

Complaints Procedure

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Document Control

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New Version Number	Key changes from previous version	Date of ratification by Trust Board
2	Division of process for MET-Living & central staff; and changes to appeal stages	28 August 2018
3	Clarification of appeal stages and panels and reformatting of document	11 December 2018
4	Removal of the use of Trustees in a review panel at stage three for complaints concerning a school	16 March 2020
5	Updated contact details	21 September 2020
6	Updated with details of new schools in the trust	24 September 2020

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Trust is committed to developing a strong partnership with students, parents/carers and other stakeholders. This provides a good basis for mutual understanding and for preventing and resolving complaints.
- 1.2 When responding to complaints, the Trust aims to:
- Be impartial and non-adversarial
 - Facilitate a full and fair investigation and where necessary including an independent person or panel
 - Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
 - Treat complainants with respect
 - Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
 - Consider how the complaint can feed into school and Trust improvement evaluation processes
- 1.3 The Trust will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.
- 1.4 To support this, the Trust will publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on its website, and on the websites of the Trust schools.
- 1.5 This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which states that a school must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils in our Trust. It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations, and refers to good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures from the Department for Education (DfE).
- 1.6 This procedure complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

2. Scope

- 2.1 A complaint is defined by the DfE as “an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”.
- 2.2 The Trust intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage. There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.
- 2.3 This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:
- Admissions
 - Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
 - Safeguarding matters
 - Exclusion
 - Whistle-blowing

- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

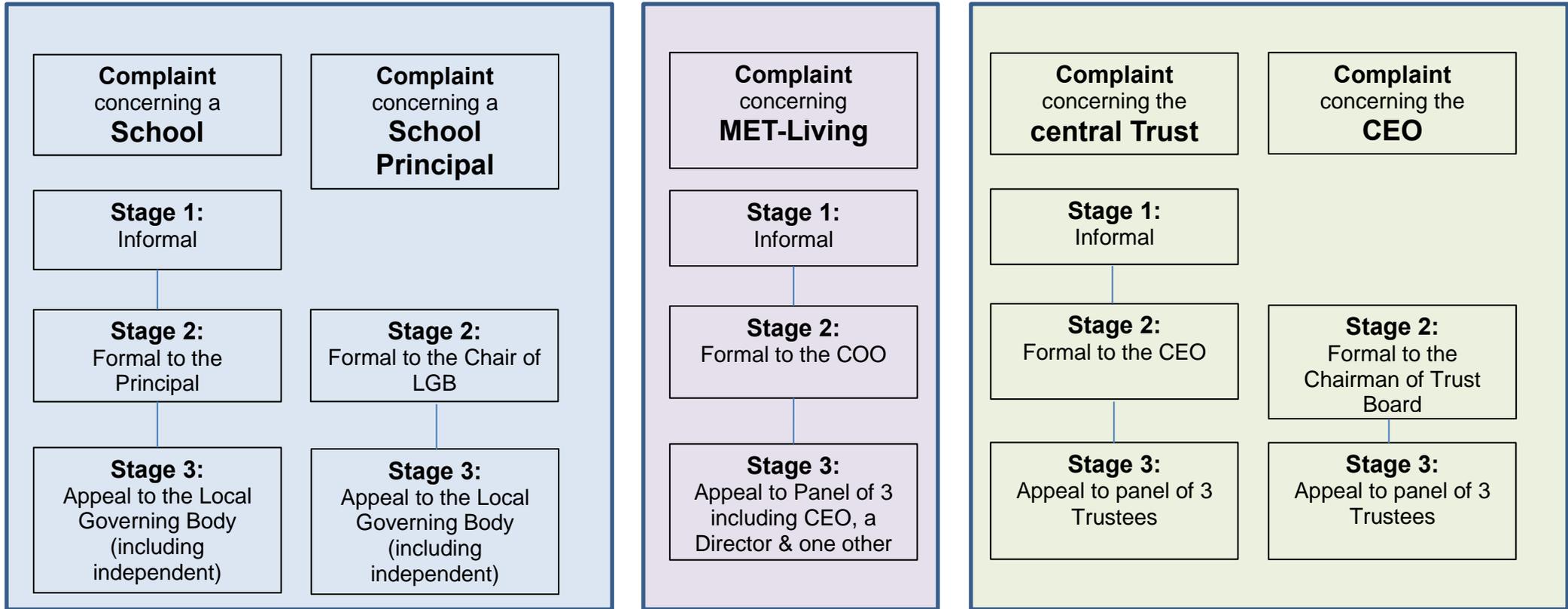
Please see the Trust's separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

