Meridian Trust

Complaints Policy and Procedure

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Aims and Application

0.1 The aims of the policy and procedure are to deal with complaints and concerns about an Academy, Meridian Trust ("Trust") or any individual connected with it by following the procedure thoroughly and in an open, honest and fair manner.

0.2 This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children who are registered at one of the academies within the trust. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to an individual academy within the Trust, or the Trust itself, about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Part 1 of this policy outlines how parents/carers of registered students currently attending academies within the trust can raise a concern or complaint. Concerns or complaints from other persons will be dealt with in accordance with Part 2 of this policy.

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

0.4 Anonymous concerns or complaints will not normally be investigated under this procedure. The Governance Lead will determine whether there are exceptional circumstances to justify conducting an investigation into the matters raised, and will direct to the Academy Principal or Chair of Academy Council of an academy, or the Chief Executive Officer (as appropriate).

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

0.6 In this policy/procedure:

- 'Academy' means the school
- 'Academy Council' means the local governing body of an Academy
- 'Academy Principal' means the Head Teacher, School Principal, Head of School
- 'complaint' means an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action;
- 'concern' means an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought;
- 'meeting' means an in person or virtual meeting (i.e. telephone or video conference where all parties can participate verbally), virtual meetings will only be held in the event that all parties have access to appropriate equipment to attend and are happy to do so;
- 'parent' means a biological parent, carer or anyone who has parental responsibility or cares for a child;
- 'school days' excludes weekends and academy holidays and periods of partial or total academy closure;
- 'Trust' means Meridian Trust.
- 'Trustee' means a member of the Meridian Trust Board of Trustees

0.7 The Academy/Trust will seek to adhere to the timeframes referred to in this policy/procedure where possible.

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

Key Principles

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

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

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

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

0.13 Concerns or complaints should be brought to our attention as soon as possible. Any matter raised more than 3 months after the incident being complained of (or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within 3 months of the last of these incidents) will not be considered unless the Academy Principal or Governance Lead accepts that there are good reasons to explain the delay. Or the complaint is, in the view of the Trust, about a particularly serious matter.

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

0.15 On rare occasions an Academy or the Trust may receive complaints from a number of individuals relating to the same issue. In order to deal with these complaints efficiently the Academy/Trust will follow the procedure set out in this policy.

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

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

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

0.19 If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing. If this is not forthcoming, we will confirm our understanding that this has happened.

0.20 A record will be kept of all written formal complaints (Stage 2 and onwards), including at what stage they were resolved, and action taken by the Academy/Trust as a result of those complaints regardless of whether they were upheld. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where:

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

We will make the findings and recommendations of the Complaints Committee available for inspection.

Roles and Responsibilities

0.21 **The role of the Governance Team**

The Academy Principal, Investigating Manager or Governance Lead (dependent on stage of complaint) is the contact point for the complainant and the Complaints Committee, and should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure;
- liaise with all parties as applicable to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure;
- be mindful of the timescales to respond to complaints;
- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR);
- ensure that the Complaints Committee has access to legal advice, where appropriate;
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, taking reasonable steps to find a date that is convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example: Stages 1 & 2 paperwork, Academy and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale;
- ensure minutes of the meeting are taken;
- notify all parties of the Complaint Committee's decision;
- assist the Academy/Trust in issuing a letter to the complainant explaining the Complaint Committee's decision.

0.22 **The role of the Chair of the Complaints Committee**

The Chair of the Complaints Committee has a key role, ensuring that:

- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy;
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child;
- the remit of the Complaints Committee is explained to the complainant;
- the 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);
- key findings of fact are made, and that any issues not previously mentioned in writing should not be raised at the meeting and, if they are mentioned at the meeting, these should not be noted or considered by the Complaints Committee;
- both the complainant and the Academy/Trust are given the opportunity to make their case, and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting, or verbally in the meeting itself;
- the Complaints Committee is open-minded, acts independently and no committee member has an external interest in the outcome or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- the meeting is minuted.

Part 1: Complaints procedure for parents

Stage 1 - Informal concerns

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

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

1.3 If the matter is brought directly to the attention of the Academy Principal, they may decide to deal with the concerns directly at this stage. If the concerns are about the Academy Principal these should be referred directly to the Executive Principal.

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

1.5 Staff members should log all informal concerns and inform the Academy Principal of any serious concerns related to the complaint.

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

Stage 2- Formal written complaints

1.7 If concerns are not resolved under Stage 1, complainants are entitled to put a complaint in writing and send this to the Academy Principal of the relevant Academy who will appoint an Investigating Manager to address the complaint.

