



**LIFE ACADEMIES TRUST**

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# Complaints Policy

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## Introduction

“We can talk with someone about anything even if it’s awful or small”

At LIFE Academies Trust we actively encourage pupils and parents to contact us about anything and everything related to learning and school. We welcome news about successes and important events outside of school and we appreciate feedback on all school-related matters. We hope for open, positive, solution-focussed conversations and exchanges of information and we will also provide positive feedback on the great work students are doing. Receiving a phone-call from school is not always a negative experience!

## Definitions

- A concern may be defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought’.
- A complaint may be defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action’.
- A “grievance” is an issue raised by a member of staff where they feel the school has not implemented a policy or process fairly or properly. Grievances will be dealt with in line with the school’s Grievance Policy.
- Unreasonable complaints include:
  - Vexatious complaints which:
    - Are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, and repetitious.
    - Insist upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason.
    - Insist upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner.
    - Are designed to cause disruption or annoyance.
    - Demand for redress which lacks any serious purpose or value.
  - Serial or persistent complaints:
    - Are duplicated, sent by the same complainant once the initial complaint has been closed.
- Duplicate complaints are identical complaints received from a complainant’s spouse, partner, grandparent or child. These complaints will not be addressed again, the individual making the second complaint will be informed that the complaint has been dealt with on a local level and if they are dissatisfied with the result, they can appeal to the DfE
- Persistent complainers – a parent/carer or member of the public who complains about issues, either informally or formally, or frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the Academy, and whose behaviour is unreasonable.

## How to raise a concern or make a complaint

At LIFE Academies Trust, we aim to resolve all concerns and complaints at the earliest possible stage and we are dedicated to continuing to provide the highest quality of education possible throughout the procedure.

Our policy has been created to deal with any concern or complaint against a member of staff or the school as a whole, relating to any aspects of the school or the provision of facilities or services. It is designed to ensure that the school's policy is straightforward, impartial, non-adversarial, allows a full and fair investigation, respects confidentiality and delivers an effective response and appropriate redress.

Any person, including a member of the public, is able to make a complaint about the provision of facilities or services that the school provides. This policy outlines the procedure that the complainant and school must follow. NB. We actively discourage the use of social media for airing dissatisfaction with our school – we are fiercely proud of our school and its excellent standing in the community. Where there are concerns and issues, we expect all members of our community to communicate with us by using the procedure outlined in this policy and only through official channels.

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 time frame 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 next school day.

If at any point we cannot meet the time scales 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

Once a complaint has been made, it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

### **How to raise a concern**

In general, concerns are handled within the school and are best addressed directly to the member of staff involved. A concern may be raised in person, in writing or by telephone. Even with concerns, it is best to use the proforma in Appendix A. This ensures clarity of communication and makes clear what the complainant would like as an outcome of the concern.

### **How to raise a complaint**

In general, complaints are handled within the school. A complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. A complaint may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

There are three Stages in investigating and reviewing complaints that are received:

- **Stage 1** aims to resolve the complaint through an informal process at the appropriate level.
- **Stage 2** is the first formal stage where a formal written complaint is considered by the Academy Principal (or the Chair of the Trust Board if the complaint is about the Academy Principal), who has responsibility for dealing with complaints. We always advise that Stage 1 has been completed, before issues and concerns are raised as more formal complaints.

- **Stage 3** is the next step once Stage 2 is complete. It involves a review of the complaint by the Chair of Trust Board who will convene a complaint's review panel: one panel member being independent of the management and running of the academy.

Regardless of the stage of the complaint, it is best to use the proforma in Appendix A. This ensures clarity of communication and makes clear what the complainant would like as an outcome of the complaint.

### **Complaints Relating to Fulfilment of the EYFS Requirements**

In order to comply with the statutory framework, written concerns or complaints relating to the fulfilment of the EYFS Requirements will be dealt with in accordance with the following process:

- The written concern/complaint will be acknowledged within 5 days;
- The Academy Principal will investigate the concern or complaint which may include meeting with the complainant. A written response notifying the complainant of the outcome of the investigation will be sent within 28 days of the complaint being received.
- Where the complainant remains dissatisfied, the complaint will be dealt with in accordance with stage 3 of this policy.

A record of the written complaints and their outcome will be maintained and made available to Ofsted on request.

Parents are further advised that where they have concerns regarding the Academy meeting EYFS requirements they may contact Ofsted on 0300 123 4666.

The Academy expect parents/carers/members of the public who raise either informal concerns or formal complaints with the Academy to:

- a) treat all Academy staff with courtesy and respect;
- b) respect the needs and well-being of pupils and staff in the Academy;
- 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 the Academy work and allow the Academy a reasonable time to respond;
- f) recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time;

### **Stage 1 – Informal complaints**

It is to be hoped that most complaints can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis. Complaints should be raised with either the class teacher, progress leader / subject leader, member of the senior leadership team or Academy Principal. Complainants should not approach individual Trustees to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 of the procedure.

When considering complaints, we aim to be peaceful problem-solvers, whilst remaining clear and robust in terms of standards and expectations. Keeping the focus on learning always results in great outcomes and positive communication.

The member of staff the complaint has been made against can discuss the complaint with the Academy Principal. The Academy Principal may seek support and/or delegate the matter to another member of staff to act as a complaints' co-ordinator. If the complaint is about the Academy Principal, the Academy Principal may direct the complainant to the Chair of the Trust Board and/or refer the matter to a member of the Senior Leadership Team to act as a complaints' co-ordinator.

To prevent any later challenge or disagreement over what was said, brief notes of meetings and telephone calls are kept and a copy of any written response is added to the record. These notes are kept securely on the school's ICT system and, where appropriate, encrypted.

We will aim to acknowledge your complaint as soon as possible. Please be aware that all staff have teaching commitments and/or other responsibilities. An immediate response may not always be possible and, at the very latest, we will respond to your complaint within three working days.

We will arrange a meeting between the complainant and the relevant member of staff to discuss the issue in a respectful and informal manner to seek a mutual resolution. This may be mediated by the Academy Principal and/or another member of staff acting as a complaints' coordinator. We will only arrange a meeting where we think it is beneficial to both parties.

At this stage, the complainant will be asked what they think might resolve the issue – any acknowledgement that the Academy could have handled the situation better is not an admission of unlawful or negligent action. At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If an appropriate resolution cannot be sought at this informal level, if the issue remains unresolved, or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome following the initial discussions, the complainant may wish to proceed to the next level of the procedure – Stage 2: to make a formal complaint.

## **Stage 2: Formal Complaints**

Formal complaints must be made in writing or in person using the proforma in Appendix A of this policy. Normally, this formal written complaint should be sent to the Academy Principal. If, however, your complaint concerns the Academy Principal personally, it should be sent to the academy marked "For the attention of the Chair of the Trust Board" or sent by email to the Chair of the Trust Board via the Clerk of Trustees (clerk@biggleswadeacademy.org).

The Academy Principal, or the Clerk of Trustees if the complaint is concerning the Principal, will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) as soon as possible and no later than 3 school days after receipt of the formal complaint.

Within this investigation, the Academy Principal (or Chair of Trustees), will act as the investigator and will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The investigator can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

*Note 1: The Academy Principal may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken. The Chair of Trustees may delegate to another Trustee but not the decision to be taken.*

If the complaint is about the Academy Principal, or a member of the Trust Board (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled Trustee will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

Complaints about the Academy Principal or member of the Trust Board must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or the entire Trust Board or the majority of the Trust Board, Stage 2 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the Trust Board. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

The investigator will investigate the complaint. During the investigation, the investigator will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

As part of the investigation into the complaint, the complainant may be invited to a meeting to discuss the complaint and clarify any further details required. If they wish, the complainant can ask someone to accompany them to help explain the reasons for the complaint. The investigator may also be accompanied by a suitable person if they wish.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the investigator will provide a formal written response, usually no later than 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the investigator 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 the school will take to resolve the complaint.

During the investigation there may be ongoing dialogue with the complainant. The Investigator will state when they have completed the investigation under stage 2 of the policy.

Where the complainant remains dissatisfied s/he may request the complaint is dealt with at Stage 3. Any such request **must** be set out in writing, stating where the complainant remains dissatisfied, what remedies requested have not been given and be lodged within **10** school days of the complainant receiving the findings in writing of stage 2 completion.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a panel hearing consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, with one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school. This is the final stage of the complaints' procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk of the Trust Board, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response. The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 10 school days of receipt of the request to move the complaint to Stage 3. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

The complainant must supply any additional information at least two days prior to the day of the meeting to allow the panel to review in advance.. The committee will only consider evidence related to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

If the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or the entire Trust Board or the majority of the Trust Board, Stage 3 will be heard by a committee of independent, co-opted Trustees, selected by the Board of Trustees and organised by the Clerk.

A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if an Academy employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

*Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints' procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under the academy's internal confidential procedures, as required by law using our Disciplinary Policy, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.*

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 5 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 3 school days before the meeting.
- Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 2 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.
- The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

During the meeting, you can expect there to be opportunities for:

- you to explain your complaint;
- you to hear the academy's response from the Academy Principal;
- you to question the Academy Principal about the complaint and the response;
- you to be questioned by the Academy Principal about the complaint and the response;
- the panel members to be able to question you and the Academy Principal;
- any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the chair's approval) and all parties to have the right to question all witnesses;
- you and the Academy Principal to make a final statement.

At the end of the meeting, everyone apart from the committee will leave.

The committee will consider all the evidence submitted. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and the school with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the school

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 the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection by the Principal.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing.

### **Next Steps**

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the ESFA after they have completed Stage 3.

The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by LIFE Academies Trust. They will consider whether LIFE Academies Trust has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed [Part 7 of the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#). It will also look into:

- Whether there was undue delay, or the academy did not comply with its own complaints procedure
- Whether the academy was in breach of its funding agreement with the secretary of state
- Whether the academy has failed to comply with any other legal obligation

The ESFA may advise the Academy of remedial actions to be taken if they consider appropriate. The complainant can refer their complaint to the ESFA online at: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:



Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit  
 Education and Skills Funding Agency  
 Cheylesmore House  
 5 Quinton Road  
 Coventry  
 CV1 2WT

**Anonymous complaints**

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Academy Principal or Chair of the Trust Board, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

**Time scales**

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

**Complaints received outside of term time**

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

**Scope of this complaints’ procedure**

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by LIFE Academies Trust, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the local authority.
Matter likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Integrated front door previously MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub).</p> <p>LADO – 0300 300 5026 / 0300 300 8142</p> <p>Integrated Front Door - 01234 718700 between 8.45am and 5.20pm Monday to Thursday and 8.45 – 4.20 on Fridays. Out of hours calls</p>

	should be made to the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) on 0300 3008123
Exclusion of children from school *	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>
Whistleblowing	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should follow this policy. They may also complain directly to the Department for Education (see link above) depending on the substance of their complaint</p>
Staff grievances	Complaints from members of staff will be dealt with under the Academy's grievance policy.
Staff conduct	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the Academy's disciplinary policy</p> <p>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.</p>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, 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. If this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action against the school in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

### **Persistent complaints and unreasonably persistent complaints**

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure

- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive
- Knowingly provides false information
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints' procedure
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refused to co-operate with this complaints' procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value
- Changes the desired outcomes of the original complaint

### **Steps we will take**

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, 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.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. 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

### **Stopping responding**

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

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 our school site.

### **Duplicate complaints**

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

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

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

If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

### **Complaint campaigns**

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

- Publishing a single response on the school website.
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants.

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

### **Resolving complaints**

At each stage in the procedure, LIFE Academies Trust wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Very occasionally, the academy will feel that it needs, regretfully, to close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied with the response.

We will do all we can to help to resolve a complaint against the academy, but sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all of the complainant's wishes. Sometimes it is simply a case of "agreeing to disagree".

If a complainant persists in making representations to the academy - to the Academy Principal, designated trustee, Chair of the Trust Board or anyone else - this can be extremely time-

consuming and can detract from our responsibility to look after the interests of all the children in our care.

For this reason, we are entitled to close correspondence (including personal approaches, as well as letters and telephone calls) on a complaint where we feel that we have taken all reasonable action to resolve the complaint and the complaint has completed all 3 stages of the procedure.

### **Withdrawal of a complaint**

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

### **Main contacts are as follows:**

Biggleswade Academy  
Mead End  
Biggleswade  
Beds  
SG18 8JU

[email: enquiries@biggleswadeacademy.org](mailto:enquiries@biggleswadeacademy.org)

Contact details for Progress Leaders, Senior Leadership team and Designated Safeguard Lead are available from the school website

## Appendix A: Formal Complaint

This form should be used to submit a formal complaint to the school.

Send the completed formal complaint to the Academy Principal         

If your complaint relates to the Academy Principal, send it to the Chair of the Trust Board. You are advised to keep a copy. Please be aware that the information will, in normal circumstances, be shared with any person/s complained about. Please think carefully about what you write.

Name of parent/carer making the complaint:	
Phone Number:	
Email:	
Student's name:	
1. Describe briefly the nature of your complaint. Please include all relevant facts, dates and names of people involved and any witnesses:	
2. Has this complaint been raised at an informal level? Please include the following: - When you first raised the issue and with whom - What action was taken as a result of your informal complaint? - Is this a one-off issue or part of a chain of events?	
3. What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
4. Have you informed any external agency / third party about your complaint?      YES / NO	

<p>If yes, do you wish the external agency / third party to receive correspondence? YES / NO</p> <p>If yes, please identify the external agency / third party and provide an email and postal address and telephone number.</p>	
Print Name	
Signed	
Date	

<b>Official use</b>	
<b>Date acknowledgement sent:</b>	
<b>By whom:</b>	
<b>Complaint referred to:</b>	
<b>Action taken:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

## **Appendix B: Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Complainant**

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

### **Investigator**

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
  - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
  - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
  - consideration of records and other relevant information
  - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

### **The investigator should:**

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the Academy Principal or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The Academy Principal or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing



the appropriate escalation details.

### **Complaints Co-ordinator**

*(This could be the Academy Principal / designated complaints trustee or other staff member providing administrative support)*

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, Academy Principal, Chair of the Trust Board or the Clerk and to ensure the smooth running of the complaints' procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
  - sharing third party information
  - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

### **Clerk to the Trust Board**

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- 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)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example: stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

### **Committee Chair**

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- 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.

If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting

- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the academy has one).

### **Committee Member**

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so  
No trustee may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant