



KNUTSFORD MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE STATEMENT FOR

KNUTSFORD ACADEMY AND THE STUDIO SCHOOL

Policy lead:	Mr Christopher Parr
Last review date:	August 2019
Next review date:	August 2020
Approval needed by:	Head teacher

Purpose

All academies are required to have a complaints procedure, which is publicised.¹ The intention of this is to provide information about how to complain and how any complaint will be dealt with.

Introduction

This procedure covers all complaints against the school(s) by external parties who do not have an alternative statutory avenue of appeal or complaint. Where complaints make allegations of misconduct against members of staff this procedure may be superseded by the staff disciplinary procedure.

Employees of the Multi-Academy Trust cannot use this procedure, but have their own procedure through which any concerns can be raised.

All complaints should be dealt with as quickly as is practicable. Complainants should be kept informed during the investigation of their complaint and of the outcome, except where this is confidential, e.g. in the case of a staff disciplinary process. Every effort should be made to resolve complaints in a non-confrontational and informal way.

Wherever possible, concerns/complaints will be resolved without the complainant having to invoke the use of the formal complaints procedure.

¹ See The Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014.

Monitoring and evaluation

Senior managers and the full governing body will review information about complaints, including the amount and type of complaints, at least annually.

How to complain

If the concern/complaint cannot be resolved through informal discussion, the complainant should contact complaints@knutsfordacademy.org.uk. The complaint should be made in writing. If the complaint is made by another person on the complainant's behalf, this must be accompanied by written consent (by letter or email).

What happens next?

Stage 1

An investigation into the complaint will follow, usually involving a meeting with the complainant and a senior member of staff, or representative of the Multi-Academy Trust, who has no direct involvement in the complaint.

A written response to the complaint will usually be given within 10 school days of receipt of the complaint. This will set out the conclusions of the investigation, including whether the complaint is upheld or not and any further action that will be taken.

Stage 2

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they should put the complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors of the local governing body at Knutsford Multi-Academy Trust, Bexton Road, Knutsford WA16 0EA. The Chair/Vice Chair or nominated governor should meet with the complainant to discuss his/her concerns within ten school days of receiving the complaint, or as soon as is reasonably practical after this.

The Chair/Vice Chair/nominated governor will review the investigation and communicate his/her response in writing to the complainant within ten school days of receiving the written complaint.

Where the complainant is dissatisfied with this response the complaint should move to the appeal stage of the procedure

Stage 3

If the complainant wishes to appeal against the decision made at the formal stage, s/he must indicate his/her intention to do so with a written appeal within 10 school days of receipt of the written response from Stage 2. This must outline the reasons for the appeal and should state the original complaint and the reasons for on-going dissatisfaction. This should be sent to the Chair of the Governing Body or complaints@knutsfordacademy.org.uk.

If it does proceed, a governors' panel will be convened, consisting of three governors who have had no previous involvement in consideration of the complaint. The panel will include an independent member who is not involved in the running or management of Knutsford Multi-Academy Trust.

A response to the appeal will usually be sent within 10 school days of the meeting. This further response will set out the conclusion of the appeal, whether the complaint is upheld or not and any action that may be taken.

Outcome of complaint

If, at any stage, the complaint is upheld, then this will be acknowledged. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology
- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that the event complained of will not reoccur
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- an undertaking to review Academy policies in light of the complaint

Complainants are encouraged to state what action they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. However, please note that an admission that the Academy could have dealt with a situation differently is not the same as an admission of negligence.

Where a complainant seeks to reopen a matter the same as, or similar to, one previously considered under the procedure the Chair of Governors has the right to inform him/her that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is closed.

What to do if you remain dissatisfied

The complainant will have no further right to appeal this decision made by the governors' panel. However, a complainant may contact the Education Funding Agency if they are dissatisfied with the way in which their complaint has been handled once the full complaints procedure with the Academy has been completed.

If a complainant believes that the Governing Body has acted unreasonably, s/he can complain in writing to the Secretary of State for Education. Ofsted has certain powers

to investigate certain types of complaint from parents to help them decide whether or not to inspect a school.

Before complaining to the Local Authority, the Secretary of State, or to Ofsted, all stages of this Academy procedure should have been exhausted.

The Role of the Parent Partnership Service

The Parent Partnership Service helps parents/carers whose children have difficulties with learning, medical needs or mental health problems, from pre-school age to school leavers. The service is confidential and offers impartial advice and information to enable parents and carers to make decisions about their child's education. This includes supporting parents with complaints to schools or the Local Authority.

The service can help parents consider what their complaint is about and the options available to them to resolve it, including more informal measures that can be explored in the first instance. If a parent wishes, the service can explain how to put a letter/case together to take the matter forward. Someone from the service can attend meetings with the parent to offer support, but doesn't speak on behalf of or make decisions for the parent.

The service also offers support after meetings have taken place to consider the conclusions of the meeting and if the parent feels a satisfactory outcome was achieved. If not, the parent may have further options to consider.

Contact details for the service are (01829) 742997

parentpartnership@cheshire.gov.uk

On very rare occasions, complaints can be made that are vexatious, in that an individual persists unreasonably with his/her complaints, or makes complaints in order to make difficulties for the school rather than genuinely to resolve a concern. Action then taken may include restricting the contact between the complainant and the Academy.

If at any level a complainant attempts to reopen an issue or a closely related issue that has already been dealt with under this complaints procedure, the Chair of the Governors may write to the complainant to inform him/her that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter closed, that continued correspondence on the same matter is vexatious and that the Academy Trust will not respond to any further correspondence on this issue or any closely related issue.