1.8 It is very important that complainants include a clear statement of the outcomes that they would like us to take to resolve the complaint. We strongly encourage complainants to use the Complaint Form provided at Annex 2 of this procedure. If help is required in completing the form, please contact the Academy office. Complainants can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help. Complainants may be contacted for further detail or clarification if the complaint does not clearly include the following :

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

1.9 Complaints will normally be acknowledged in writing within five school days of receipt. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the Trust's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This will normally be within 20 school days of receipt.

1.10 If the Investigating Manager deems it to be appropriate, they may invite the complainant to a meeting to clarify the complaint and to explore possible resolutions. If the complainant accepts that invitation, they may be accompanied by one other person, such as a friend, relative or interpreter, to assist them. Where possible, this meeting will take place within 10 school days of receipt of the written complaint.

1.11 If necessary, witnesses will be interviewed, and statements taken from those involved. If the matter includes a complaint relating to a member of staff, the member of staff will have the opportunity to respond to the complaint.

1.12 Once the relevant facts have been established as far as possible, complainants will be provided with a written response to the complaint, including an explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. This will include what action will be taken to resolve the complaint (if any). This will normally be within 20 school days of receipt.

1.13 Complainants will be advised that if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint, they may request that the complaint be heard by the Complaints Committee under Stage 3 of this procedure. The Trust may engage an independent, external person to carry out the investigation into the Stage 2 complaint or to review the investigation and response at Stage 2. This may be appropriate where the complaint is particularly complex or involves legal issues.

Q1. What if the complaint is about the Academy Principal or the Academy Principal has already provided a response to a complaint under Stage 1?

In these cases, the complaint should be sent to the Governance Lead at Governance@meridiantrust.co.uk who will arrange for an Executive Principal to carry out the Stage 2 procedure.

Q2. What if the complaint is about a member of the Academy Council?

Complaints about the Chair of the Academy Council or any individual Academy Council member should be addressed to the Governance Lead via Governance@meridiantrust.co.uk. The Governance Lead will arrange for an Investigating Manager to investigate the concerns in accordance with Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the Clerk of the Academy Council or the Academy Council as a whole, the complaint should be sent to the Governance Lead via Governance@meridiantrust.co.uk, who will then determine the most appropriate action with regards to Stage 2 and Stage 3.

Q3. What if the complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer?

If the complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer of the trust, or if they have been closely involved at Stage 1, the complaint should be sent to the Governance Lead via Governance@MeridianTrust.co.uk. The Governance Lead will arrange for a Trustee to investigate the concerns in accordance with Stage 2.

Q4. What if the complaint is about a Trustee, Clerk of the Trustees or a Member of the Trust?

If the complaint is about a Trustee or Member of the trust, complainants should contact the Governance Lead via Governance@meridiantrust.co.uk who will arrange for another Trustee to investigate the concerns in accordance with Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the Trust Board as a whole, it should be sent to the Governance Lead via Governance@meridiantrust.co.uk who will arrange for the matter to be independently investigated.

If the complaint is about the Clerk of the Trustees, the complaint should be sent to the Governance Lead via Governance@meridiantrust.co.uk

Q5. What if the complaint is about the Governance Lead?

If the complaint is about the Governance Lead you should contact the CEO via Enquiries@meridiantrust.co.uk who will arrange for an appropriate senior colleague to investigate the concerns in accordance with Stage 2.

Please be aware that where a complaint relates to an employee, the member of staff will have the opportunity to respond to the complaint.

Stage 3 - Referral to the Complaints Committee

1.14 If a complainant is dissatisfied with the decision under Stage 2, they may request that a Complaints Committee be convened to consider the complaint. The Complaints Committee will principally consider how the complaint was handled at the previous stages but has discretion to review other aspects of the complaint as it sees fit. The Complaints Committee will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

1.15 To request a hearing before the Complaints Committee, complainants should write to the Governance Lead via Governance@meridiantrust.co.uk within 15 school days of receiving notice of the outcome of Stage 2. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. Complainants should ensure that they provide copies of all relevant documents and state all the grounds for the complaint and the outcome that they are seeking.

1.16 Written requests to convene a Complaints Committee will be acknowledged within five school days of receipt.

The Governance Lead will arrange for a Complaints Committee to be convened.

The Complaints Committee will be made up of at least three members, all of whom will have had no prior involvement in the matter and will include:

- Academy Council members, Trustees, Academy Principals (from another Academy within the Trust), Executive Principals (from another Academy within the Trust) and/or Policy & Scrutiny committee members.

  and

- One person who is independent of the management and running of the Academy in question.