- 2.4 Arrangements for handling complaints from parents of children with SEN about the school's support are within the scope of this policy. Such complaints should first be made to the school's special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO); they will then be referred to this complaints procedure.
- 2.5 Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

3. Principles

- 3.1 All formal complaints will be investigated fully, fairly and carefully, and complainants will be kept informed of progress. When investigating a complaint the Trust will try to clarify: what has happened, who was involved and what the complainant feels would put things right.
- 3.2 All complaints will be dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible. To achieve this, realistic and reasonable time limits will be set for each action within each stage.
- 3.3 Where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set, and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline with an explanation for the delay.
- 3.4 The Trust expects that complaints will be made as soon as possible after an incident arises, and no later than 3 months afterwards. Exceptions to this time frame will be considered 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.
- 3.5 The aim is always to secure the resolution of the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant, if possible.
- 3.6 The diagram below illustrates the stages of the complaints procedure, which are explained in detail from Section 4 of this document. Complaints follow a slightly different path depending on whether they are about a School (Primary, Secondary or Sixth Form) or MET-Living (Sports Centres, Adult Learning or Bookings) or the Central Trust.

Stages of the MET Complaint Procedure



4. Complaints concerning a school

4.1 Stage 1: Informal

- 4.1.1 The Trust will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly.
- 4.1.2 Informal complaints or concerns that are about a school should be raised directly with the relevant member of school staff either verbally or in writing.
- 4.1.3 In certain circumstances, the relevant member of staff may ask the Principal to deal with it informally in person.
- 4.1.4 If the complaint has been made in writing, the Principal may choose to treat it as a formal complaint and invoke the formal procedure (Stage 2).
- 4.1.5 The school will acknowledge receipt of informal complaints within **three working** days, and provide a response within **ten working** days.
- 4.1.6 The member of staff to whom the complainant is referred will carry out an investigation and decide on any appropriate action. The complainant and the Principal will be informed of the conclusions drawn from the investigation and action to be taken, together with details of how to make a formal complaint if they remain dissatisfied.
- 4.1.7 In some cases, matters affecting general Trust policy may be judged by the Principal, in consultation with the CEO, to be an appropriate area for discussion at Trust level, in order to resolve the complaint.
- 4.1.8 Every effort will be made to resolve the problem to the satisfaction of the complainant at this informal stage. Possible outcomes include:
- complaint resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;
 - complaint not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;
 - complaint dealt with under another procedure;
- 4.1.9 If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

4.2. Stage 2: Formal Complaints

- 4.2.1 If the complaint is not resolved at Stage 1, the complainant should put their complaint in writing using the Complaint Form (Appendix A). This should include 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.
- 4.2.2 Complaints **not** involving the Principal or a member of the Local Governing Body (LGB) should be addressed to the Principal of the school and either posted to the school address or emailed as follows:
Principal for Impington Village College: rkelsall@ivc.tmet.org.uk
Principal for Witchford Village College: r.purvis@downhammarketacademy.co.uk
Principal for Chesterton Community College: iscott@chesterton.cambs.sch.uk

Principal for Downham Market Academy: r.purvis@downhammarketacademy.co.uk

Principal for Girton Glebe Primary: aspencer@gg.tmet.org.uk

- 4.2.3 Complaints involving the Principal or a member of the Local Governing Body should be addressed to the Chairman of the LGB and either emailed or posted (to the school address) to the Clerk to the LGB, as follows:

Clerk for Impington Village College: jgreenway@ivc.tmet.org.uk

Clerk for Witchford Village College: kmajor@wvc.tmet.org.uk

Clerk for Chesterton Community College: sizzard@chesterton.cambs.sch.uk

Clerk for Downham Market Academy: n.gillprice@downhammarketacademy.co.uk

Clerk for Girton Glebe Primary: Natalie.Drewery@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

- 4.2.4. The complainant will receive written acknowledgement of their complaint within **three working** days.

- 4.2.5 The Principal or Chairman of the LGB will conduct their own investigation which may include reviewing relevant documents and interviewing pupils, parents, staff and other parties. The Principal or Chairman of the LGB may delegate responsibility for conducting the investigation to another member of staff.

