



COMPLAINTS & RESOLUTIONS POLICY

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1. Aims

At OWN Trust, we are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to resolve any concerns as quickly and effectively as possible and encourage parents and carers to raise any concerns with a member of staff at the school. However, we recognise that on occasion there may be cause to escalate a concern into a formal complaint.

OWN Trust commits to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents/carers of pupils at the school, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Keep the best interests of the child at the forefront of all decisions
- 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 and courtesy
- Make sure 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 complainant can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

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

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

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

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

2. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents/carers of pupils at the school.

It is also based on best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures published by the DfE.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

In addition, it addresses duties set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework with regards to dealing with complaints about the school's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements.

3. Scope

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

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

A **complaint** is defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made about actions taken or a lack of action'.

A **concern** becomes a **complaint** when:

- It has been raised with the relevant staff but remains unresolved.
- The response received is unsatisfactory, and the parent wishes to escalate it.
- The issue is serious enough to warrant a formal process (e.g., safeguarding concerns, staff misconduct, leadership decisions).

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Suspension and permanent exclusion
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline
- Withdrawal from the curriculum (parents and carers can withdraw their child from any aspect of religious education, including the daily act of collective worship. They do not have to explain why)

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

Arrangements for handling complaints from parents of children with Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) are within the scope of this policy.

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

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1. The Complainant

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

- Follow these procedures
- Co-operate with the school throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Respect confidentiality and liaise with appropriate staff members as outlined in the Complaints Policy.
- Refrain from publishing details about the complaint on social media

4.2. The Investigator

An individual will be appointed to look into the complaint and establish the facts. They will:

- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- Prepare a comprehensive report to the headteacher or complaints committee, which includes the facts and potential solutions
- Ensure that their investigations are conducted in a fair, sensitive and transparent way.

4.3 The Complaints Co-Ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator can be:

- The headteacher or CEO of the trust (the CEO may delegate this to a member of the Executive Team)
- The designated complaints governor
- Any other staff member providing administrative support

The complaints co-ordinator will:

- Keep the complainant up to date at each stage in the procedure for complaints at Stage 1 or 2.
- Make sure the process runs smoothly by liaising with staff members, the headteacher, chair of governors, clerk, CEO of the trust and chair of trustees

Be aware of issues relating to:

- Sharing third-party information

- Additional support needed by complainants; for example, interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- Keep records

4.4 Clerk to the Local Governance Committee

The clerk will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings for complaints that reach Stage 3.
- Arrange the complaints hearing
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing

4.5 Committee Chair

The committee chair will:

- Chair the meeting, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect throughout
- Make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee, and are allowed to present their case

5. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

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

5.1 Timescales

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this timeframe in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If at any point we cannot meet the timescales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

5.2 Complaints About Our Fulfilment of Early Years Requirements

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The school will keep a record of the complaint (see section 10) and make this available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers can notify Ofsted if they believe that the school is not meeting Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, by:

- Calling 0300 123 4666
- Emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- Using the online contact form available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted#org-contacts>

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

6. Stages of complaint (not including complaints against the headteacher, governors, OWN Trust CEO or trustees)

We have adopted a 3-stage process for dealing with complaints:

- Stage 1 – Informal Resolution
- Stage 2 – Formal Investigation
- Stage 3 – Review Panel

6.1 Stage 1: Informal

Summary

Informal Complaint received by:	Relevant member of school/central services team staff or headteacher/CEO (either in person or by letter, telephone or email)
Acknowledgement	Within 5 school days
Action:	Meeting
Follow-up:	Written response within 15 school days of the meeting
If resolved:	No further action needed
If not resolved:	Move onto Stage 2 (6.2)

Details

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

The complainant should raise the complaint as soon as possible within the timescales set out in section 5.1.

The complaint should be addressed to the relevant member of school/trust staff or the headteacher/CEO, either in person or by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the school office or trust office as appropriate. Please see flowchart in appendix A for further clarification.

The school/trust will acknowledge informal complaints within 5 school days of receipt, which will confirm how the school intends to proceed, including an indication of the anticipated timescale.