The Governance Lead shall appoint one of these committee members to be the Chair of the Complaints Committee.

1.17 Every effort will be made to enable the hearing to take place within 20 school days of the receipt of the request from the complainant. As soon as reasonably practicable and in any event at least five school days before the hearing, complainants will be sent written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing, together with brief details of the committee members who will be present. Fair consideration will be given to any genuine or reasonable objection based on evidence to a particular member of the committee. Complainants will also be informed of the name of the person who will be presenting the case on behalf of the Academy/Trust.

1.18 If, despite best efforts, it is not possible to find a mutually convenient date and time for a hearing within a reasonable timeframe, the Governance Lead may determine that the hearing proceeds on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

1.19 Complainants have the right to be accompanied to the hearing by a friend, relative or interpreter. Complainants should notify the Clerk in advance if they intend to bring anyone to the hearing. The Trust do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the Complaints Committee meeting. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend. The Complaints Committee itself may take legal advice and/or be supported by a legal advisor at the hearing on matters of law and procedure.

1.20 A copy of the complaint and any other documents provided by complainant in support of the complaint, or by the academy representative in defence of the complaint, will be provided to the Complaints Committee as soon as practicable upon receipt. Copies of these documents shall also be provided to complainant or academy representative (as applicable) at least 3 school days before the hearing. The Complaints Committee reserves the right not to consider any documentation presented by either party less than 3 school days prior to the hearing. The Complaints Committee is under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account. The committee will not accept recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

1.21 The hearing will be conducted to ensure that each party has the opportunity to address the Complaints Committee. The procedure to be followed during the hearing will be explained to the parties by letter in advance of the hearing. The Clerk will ensure that sufficient notes are taken to record an accurate reflection of the points considered and any decisions taken, or actions agreed. Electronic recordings of the hearing will not normally be permitted and, in any event, would require the consent of all those present.

1.22 Unless otherwise stated, the procedure for the Stage 3 hearing is as follows:

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

1.23 The Clerk and or Complaints Committee reserves the right to modify the above procedure at their sole discretion, for example requiring the Parent and the Academy/Trust representative to present their complaint/actions separately to the Complaints Committee in the absence of the other party.

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

1.25 After the hearing, the Complaints Committee will consider their decision and inform the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about of their decision in writing within five school days. The letter will set out the decision of the committee together with the reasons underpinning that decision. The committee can (by a majority if necessary):

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

This concludes all stages of the trust's complaints procedure.

Referral of complaint to the Department for Education ("DfE")

1.26 If complainants are dissatisfied with the decision of the Complaints Committee, they are entitled to refer the complaint to the DfE. The DfE will only investigate whether the complaint was handled properly and in accordance with education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

1.27 For further information on the DfE's remit in relation to academy complaints, please visit:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy/complain-about-an-academy

The DfE can be contracted for general assistance on complaint handling by:

- calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288
- using the DfE's Contact the Department for Education - Contact type - GOV.UK

1.28 Writing to:

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

Part 2: Concerns or complaints from other persons

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

2.1 **Stage 1 -** a concern regarding an Academy or its operations may be made to any member of staff. That member of staff will attempt to resolve the matter immediately or may, if appropriate, refer the matter to their line manager or member of the senior leadership team who is best placed to deal with the concern. It is expected that most concerns will be responded to orally or in writing within five school days. If a longer period is required, complainants will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation.

Where no satisfactory solution has been found, complainants will be advised that if they wish the concerns to be considered further, they should write to the Academy Principal under Stage 2 of this procedure within 15 school days.

2.2 **Stage 2** - where a concern is not resolved at Stage 1, or complainants wish concerns to be dealt with immediately as a formal complaint, they should put the complaint in writing and send this to the Academy Principal of the relevant Academy to investigate. The Academy Principal may delegate the task of investigation and/or responding to the complaint to a member of the senior leadership team or may escalate the complaint straight to Stage 3. A formal response to the complaint will usually be provided within 20 school days of receipt of the letter of complaint although if a longer period is required to respond, complainants will be kept updated.

2.3 **Stage 3** - if the complainant is not satisfied with the response at Stage 2, they may request a review by writing to the Governance Lead via Governance@meridiantrust.co.uk The written request should be sent to the Governance Lead within 15 school days of receipt of the letter at Stage 2. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. The Governance Lead will usually arrange for an Academy Council Member or a Trustee to consider the complaint alone or may refer the matter to convene a Complaints Committee on the same terms as set out in Part 1 of this complaints policy. The decision at this stage will usually be sent within 15 school days of receipt of the request for a review or within five school days of the Complaints Committee hearing (as applicable).