- 4.2.6 The Principal or LGB Chairman will decide on the outcome and inform the complainant in writing of the decision **within 10 working days of receipt**, together with details of how to appeal against the decision if they remain dissatisfied. A meeting may also be arranged to convey the reasons for the decision. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, the complaint moves to the next stage; Formal Stage 3.

- 4.2.7 Rarely, the decision may involve taking disciplinary action against an individual, for which there is a separate procedure. In this event, the complainant will be informed that the complaint will be pursued through disciplinary action. The Trust's disciplinary procedures require that all details of proceedings remain confidential, and consequently the complainant will not be informed of the outcome.

- 4.2.8 Possible outcomes include:
- i complaint withdrawn;
 - ii complaint dismissed;
 - iii complaint dealt with under another procedure;
 - iv complaint upheld.

4.3 Stage 3: Review Panel

- 4.3.1 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they should send a completed Complaint Appeal Form (Appendix B) to the Chairman of the Local Governing Body (through the Clerk) **within 10 working days** from the date of the response received. The Chairman will acknowledge receipt of the Complaint Appeal Form **within three working days**.

The email addresses for the Clerk to the Local Governing Body are:

Clerk for Impington Village College: jgreenway@ivc.tmet.org.uk

Clerk for Witchford Village College: kmajor@wvc.tmet.org.uk

Clerk for Chesterton Community College: sizzard@chesterton.cambs.sch.uk

Clerk for Downham Market Academy: n.gillprice@downhammarketacademy.co.uk

Clerk for Girton Glebe Primary: Natalie.Drewery@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

- 4.3.2 The Chairman will convene a meeting of the Review Panel to consider the appeal. The panel will be a minimum of 3 people and will include at least 2 governors of the Local Governing Body (LGB) of that school and a person who is independent of the running or management of the school. The panel may include a governor from the LGB of another Trust school. The Panel may not include any Trust employees or any Governor who has had a prior involvement in the complaint or in any matter which is the basis of the complaint.
- 4.3.3 The panel will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress. The LGB is responsible for making sure that the panel is properly minuted.
- 4.3.4 The complainant must have reasonable notice (five working days) of the date of the review panel; however, the review panel reserves the right to convene at their convenience rather than that of the complainant. 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 by a suitable companion if they wish.
- 4.3.5 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 will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representatives have completed presenting their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.
- 4.3.6 The Review Panel will decide:
- i. whether or not the Complaints Procedure was adhered to;
 - ii whether or not the matter giving rise to the complaint was investigated properly, and;
 - iii whether the resolution of the complaint was reasonable.
- 4.3.7 The complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome **within 10 working days** of the Review Panel and the reasons for these findings and that **the decision is final and that the matter is now closed**. Where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint will be sent a copy of the outcome and also a copy made available for inspection by the Trust and Principal.
- 4.3.8 Where the LGB 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.

4.3.9 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 LGB, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

5. Complaints concerning MET-Living

5.1 Stage 1: Informal

5.1.1 The Trust will make every effort to address any concerns or complaints early through informal measures.

5.1.2 Informal complaints or concerns that are about MET-Living should be raised directly with the relevant member of staff.

5.1.3 In certain circumstances, the relevant member of staff may ask the Chief Operating Officer (COO) to deal with the complaint informally in person.

5.1.4 If the complaint has been made in writing to the COO, then the COO may choose to treat it as a formal complaint and invoke the formal procedure (Stage 2).

5.1.5 MET-Living staff will acknowledge receipt of informal complaints within **three** working days, and provide a response within **ten** working days.

5.1.6 The member of staff to whom the complainant is referred will carry out an investigation and decide on any appropriate action. The complainant and the COO will be informed of the conclusions drawn from the investigation and action to be taken, together with details of how to make a formal complaint if they remain dissatisfied.

5.1.7 Every effort will be made to resolve the problem to the satisfaction of the complainant at this informal stage. Possible outcomes include:

- i complaint resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;
- ii complaint not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;
- iii complaint dealt with under another procedure;

5.1.8 If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint (Stage 2).

5.2 Stage 2: Formal Complaints

5.2.1 If the complaint is not resolved at Stage 1, the complainant should inform the COO in writing about their complaint using the Complaint Form (Appendix A). This should be emailed to the COO using the following email address: fdifranco@tmet.org.uk. The form should include 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.