The informal stage will involve a meeting between the complainant and a member of school/trust staff as appropriate. A written response will be provided by the school within 15 school days following the informal meeting.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

If you have any concerns or complaints, we kindly ask that you follow the appropriate channels for raising them. This ensures they can be addressed fairly and effectively. To maintain confidentiality and respect for all involved, we ask that concerns are not shared on social media or WhatsApp community groups. Additionally, governors and trustees are not able to address individual concerns directly, as this may affect their ability to remain impartial in any formal complaints process.

6.2 Stage 2: Formal

Summary

Complaint received by:	Headteacher (if relating to school) or CEO (if relating to central services team) either by letter or by email enclosing the form in Appendix 2 duly completed
Acknowledgement	Within 5 school days
Action:	Investigation (including any discussion with the complainant)
Follow-up:	Written response within 20 school days from receipt
If resolved:	No further action needed
If not resolved:	Move onto Escalating a Complaint

Details

The formal stage involves the complainant putting the complaint in writing, either by letter or by email enclosing the form in Appendix 2 duly 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 should also state what they feel would resolve the complaint.

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

The headteacher (if relating to school) or CEO (if relating to central services team) will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

The headteacher (if relating to school) or CEO (if relating to central services team) or other person appointed for this purpose will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 20 school days.

How to escalate a Stage 2 complaint

A complaint can be escalated following the outcome of the formal written complaint being shared (6.2).

Summary

Complaint received by:	Clerk of Local Governance Committee (if relating to school) within 2 working school days of previous response via the trust email address: info@own-trust.education Or Clerk of Trust Board (if relating to central services team) within 2 working school days of previous response via the trust email address: info@own-trust.education
Acknowledgement	Within 5 school days
Action:	Move onto Stage 3 Review Panel (6.4)

Details

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the clerk to the Local Governance Committee (if relating to school) or the clerk to the Trust Board (if relating to central services team) in writing within 2 working school days. Requests received outside of this timeframe will be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Complaints can be escalated by contacting the clerk to the Local Governance Committee via the trust email address: info@own-trust.education.

The clerk will need the details of the complaint as set out above, as well as details from the complainant on how they feel the previous stage of the procedure has not addressed their complaint sufficiently, and what they feel would resolve the complaint.

The clerk will acknowledge receipt of the request within 5 school days.

6.3 Stage 3: Review Panel

Summary

Escalation of complaint received by:	Review Panel via Clerk of Local Governance Committee
Action:	Review panel meet within 10 school days of the request, where possible
Follow-up:	Review panel decision within 10 school days of review panel meeting
Outcome:	Review Panel can uphold or dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part

Details

Convening the panel

Complaints will be escalated to the panel hearing stage if the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint at the second, formal stage.

The panel must consist of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least 1 panel member must be independent of the management and running of the school, e.g. an LGC member from another committee within the trust. The panel cannot be made up solely of Local Governance Committee members, as they are not independent of the management and running of the school.

The panel will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress (see section 10).

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel. The clerk will aim to find a date within 10 school days of the request, where possible.

If the complainant rejects the offer of 3 proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will set a date. The hearing will go ahead using written submissions from both parties.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 2 school days before the date of the meeting.

The panel will ensure that the hearing is properly minuted.

At the meeting

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless required as part of reasonable adjustments. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending will be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

At the review panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish. We don't encourage either party to bring legal representation but will consider it on a case-by-case basis. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by their union.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the school representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave, and evidence will then be considered.

The panel will then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide copies of the minutes of the hearing and the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint, and make a copy available for inspection by the proprietor and headteacher.

The outcome

The review panel can:

- Uphold the complaint, in whole or in part
- Dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld, the review panel will:

- Decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

The school will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 10 school days.

7. Complaints against the headteacher, a governor or the Local Governance Committee or OWN Trust CEO or Trust Board

7.1 Stage 1: Informal

Summary

Informal Complaint received by:	Clerk of the Local Governance Committee (if regarding headteacher or individual member of the Local Governance Committee including the chair or vice-chair) via email on info@own-trust.education or Clerk of Trust Board (if regarding CEO or any member of the Trust Board including chair or vice-chair) via email on info@own-trust.education
Acknowledgement	Within 5 school days
Action:	Meeting
Follow-up:	Written response within 15 school days of the meeting
If resolved:	No further action needed
If not resolved:	Move onto Stage 2 (7.2)

Details

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

The complainant should raise the complaint as soon as possible within the timescales set out in section 5.1.

