

# Complaints Policy



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Document Version Control Log

| Version | Modification Date | Synopsis of Changes                                                                                                   |
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| 1.0     | September 2025    |                                                                                                                       |
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## 1. Aims

The Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents/carers of pupils at the academy, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- 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
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Make sure 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 complaint can feed into academy and trust improvement evaluation processes

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

The Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust 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 our website, and on the websites of our academies.

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 \(Independent Academy Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents/carers of pupils in our trust.

It is also based on [best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures](#) published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

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 trust's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements.

### 3. Scope

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

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Suspension and permanent exclusion
- Whistle-blowing
- 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 complaints.

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

### 4. Parent Guidance and Early Resolution

The Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust is committed to working in partnership with parents, carers and all members of our school communities to resolve concerns promptly, fairly and respectfully. We believe that open communication and positive relationships are the most effective way of addressing concerns before they become formal complaints.

Parents and carers are encouraged to raise any concerns at the earliest opportunity with the appropriate member of staff, in accordance with the stages outlined in this policy. Wherever possible, the Trust seeks to resolve concerns informally through discussion and collaboration. Where this is not possible, concerns will be managed through the Trust's formal complaints procedure in a fair, transparent and timely manner.

To help parents and carers understand the complaints process and how concerns can be raised constructively, The Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust recommends the **Parentkind Parent Guide to School Complaints**. This guidance explains the difference between feedback, concerns and formal complaints, identifies who to speak to at each stage, and offers practical advice on achieving a positive resolution.

**The Parentkind Parent Guide to School Complaints is provided at Appendix 1 to this policy and should be read alongside the Trust's Complaints Policy. The guide is intended to support parents and carers and does not replace or amend the Trust's complaints procedure, which will take precedence in the event of any inconsistency.**

## **5. Roles and responsibilities**

### **5.1 The complainant**

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

- Follow these procedures
- Co-operate with the academy or trust throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Do not approach individual governors about the complaint
- Do not publish details about the complaint on social media

### **5.2 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

### **5.3 The complaints co-ordinator**

The complaints co-ordinator can be:

- The [headteacher/CEO]
- 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
- Make sure the process runs smoothly by liaising with staff members, the executive headteacher/ headteacher/head of school, chair of governors/trustees, clerk, CEO and 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

#### **5.4 Clerk to the local governing body and trust board**

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
- Arrange the complaints hearing
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing

#### **5.5 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

### **6. 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

#### **6.1 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 academy 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

#### **6.2 Complaints about our fulfilment of early years requirements**

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the trust's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. Academies 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 an academy is not meeting Early Year Foundation Stage requirements, by:

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

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

## 7. Stages of complaints against academies, the trust or trustees

We have adopted a 4-stage process for dealing with complaints:

- Stage 1 – informal resolution
- Stage 2 – formal investigation
- Stage 3 – local governing body panel hearing
- Stage 4 – review by the trust board

### 7.1 Stage 1: informal

The Trust is committed to resolving concerns quickly, fairly and informally wherever possible. Most concerns can be addressed through early discussion without the need to invoke the formal complaints procedure.

The complainant should raise their concern as soon as possible and within the timescales set out in Section 5.1 of this policy.

Concerns should normally be raised with the member of academy staff directly involved. Where this is not appropriate, or where the complainant remains concerned, the matter should be raised with the relevant senior leader or the Headteacher. Concerns may be raised in person, by telephone, by email or in writing. If the complainant is unsure who to contact, they should contact the academy office, who will direct the concern to the appropriate member of staff.

The academy will acknowledge receipt of the concern within **one academy working day**. The acknowledgement will outline how the concern will be managed and provide an indicative timescale for responding.

Where appropriate, the informal stage may include:

- discussion with the complainant by telephone or in person;
- a meeting with the relevant member of staff, senior leader or Headteacher;

- enquiries to establish the facts;
- consideration of any evidence provided by the complainant.

A meeting will only be arranged where this is considered appropriate and likely to assist in resolving the concern. The complainant may be accompanied by a friend or relative for support if requested in advance.

Following any enquiries or meeting, the academy will provide a written response **within three academy working days** wherever reasonably practicable. The response will normally be issued by email or letter. Where additional time is required due to the complexity of the matter or staff availability, the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay and provided with a revised timescale.

A written record of the concern, the actions taken and the outcome will be retained by the academy in accordance with the Trust's record retention arrangements.