5.2.2 The complainant will receive written acknowledgement of their complaint within **three working** days.

- 5.2.3. The COO will conduct their own investigation which may include reviewing relevant documents and interviewing customers, pupils, parents, staff and other parties. The COO may delegate responsibility for conducting the investigation to another member of staff.
- 5.2.4 The COO will decide on the outcome and inform the complainant in writing of the decision **within 10 working days of receipt**, together with details of how to appeal against the decision if they remain dissatisfied. A meeting may also be arranged to convey the reasons for the decision. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome then the complaint moves to the next stage; Formal Stage 3.
- 5.2.5 Rarely, the decision may involve taking disciplinary action against an individual, for which there is a separate procedure. In this event, the complainant will be informed that the complaint will be pursued through disciplinary action. The Trust's disciplinary procedures require that all details of proceedings remain confidential, and consequently the complainant will not be informed of the outcome.
- 5.2.6 Possible outcomes include:
- i complaint withdrawn;
 - ii complaint dismissed;
 - iii complaint dealt with under another procedure;
 - iv complaint upheld.

5.3. Stage 3: Review Panel

- 5.3.1 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they should send a completed Complaint Appeal Form (Appendix B) to the CEO **within 10 working days** from the date of the response received. The CEO will acknowledge receipt of the Complaint Appeal Form **within three working days**. The email address for the CEO is lscott@chesterton.cambs.sch.uk
- 5.3.2 The CEO will convene a meeting of the Review Panel to consider the appeal. The panel will be a minimum of 3 people and will include the CEO, and another MET-Living Ltd Director. The Panel may not include any Trust employees or any Governor or Trustee who has had a prior involvement in the complaint or in any matter which is the basis of the complaint.
- 5.3.3 The panel will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress. The CEO is responsible for making sure that the panel is properly minuted.
- 5.3.4 The complainant must have reasonable notice (five working days) of the date of the review panel; however, the review panel reserves the right to convene at their convenience rather than that of the complainant. At the review panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from MET-Living, 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 by a suitable companion if they wish.
- 5.3.5 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 MET-Living representative will be

given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and MET-Living representatives have completed presenting their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

5.3.6 The Review Panel will decide:

- i. whether or not the Complaints Procedure was adhered to;
- ii whether or not the matter giving rise to the complaint was investigated properly, and;
- iii whether the resolution of the complaint was reasonable.

5.3.7 The complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome **within 10 working days** of the Appeal Panel and the reasons for these findings and that **the decision is final and that the matter is now closed**. Where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint will be sent a copy of the outcome and also a copy made available for inspection by the Trust.

6. Complaints concerning central Trust staff, including the Morris Teaching School Alliance

6.1 Stage 1: Informal

6.1.1 The Trust will make every effort to address any concerns or complaints early through informal measures.

6.1.2 Informal complaints or concerns that are about the central Trust should be raised directly with the relevant member of staff. Central Trust staff are those who do not work in a school or in MET-Living.

6.1.3 In certain circumstances, the relevant member of staff may ask the CEO to deal with the complaint informally in person.

6.1.4 If the complaint has been made in writing to the CEO, then the CEO may choose to treat it as a formal complaint and invoke the formal procedure (Stage 2).

6.1.5 The trust will acknowledge receipt of informal complaints within **three working** days, and provide a response within **ten working** days.

6.1.6 The member of staff to whom the complainant is referred will carry out an investigation and decide on any appropriate action. The complainant and the CEO will be informed of the conclusions drawn from the investigation and action to be taken, together with details of how to make a formal complaint if they remain dissatisfied.

6.1.7 Every effort will be made to resolve the problem to the satisfaction of the complainant at this informal stage. Possible outcomes include:

- i complaint resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;
- ii complaint not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;
- iii complaint dealt with under another procedure;

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

6.2 Stage 2: Formal Complaints

6.2.1 If the complaint is not resolved at Stage 1, the complainant should put their complaint in writing (where possible) using the Complaint Form (Appendix A). This should include 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.

6.2.2 Complaints **not** involving the CEO should be addressed to the CEO and emailed to lscott@chesterton.cambs.sch.uk

6.2.3 Complaints involving the CEO or a trustee should be addressed to the Chairman of the Trust Board and emailed through the Clerk to the Trustees to trustclerk@tmet.org.uk.

6.2.4 The complainant will receive written acknowledgement of their complaint within **three working days**.

6.2.5 The CEO or Chairman of the Trust Board will conduct their own investigation which may include reviewing relevant documents and interviewing pupils, parents, staff and other parties. The CEO or Chairman of the Trust Board may delegate responsibility for conducting the investigation to another member of staff.