Complaints made against the headteacher, or any individual member of the Local Governance Committee (including the chair or vice-chair) should be directed to the clerk of the Local Governance Committee in the first instance.

Complaints made against the CEO, or any member of the trust board should be directed to the clerk to the trust board in the first instance. In either case, please contact the relevant clerk via email on info@own-trust.education.

The relevant clerk will acknowledge informal complaints within 5 school days of receipt, which will confirm how the trust intends to proceed, including an indication of the anticipated timescale.

The informal stage will involve a meeting between the complainant and a member of trust staff as appropriate. A written response will be provided by the trust within 15 school days following the informal meeting.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

If you have any concerns or complaints, we kindly ask that you follow the appropriate channels for raising them. This ensures they can be addressed fairly and effectively. To maintain confidentiality and respect for all involved, we ask that concerns are not shared on social media or WhatsApp community groups. Additionally, governors and trustees are not able to address individual concerns directly, as this may affect their ability to remain impartial in any formal complaints process.

7.2 Stage 2: Formal

Summary

Complaint received by:	<p>Chair of the Local Governance Committee (if regarding headteacher)</p> <p>or</p> <p>Clerk of the Local Governance Committee (if regarding individual member of the Local Governance Committee including the chair or vice-chair or whole committee)</p> <p>or</p> <p>Chair of Trustees (if regarding CEO)</p> <p>or</p> <p>Clerk of Trust Board (if regarding any member of the Trust Board including chair or vice-chair)</p> <p>In all instances, the complaint should be sent via email on info@own-trust.education (enclosing the form in Appendix 2 duly completed)</p>
Acknowledgement	Within 5 school days
Action:	Investigation (including any discussion with the complainant)
Follow-up:	Written response within 20 school days from receipt
If resolved:	No further action needed
If not resolved:	Inform relevant clerk that they wish to move onto Stage 3 (7.3) within 2 working days

Details

The formal stage involves the complainant putting the complaint in writing and sending via email on info@own-trust.education (enclosing the form in Appendix 2 duly completed) to the relevant person as outlined in the summary above.

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 should also state what they feel would resolve the complaint.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the Trust office on info@own-trust.education.

The Chair or Clerk of Local Governance Committee or Chair or Clerk Trust Board (as appropriate) will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

If the complaint is about the headteacher or an individual governor, a suitably skilled and impartial governor will then carry out the steps at stage 2 set out in section 6 above.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair (LGC) or
- The entire Local Governance Committee or
- The majority of the Local Governance Committee

An independent investigator will carry out the steps in stage 2 set out in section 6 above. They will be appointed by the Local Governance Committee and will write a formal response at the end of their investigation.

If the complaint is about the CEO or an individual trustee, a suitably skilled and impartial trustee will then carry out the steps at stage 2 set out in section 6 above.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair (Trust Board) or
- The entire Trust Board or
- The majority of the Trust Board

An independent investigator will carry out the steps in stage 2 set out in section 6 above. They will be appointed by the Trust Board and will write a formal response at the end of their investigation.

The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 20 school days.

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the next stage of the procedure, they should inform the clerk to the governing board or trust board in writing within 2 school days via email on info@own-trust.education. Requests received outside of this timeframe will be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The relevant clerk will acknowledge receipt of the request within 5 school days.

7.3 Stage 3: Review Panel

Summary

Escalation of complaint received by:	Review Panel via Clerk of Local Governance Committee (if relating to headteacher, individual governor or whole Local Governance Committee) or Clerk of Trust Board (if relating to CEO, individual trustee or whole Trust Board)
Action:	Review panel meet within 10 school days of the request, where possible
Follow-up:	Review panel decision within 10 school days of review panel meeting
Outcome:	Review Panel can uphold or dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part

Details

If the complaint is about the headteacher or an individual governor, the steps outlined in stage 3 of section 6 above will be followed.