Where the concern relates to the Headteacher, the informal stage will be managed by an appropriate member of the Trust's Central Team. Where the concern relates to a member of the Local Governing Body, the matter will also be managed by an appropriate member of the Trust's Central Team. Where the concern relates to the Chief Executive Officer, the Chair of Trustees will determine who will manage the informal stage.

If the concern cannot be resolved through the informal resolution process, or if the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may submit a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this procedure. Requests to progress to Stage 2 should normally be made in writing within **ten academy working days** of receiving the outcome of the informal stage.

## 7.2 Stage 2: formal

The formal stage involves the complainant putting the complaint in writing (unless the complainant has a sufficient reason to request a reasonable adjustment be made to amend this). This letter should provide details such as:

- Why the complainant was unhappy with the outcome from the informal stage
- Relevant dates and times
- The names of witnesses of events
- What the complainant feels would resolve the complaint

The letter should be submitted alongside copies of any relevant documents.

### Addressing the complaint

Complaints not involving the headteacher or a member of the local governing body should be directed to the executive headteacher or headteacher.

Complaints involving the headteacher or a member of the local governing body should be directed to the chair of the local governing body.

### Investigation

The complainant will receive written acknowledgement of their complaint within **3 working days**.

The headteacher or the chair of the local governing body will then conduct their own investigation.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- The entire local governing body or
- The majority of the local governing body

A member of the trust central team will conduct the investigation.

The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within **10 working days**.

If the academy is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions to be taken to resolve the complaint.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and wishes to proceed to the next stage of this procedure, they should inform the clerk to the governing board in writing within **5 working days**.

### **7.3 Stage 3: review panel**

#### **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 will be appointed by the chair of the academy governors and 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 a senior member of the central trust team. The panel cannot be made up solely of local governing body members, as they are not independent of the management and running of the academy.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- The entire local governing body or
- The majority of the local governing body

The panel will be made up of governors of the academy and a senior member of the central trust team.

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 5 working 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 5 working days before the date of the meeting.

The board 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 or requested prior to the start of the meeting. 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 academy, 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 an academy 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 academies/trust/ or trustees representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and academy 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 academies/trust/ or trustees.

### **The outcome**

The committee can:

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

If the complaint is upheld, the committee will:

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

The academies/trust or trustees will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 3 working days.

#### **7.4 Stage 4: review by the trust board**

Where the academies/trust or trustees -based complaints procedure has been completed, and the complainant does not feel their complaint has been addressed to their satisfaction, they may contact the trust in writing to request a review of the complaint investigation.

They can do this by:

➤ Email: [info@lhmat.com](mailto:info@lhmat.com)

The written request should include a summary of the complaint, along with any relevant dates, times and evidence and must include clarification as to why previous stages did not resolve the matter.

The trust cannot overturn decisions on complaints made during the academy's complaints procedure. However, it can assess whether the academy considered the complaint appropriately. If the academy is found not to have considered the complaint appropriately, the trust will request that the complaint is reconsidered within 10 working days.

### **7. Referring complaints on completion of the academy and trust procedures**

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the academy or trust 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 academy or trust's decision about a complaint but will intervene if an academy or trust has:

- Breached a clause in its funding agreement
- Failed to act in line with its duties under education law
- Acted (or is proposing to act) unreasonably when exercising its functions

If the complaints procedure is found not to meet regulations, the trust will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

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

[www.gov.uk/complain-about-academy](http://www.gov.uk/complain-about-academy)

We will include this information in the outcome letter to complainants.

### **8. Unreasonable and persistent complaints**

#### **8.1 Unreasonable complaints**

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them 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 complaints investigation process

- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints 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 academy's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to the ESFA
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Makes excessive demands on academy 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 trust what is deemed to be unreasonable.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the academy/trust 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 academy/trust will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking. If the behaviour continues, the academy/trust 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 academy 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 academy premises and ensuring appropriate measures of support are provided to staff where they are the subject of aggression and/or violence.

## 8.2 Serial/persistent complaints

If the complainant contacts the academy/trust 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
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts the academy/trust 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
- The academy/trust have reason to believe the individual is contacting the academy/trust with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience
- Where the academy/trust decide to stop responding, they will inform the individual that they intend to do so. They will also explain that they 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

## 8.3 Duplicate complaints

If the academy/trust has resolved a complaint under this procedure and received a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, the academy/trust will assess whether there are aspects that they hadn't previously considered, or any new information that needs to be taken into account.