6.2.6 The CEO will decide on the outcome and inform the complainant in writing of the decision **within 10 working days of receipt**, together with details of how to appeal against the decision if they remain dissatisfied. A meeting may also be arranged to convey the reasons for the decision. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome then the complaint moves to the next stage; Formal Stage 3.

6.2.7 Rarely, the decision may involve taking disciplinary action against an individual, for which there is a separate procedure. In this event, the complainant will be informed that the complaint will be pursued through disciplinary action. The Trust's disciplinary procedures require that all details of proceedings remain confidential, and consequently the complainant will not be informed of the outcome.

6.2.8 Possible outcomes include:

- i complaint withdrawn;
- ii complaint dismissed;
- iii complaint dealt with under another procedure;
- iv complaint upheld.

6.3 Stage 3: Review Panel

6.3.1 If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they should send a completed Complaint Appeal Form (Appendix B) to the Chairman of the Trust Board (through the Clerk) **within 10 working days** from the date of the response received. The Chairman will acknowledge receipt of the Complaint Appeal Form **within three working days**. The email address for the Clerk to the Trust Board is trustclerk@tmet.org.uk .

- 6.3.2 The Chairman will convene a meeting of the Review Panel to consider the appeal. The panel will be a minimum of 3 trustees. The panel will not include any trustee who has had prior involvement in the complaint or in any matter which is the basis of the complaint.
- 6.3.3 The panel will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress. The Chairman is responsible for making sure that the panel is properly minuted.
- 6.3.4 The complainant must have reasonable notice (five working days) of the date of the review panel; however, the review panel reserves the right to convene at their convenience rather than that of the complainant. At the review panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the central Trust, 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 by a suitable companion if they wish.
- 6.3.5 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 Trust representative will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and Trust representatives have completed presenting their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.
- 6.3.6 The Review Panel will decide:
- i. whether or not the Complaints Procedure was adhered to;
 - ii whether or not the matter giving rise to the complaint was investigated properly, and;
 - iii whether the resolution of the complaint was reasonable.
- 6.3.7 The complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome **within 10 working days** of the Appeal Review Panel and the reasons for these findings and that **the decision is final and that the matter is now closed**. Where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint will be sent a copy of the outcome and also a copy made available for inspection by the Trust.

7. Referring complaints on completion of the Trust procedures

- 7.1 If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the Trust's complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the ESFA. The ESFA will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly. The ESFA will not overturn the Trust's decision about a complaint. However, it will look into:
- Whether there was undue delay, or the Trust did not comply with its own complaints procedure
 - Whether the Trust was in breach of its funding agreement with the secretary of state
 - Whether the Trust has failed to comply with any other legal obligation

7.2 If the complaint was not dealt with properly, the Trust will be asked to re-investigate the complaint. If the complaints procedure is found not to meet regulations, the Trust will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

7.3 For more information or to refer a complaint see the following webpage:
<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

8. Record-keeping

8.1 The school/trust 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.

8.2 This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

8.3 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 under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

8.4 Records of complaints will be kept for a minimum of 6 years.

9. Learning lessons

9.1 The LGB will review any underlying issues raised by complaints to the school with the Principal, 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.

9.2 The CEO will receive regular reports from the Principal or LGB on the types of complaints received in each school in order to support the development of appropriate support structures, and to inform any improvements to procedures or practice.

10. Persistent Complaints and Harassment

10.1 See Appendix C for the Persistent Complaints and Harassment Procedure.

Appendix A: Complaint Form

Complainant:

<p>Name:</p> <p>Address:</p> <p>Tel/Mobile, email</p>

Details of Complaint

<p><i>Please include full details, including dates, times and names of those involved and include what you feel would resolve the complaint. Please use an extra sheet if necessary.</i></p>
--

Signed: **Date:**

<p><i>Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary. Once completed, send this form to the Principal or CEO or COO or Chairman of the Trust Board or Chairman of the LGB (in line with the Policy) who will arrange for your complaint to be investigated.</i></p>

For office use

Date Received by Principal/CEO/COO/Chairman of the Trust Board or Chairman of the LGB:.....

Date of Response to Complainant:.....