If the complaint is:

Jointly about the chair and vice-chair of the Local Governance Committee or

The entire Local Governance Committee, or

The majority of the Local Governance Committee

A committee of independent governors will hear the complaint. They will be sourced from local schools, the local authority and will carry out the steps at stage 3 (set out in section 6 above).

If the complaint is about the CEO or an individual trustee, the steps outlined in stage 3 of section 6 above will be followed.

If the complaint is:

Jointly about the chair and vice-chair of the Trust Board or

The entire Trust Board, or

The majority of the Trust Board

A committee of independent trustees will hear the complaint. They will be sourced from local trusts, the local authority and will carry out the steps at stage 3 (set out in section 6 above).

8. 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 DfE after they have completed Stage 3.

The DfE will only consider a complaint which has not been through the Trust's own Complaints Procedure if a child is at risk of harm or missing education.

The DfE cannot:

- overturn the panel's decision
- re-investigate the original complaint
- review the accuracy of minutes taken or documents provided
- order that compensation is paid
- direct the school to discipline / exclude pupils
- force the school to discipline / dismiss staff
- instruct the school to apologise.

The role of the DfE is to make sure the complaint is handled properly by following a published procedure that complies with part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The DfE will only consider a complaint if the complainant can provide evidence that the school or trust:

- does not have a complaints procedure
- did not provide a copy of its complaints procedure when requested
- does not have a procedure that complies with statutory regulations
- has not followed its published complaints procedure
- has not allowed its complaints procedure to be completed

The DfE will intervene when a school or trust has:

- breached a clause in its funding agreement
- failed to act in accordance with its duties under education law
- acted (or is proposing to act) unreasonably when exercising related education functions.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE in the following ways:

- online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus
- by telephone on: 0370 000 2288
- by writing to: Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House 5 Quinton Road Coventry CV1 2WT

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

www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

9. Unreasonable and persistent complaints

9.1 Unreasonable Complaints

All complaints will be treated seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaint's investigation process
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint's procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- Raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to the DFE
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Makes 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
- Uses threats to intimidate
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- Knowingly provides falsified information
- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums

Please note: the above list is not intended to be exhaustive and is for guidance purposes only. It is at the discretion of the school what is deemed to be unreasonable.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school while the 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.

Steps we will take

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

Whenever possible, the headteacher or chair of governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking. If the behaviour continues, the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable, refer them to this policy and remind them to act in accordance with it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as Citizens Advice
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from school premises and ensuring appropriate measures of support are provided to staff where they are the subject of aggression and/or violence.

9.2 Serial/Persistent Complaints

If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent'. We may stop responding to the complainant when the following conditions are met:

- We have taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns & consulted our 'Managing Persistent or Vexatious Complaints, Including Harassment' policy
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts the school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time

The case to stop responding is stronger if:

- The complainant's communications are often or always abusive or aggressive
- The complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
- We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

Where we decide to stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will consider any new complaints they make provided the concerns raised are materially different to those raised previously and/or are unconnected to the previous concern

9.3 Duplicate Complaints

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

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

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

If a duplicate complaint is raised which in the view of the school warrants further consideration, the procedure outlined in section 6 or 7 (as appropriate) will be repeated.

9.4 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 school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

10. Record keeping and confidentiality

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 stored securely 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) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

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

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

Where the Local Governance Committee is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the school will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the Local Governance Committee, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

11. Learning lessons

The chair of the Trust Board will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Chief Executive Officer where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

12. Monitoring arrangements

The Trust Board will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in making sure that complaints are handled properly. The Trust Board will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in section 11.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the Company Secretary.

This policy will be reviewed by the Trust Audit & Risk Committee every three years.

At each review, the policy will be approved by the Trust Audit and Risk Committee.

13. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Exclusions policy
- Managing persistent and Vexatious complaints, including Harassment policy
- Suspension and permanent exclusion policy
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- Special educational needs policy and information report
- Privacy notices

14. APPENDIX A – Complaints & Resolutions Flowchart for Parents

If you have a concern, please come and talk to us at the earliest opportunity so that we can resolve the issue before it reaches the stage of a formal complaint. If you wish to speak to a member of staff directly you can contact them via an email to the school office, come and find them at the beginning or end of the school day or call the school to arrange a suitable time to talk or pass your concerns to a member of staff on duty in the playground at the beginning or end of the day.

