Web: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/sendias
Email: SENDIASS@hertfordshire.gov.uk
Phone: **01992 555847**

7. Flowchart - Summary of Dealing with Complaints

The Education Act 2002 requires all schools to have a complaints procedure that has been approved by the Governing Body and publicised to parents.