Appendix C: Persistent Complaints and Harassment Procedure

1. Aims of the policy

- 1.1 To uphold the standards of courtesy and reasonableness that should characterise all communication between the Trust and persons who wish to express a concern or pursue a complaint.
- 1.2 To support the well-being of students, staff and everyone else who has legitimate interest in the work of the Trust, including members, trustees, governors and parents.
- 1.3 To deal fairly, honestly and properly with persistent complainants and those who harass members of staff who work for the Trust while ensuring that other stakeholders suffer no detriment.

2. Human Rights

- 2.1 In implementing this policy the Trust will seek to ensure that its actions are in accordance with its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Convention Rights embodied within it in order to protect the Human Rights of both persistent complainants and all other stakeholders.

3. Who is a persistent complainant?

- 3.1 For the purpose of this policy, a persistent complainant is a parent/carer or member of the public who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the Trust and whose behaviour is unreasonable. Such behaviour may be characterised by:
 - a) actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious and/or
 - b) prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint
 - c) an insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes
 - d) an insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- 3.2 For the purpose of this policy, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions as in (a) to (d) above in such a way that they:
 - a) appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of Trust staff and/or
 - b) cause ongoing distress to individual member(s) of Trust staff and/or
 - c) have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the Trust community and/or
 - d) are pursued aggressively

- 3.3 Actions or behaviour that fall into any of the categories described in 3.1 and 3.2 above, or any other harassing or persistently unreasonable behaviour, may render an individual liable to become subject to this policy.

4. Expectations of the Trust

- 4.1 Parents/carers/members of the public who raise either informal or formal issues or complaints with the Trust can expect the Trust to:
- a) regularly communicate to parents/carers in writing (i) how and when problems can be raised with any aspect of the Trust, (ii) the existence of the Trust's complaints procedure and (iii) the existence of the Persistent Complaints and Harassment Policy
 - b) respond within a reasonable time
 - c) be available for consultation within reasonable time limits bearing in mind the needs of the students within the Trust and the nature of the complaint
 - d) respond with courtesy and respect
 - e) attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the Trust's complaints procedure, other policies and practice and in line with guidance and advice from the Local County Council
 - f) keep complainants informed of progress towards a resolution of the issues raised

5. The Trust's expectations of parents/carers/members of the public

- 5.1 The Trust can expect parents/carers/members of the public who wish to raise problems with the Trust to:
- a) treat all Trust staff with courtesy and respect
 - b) respect the needs and well-being of students and staff within the Trust
 - c) avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence to people or property
 - d) avoid any aggression or verbal abuse
 - e) recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the Trust a reasonable time to respond
 - f) recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time
 - g) in the case of a complaint, follow the Trust's complaints procedure

6. The Trust's actions in cases of persistent complaint or harassment

- 6.1 The Trust will take the following consecutive steps as necessary if the complainant's behaviour is not modified:
- a) inform the complainant orally or in writing that his/her behaviour is considered to have become unreasonable/unacceptable and may be considered to fall under the terms of this policy.

- b) inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the Trust to have become unreasonable/unacceptable and warn of further sanctions under the policy.
- c) inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the Trust to fall under the terms of this policy and that the complaint will not be investigated further until it is pursued in a manner the Trust considers to be reasonable.

As appropriate this may additionally result in the Trust:

- a) informing the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties.
 - b) informing the complainant that, except in emergencies, all communication from the complainant to the Trust should be carried out in writing.
 - c) in the case of physical or verbal aggression with reference to Section 547 of the Education Act 1996; giving consideration to warning the complainant about being banned from the relevant Trust site; or proceeding straight to a temporary ban.
 - d) considering taking advice from Local County Council on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation.
- 6.2 Legitimate new complaints, if not pursued in a harassing or unreasonable way, will still be considered even if the person making them is, or has been, subject to the Persistent Complaints and Harassment Procedure.
- 6.3 If a complainant may normally have recourse to the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) after the Trust's Complaints Procedure has been exhausted, in the event that the Trust considers that there are exceptional circumstances it may recommend that the complainant refer the matter to the ESFA at an earlier time.
- 6.4 If a complainant's harassing/persistent complaining behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the Trust may resume the process identified above as appropriate.
- 6.5 If a complainant's harassing/persistent complaining behaviour is modified and the complaint still lies within the time limit specified in the Trust's Complaints Procedure, the Trust will use its discretion and may resume investigation of the complaint.

7. Review

- 7.1 The Trust will review as appropriate, and at a minimum once in a school year, any sanctions applied in the context of this policy.