2.4 **Referral of complaint to the Department for Education ("DfE")**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision at Stage 3, they are entitled to refer the complaint to the Department for Education (DfE) as outlined in Part 1 of this complaints policy.

Concerns or complaints regarding the Academy Principal or the Trust should be referred direct to the Governance Lead via Governance@meridiantrust.co.uk who will arrange for the stages above to be considered by an appropriate person.

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

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

3.1 Repetitious, including serial and/or persistent, complaints

Where the complaint is the same, similar to or based on the same facts of a complaint which has already been considered in full and we have:

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

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

3.2 In the following circumstances (see A and B below), we may:

- inform the complainant that we consider their complaint to be vexatious or the manner in which they are pursuing their complaint to be unreasonable and why, and ask them to desist;
- conduct the Complaints Committee on the papers only i.e. not hold a hearing;
- refuse to consider the complaint any further and refer the complainant directly to DfE.

We may also restrict the complainant's access to the academy, e.g. requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only), requiring contact to take place with a named person only, restricting telephone calls to specified days and times or number of contacts or banning the complainant from the academy's premises, in line with our Responding to Aggression, Abuse or Violence from Parents, Carers or Visitors Guidance document.

3.3 Where the complainant's behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, Academy Council Members, Trustees or Members we will consider other options - for example, reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.

3.4 Vexatious complaints (A)

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaints as:

- complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific or repetitious;
- complaints insistent upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason;
- insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance; and
- demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value.

Examples include but are not limited to:

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

3.5 Complaints pursued in an otherwise unreasonable manner (B)

Where the complainant's behaviour or language towards staff, Academy Council Members, Trustees or Members is aggressive, abusive, offensive, discriminatory or threatening or insulting personal comments are made about, or threats are made towards, staff.

3.6 Complaint campaigns

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

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

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

Annex 1: Matters excluded from the scope of this policy

Excluded Matters	**Signposting**
Admissions	The process for challenging admissions decisions is set out in our admissions policy in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.
Child protection matters	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
Exclusions	The process for challenging exclusions decisions is set out in the DfE's statutory guidance and information can be found at: School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
National Curriculum content	Please contact the Department for Education at www.education.gov.uk/contactus
School re-organisation proposals	Where concerns are not adequately addressed by the academy, complaints can be raised direct with the Department for Education.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service, please contact them direct to raise a complaint. If a concern or complaint relates to a serious safeguarding matter, please also notify the Academy, via its standard safeguarding procedure.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Certain complaints about staff may need to be dealt with under the academy's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. 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.
Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Concerns about statutory assessments of special educational needs should be raised directly with the local authority.
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus Volunteer staff who have concerns should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of the complaint

Annex 2: Complaints Form

Your name:
Student's name:
Your relationship to student:
Your address and postcode:
Your daytime telephone number:
Your evening telephone number:
Your email address:
Your complaint is: (if you have more than one complaint, please number these)
What action have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint(s) in accordance with Stage 1 of the trust's complaints procedure? (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)

What would you like as an outcome from your complaint(s)?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, give details here:

Your signature..... Date .....

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

Please complete and return to the academy office by email or in a sealed envelope addressed to the Academy Principal or Governance Lead (as appropriate).

Office use

Date received .....

Date acknowledgement sent .....

Responsible member of staff .....

Annex 3: Summary of Complaints Procedure for Parents & Carers

Stage 1: **Informal concerns**	Parent brings complaint to attention of member of staff
	Issue to be resolved (guide: within 15 school days)
	Where no satisfactory solution has been found, parent to be advised that they should proceed to Stage 2
Stage 2: **Formal Written Complaint**	Parent to put complaint in writing using Complaint Form within 15 school days
	Complaint to be acknowledged within five school days
	Meeting with parents within 10 school days (if Investigating Manager deems a meeting as appropriate)
	Response to the complaint sent within 20 school days
Stage 3: **Referral to Complaints Committee**	Parent to request the matter is referred to a Complaints Committee within 15 school days of receiving notice of the outcome of Stage 2
	Request to be acknowledged within five school days
	Hearing to take place within 20 school days of receipt of request
	Notification of date, time and place of the hearing and details of the committee members present sent at least five school days before the hearing
	Academy representative and parents to submit evidence in support of their case to Governance Lead at least 3 school days before the hearing
	Complaints Committee decision sent not more than five school days after the hearing