If the academy/trust is satisfied that there are no new aspects, it will:

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

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

## 8.4 Complaint campaigns

Where the academy/trust receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the academy, the academy/trust may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the academy/trust website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the academy's/trust's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

## 9. Record-keeping and confidentiality

The academy/trust will record the progress of all complaints, including information about:

- Actions taken at all stages
- The stage at which the complaint was resolved
- The final outcome

The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes related 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.

In the case of complaints about the trust or central staff, these records will be managed by the clerk to the board of trustees and will be stored securely in the trust's offices under restricted access.

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 academy inspection.

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

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole local governing body of the academy (or the entire trust board) in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

## 10. Learning lessons

The Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the executive headteacher/headteacher, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the academy/trust can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

The trust board / CEO / central team will receive regular reports on the types of complaints received in each academy in order to support the development of appropriate support structures, and to inform any improvements to procedures or practice.

## 11. Monitoring arrangements

The local governing body/trustees will monitor the effectiveness of the academy complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly.

This policy will be reviewed by trust board once annually.

At each review, the policy will be approved by Lighthouse Multi Academy Trust

## 13. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Suspension and permanent exclusion policy
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- Special educational needs policy and information report
- Privacy notices

Parentkind



Department  
for Education

Ofsted  
raising standards  
improving lives



IET  
IMPROVING  
EDUCATION  
TOGETHER



Parent-friendly  
schools

# Parent guide to school complaints



# Working together to resolve issues

Parents and schools share the same goal: supporting children's education. Sometimes questions or concerns arise. This guide gives you clear steps to share your views and resolve issues quickly and positively.

## Why this matters

We know you value clear communication and want your feedback to make a difference.

When the process feels unclear or slow, it can be frustrating and leave you feeling unsure about what to do next. By giving you simple, transparent steps for raising issues, we aim to help you feel heard and supported.

## How this guide helps

Most issues can be resolved quickly when you know who to speak to and what to expect.

This guide will support you to follow your school's complaint procedure. Our goal is to keep the focus on your child's education while building positive, supportive partnerships between you and the school.

# Five steps to making a school complaint

When issues come up, you need to know how to raise these with the school to get an outcome that supports you and your child.

Relationships between parents and schools last for several years. Ensuring mutual trust and respect is essential to making them work in the best interests of your child.

Let's build parent and school partnerships based on our shared commitment to a great education for all. We know these matters are incredibly important to parents, but everything is founded on good intentions.

The best way to resolve concerns is through clear, respectful communication.





## What kind of issue is it?

Complaints come in different shapes and sizes. The best first step is to identify what kind of issue it is, to make sure you can get the quickest action with your school.

Is it feedback?

You need to be heard

Sometimes you will want to share your voice with your school without needing them to respond, but you expect them to listen and take it on board. Feedback is often sought by schools who want to hear and adapt to parents' views.

Is it a concern?

You need an answer

Sometimes you have a worry or doubt over an important issue and you are looking for reassurance. Schools should take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

Is it a complaint?

You need action

Sometimes you are dissatisfied with the school's actions or lack of action. Your school will have a formal complaints procedure that is available to you (likely published on their website) with the steps you need to take to complain.

## 2

## Who in the school do I go to?

Often issues can be best resolved by the person closest to your child. Who is best to hear your view at your school?

*Discuss with their teacher/form tutor*

Go to them first for anything that directly involves your child's classroom experience. Teachers know your child best and can usually sort things quickly.

Examples: homework, friendships, behaviour, day-to-day concerns.

*Raise to a middle or senior leader*

Take it here if the issue is wider than just one lesson, or if it can't be resolved by the teacher. Leaders have oversight across classes and can coordinate support.

Examples: bullying, additional support, repeated behaviour issues.

*Escalate it with the headteacher*

Go here for whole-school issues, serious concerns, or if earlier steps haven't worked. The head is responsible for the school and final decisions before governors are involved.

Examples: safeguarding, school policies, staff conduct, health and safety.

*Remember - always check your school's complaint policy.*

# 3

## How do I raise my complaint?

Concerns are best resolved in discussion with your school. Complaints are best resolved when documented with your school. Follow these tips as you raise your issue.

### *Follow one level at a time*

Start with a query aimed at resolving things quickly with those closest to your child, and only escalate if you truly need to.

### *Start with the facts*

Write down what happened, when, and who was involved. Be clear, relevant and avoid long stories.

### *Keep a record*

Note when you've spoken to a teacher or leader, so you can show you have followed the right steps.

### *Stay objective*

Avoid accusations against individuals, direct your issue toward the processes or decisions that led to the issue.

### *Suggest a clear outcome*

Be clear on what you are looking for from the school and ensure it is realistic, so they can see if it is possible.

### *Be positive*

Make your complaint constructive, focused on solutions, and trust your school to listen.

# 4

## When to expect a response?

Different schools have different policies for handling complaints. You can trust that they are following their policy as they look into your complaint.

*Check the school's policy for timescales*

Your school's complaints policy will be published on their website. Schools will normally outline how long they expect an outcome to take in that policy. Your school's policy should always be the best guidance to follow.

*Ask for a written*

### **acknowledgement**

If you have written a formal complaint to your school, they will usually acknowledge it quickly. Normally they will detail the timescales for investigating and responding to you and may ask for more details.

*Complaint resolution times will vary*

Complex complaints may take weeks of investigation. You may not always get updates, but trust that the school is following their policy, investigating and deciding the best action. You should always get a response to your complaint.

# 5

## Where to escalate a complaint?

Once you have fully followed your school's complaint procedure, you may still feel you need action from your school and there are a few ways that may apply to you. It's best to check who it should be escalated with to get it resolved quickly: contacting several people at once could slow things down.

*Is it for your school's governing body or trustees?*

To be considered if you are unhappy with the school's response. Schools will normally have an escalation process that allows parents to seek a further review of their complaint by a panel which may involve governors or trustees.

*Is it for the Department for Education (DfE)?*

To be considered if you are unhappy with the way your complaint has been handled or the school is preventing you from following the complaints process. In some circumstances, DfE can consider if the school has followed relevant statutory guidance and education law.

*Is it*

**for Ofsted?**

Ofsted do not resolve disputes between parents and schools. They may keep your complaint on file for their next inspection but don't always provide a response to parents.

# How complaints go wrong

**Tensions can run high when you're concerned about your child, but some approaches make matters worse.**

## *Using social media*

Sharing your complaint on social media can be harmful to those involved and will not lead to a quicker resolution.

## *Building a crowd*

Other parents may share your views, but your complaint should be specific to you and your child.

## *Targeting people*

Making it personal to individual school staff members can take things too far, keep it to challenging school policy.

## *Behaving aggressively*

Abusive and aggressive behaviour will never be tolerated by a school and can lead to consequences for you.

## *Only use AI with caution*

AI doesn't always get it right when citing laws and can make a complaint more complex than necessary.

## *Lacking partnership*

Having a good relationship with your school is important and it benefits all to move on after complaints are resolved.

*The outcome of a formal complaint is often a resolution, where parents and the school have worked together to listen and take action to support the child's education.*

## **Where parents act unreasonably**

In extreme circumstances, there can be consequences for parents where there is bullying and harassing behaviour towards the school. If parents use abusive language, are threatening or use intimidation, the school could:

### **Pause complaints**

Typically the first step is for the school to pause the complaints process until the unacceptable behaviour stops, and the school can resume the process.

### **Issue a verbal or written warning**

This sets clear expectations for future conduct and the school may issue a communications plan to reduce risk of confrontation.

### **Ban parents from school grounds**

In persistent or extreme cases of abusive behaviour, a school may take action by placing a ban on parents. The ban is usually issued in writing by the headteacher, though in some cases the local authority, academy trust or governing body may write one instead. Parents will have the right to appeal.

# Powering positive partnerships between families and schools

This guide has been created to further support parents. Built with wisdom, research and care by expert partners and members of the Improving Education Together board (IET), led by the Secretary of State for Education.

- Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
- The Catholic Education Service
- The Confederation of School Trusts (CST)
- GMB Union
- The Local Government Association (LGA)
- The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)
- The National Education Union (NEU)
- National Governance Association (NGA)
- The Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA)
- Unison
- Community Trade Union
- NASUWT
- The Department for Education
- Ofsted

# Get more insights, resources and support

Parentkind is on a mission to enrich the educational experience for every child - both at home and at school. We empower anyone with parental or educational responsibility with the knowledge, ideas and resources to give young people the very best start in life. As one of the largest federated charities in the UK, Parentkind has a network of 23,500 Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), parent councils and schools, and mobilises more than 100,000 volunteers to raise vital funds for schools.

[www.parentkind.org](http://www.parentkind.org)

This guide is not legal advice and is subject to future change.

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