What Do I Do If I Have a Concern?

Type of Concern	First Step: Speak to...	Next Step if Unresolved	Final Step (Formal Complaint)
Homework, progress, or learning difficulties	Class Teacher	Phase Leader or SENDCo (if related to SEND)	Headteacher
Bullying, friendships, or behaviour concerns	Class Teacher or Pastoral Lead	Phase Leader	Headteacher
Safeguarding or welfare concerns	Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)/Headteacher	Chair of Governors (if unresolved)	Trust Safeguarding Lead or external agencies if necessary
Issues with a staff member	Headteacher	Chair of Governors	Trust CEO
School policies, decisions, or leadership concerns	Headteacher	Chair of Governors	Trust CEO
SEND provision concerns	Class Teacher	SENCO	Headteacher
General school communication or administration issues	School Office	Office Manager	Headteacher

If a concern becomes a complaint, please put your complaint in writing and complete appendix 1 with the written complaint. Complaints should be sent to the school office email address, marked with the attention of the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors. If a complaint is to be escalated to Trust level, please send the complaint via the trust email address info@own-trust.education

Concerns & Complaints Process

1. Classroom-Level Concerns

(These are concerns about learning, minor behaviour issues, or classroom experiences.)

Step 1: Concern raised – Speak to the Class Teacher.

Step 2: If unresolved – Escalate the concern to the Phase Leader.

Step 3: If still unresolved – Raise the concern with a member of the Senior Leadership Team

If a resolution is still not reached, the concern now becomes a formal complaint → Go to Step 6.

2. Pastoral and Behavioural Concerns

(Concerns related to well-being, bullying, behaviour management, or pastoral care.)

Step 1: Concern raised – Speak to the Class Teacher.

Step 2: If unresolved – Escalate the concern to the Phase Leader.

Step 3: If still unresolved – Raise the concern with a member of the Senior Leadership Team

If a resolution is still not reached, the concern now becomes a formal complaint → Go to Step 6.

3. Safeguarding Concerns

(Concerns related to child protection, serious welfare issues, or safeguarding risks.)

Step 1: Report the concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL.

Step 2: If concerns persist or are about school leadership, escalate to the Chair of Governors.

Step 3: If unresolved, escalate the concern to the Trust Safeguarding Lead who is also the CEO.

If a resolution is still not reached, the concern now becomes a formal complaint → Go to Step 6.

Serious safeguarding complaints may need to be reported directly to external safeguarding authorities – see website for further details.

4. School Leadership and Management Complaints

(Concerns about school policies, leadership decisions, or staff conduct.)

Step 1: Raise concern with the Headteacher.

If a resolution is still not reached, the concern now becomes a formal complaint → Go to Step 6.

5. Special Educational Needs (SEND) Concerns

(Concerns related to SEN provision, lack of support, EHCP issues.)

Step 1: Speak to the Class Teacher

Step 2: If unresolved raise concern with the SENCO.

Step 3: If still unresolved – Raise the concern with a member of the Senior Leadership Team

If a resolution is still not reached, the concern now becomes a formal complaint → Go to Step 6.

6. Formal Complaints & Appeals Process

(If a concern has not been resolved through previous steps, it becomes a formal complaint.)

Follow the steps outlined in the policy above for the complaints process which will begin with a informal complaint.

PLEASE NOTE THAT IF A COMPLAINT DOES NOT FOLLOW THE DUE PROCESS, THEN IT WILL BE RETURNED TO THE APPROPRIATE STAGE TO ENSURE THAT THE PROCESS IS BEING FOLLOWED.

15. APPENDIX B – Complaints Form

Please complete and return to the relevant school or office, for the attention of (Headteacher, Chair of Governors, CEO or Chair of Trustees) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken

Your Name:	
Pupil's Name (if relevant):	
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):	
Address: (Including postcode)	
Telephone Number(s):	
Please give concise details of your complaint, including any relevant dates, names of witnesses etc, to allow the matter to be fully investigated:	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to/write to and what was the response)?	
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 – TO BE COMPLETED BY THE TRUST	
Date acknowledgement sent:	By Whom:
Complaint referred to:	Date: