

Documentation Information			
Reviewed By	Full Governing Body	Responsibility	People and Stakeholders
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Review Cycle	Bi-Annual	Ratified by FGB	08/12/16

Aims of the policy

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

Part 1: General Principles of complaints

Dealing with Complaints – Initial concerns

It is the LiFE Multi Academy Trust's aim to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. By taking an informal concern seriously at the earliest stage we aim to reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

The LiFE Multi Academy Trust feels that these key messages deal with complaints but the underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases the class teacher or the individual delivering the service in the case of extended Academy provision, will receive the first approach. We find it helpful if staff were able to resolve any issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.

Dealing with Complaints – Formal procedures

The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve an issue is unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further. All formal complaints must be made in writing to the appropriate person.

The individual schools within the LiFE Multi Academy Trust will nominate a member of staff to have responsibility for the operation and management of the school complaints procedure, who will appoint an investigating officer.

Framework of Principles

The LiFE Multi Academy Trust feels that an effective Complaints Procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;
- be easily **accessible** and **publicised**;
- be **simple** to understand and use;
- be **impartial**;
- be **non-adversarial**;

- allow **swift** handling with established **time-limits** for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and **fair** investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respect people's desire for **confidentiality**;
- address all the points at issue and provide an **effective** response and **appropriate** redress, where necessary;
- provide **information** to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

Investigating Complaints

It is the school's responsibility to ensure that they:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure the schools within the LiFE Multi Academy Trust aims to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved such as:

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

It would be useful to the school if complainants could suggest or be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. It should be noted that an admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

Each school within the LiFE Multi Academy Trust tries to promote and identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

Vexatious Complaints

If properly followed, a good complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the chair of the Governing Body is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Further information can be found in Annex F regarding the definition of a persistent complainant

Human Rights

In implementing this policy the School 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.

Time-Limits

Complaints need to be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. An effective complaints procedure will have realistic time limits for each action within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

Part 2: The Formal Complaints Procedure

The Stages of Complaints

Each school aims to resolve issue using the following stages. A flow chart can be found in Annex D. At each stage we intend to clarify exactly who will be involved, what will happen, and how long it will take. There may, on occasion, be the need for some flexibility; for example, the possibility of further meetings between the complainant and the member of staff directly involved and further investigations may be required by the Head of School or the Executive Head Teacher after a meeting with the complainant.

The three stages are:

- Stage 1: complaint heard by a staff member or investigating officer (though not the subject of the complaint);
- Stage 2: complaint heard by Head of School;
- Stage 3: complaint heard by Executive Head Teacher;
- Stage 4: complaint heard by Governing Body's complaints appeal panel;
- Stage 5: complaint reviewed by the Board of Directors'

Please note it may be necessary to go straight to stage 2.

If a concern relates directly to the conduct of the Head of School or the Executive Head or another member of the Governing Body, contact the Chair of the Multi-Academy Trust via the Clerk to Multi-Academy Trust, on carlyharper@bosworthacademy.org.uk and go to stage 4.

If a concern has already been raised where Executive Head Teacher or another member of Governing Body has been involved in the issue previously, contact the Chair of Multi-Academy Trust via the Clerk to Multi-Academy Trust, on carlyharper@bosworthacademy.org.uk

The Academy's complaints procedure can be found in Annex B.

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome after stage three has been completed they can contact the DFE, EFA or OFSTED – see their policies on complaints for further details.

Part 3 – Managing and Recording Complaints

Recording Complaints

Each school will ensure that all complaints and outcomes are logged on a central record. A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. An example of a complaint form can be found in Annex E. At the end of a meeting or telephone call, the school staff handling the complaint ensure that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. A brief note of meetings and telephone calls can be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record/log.

Governing Body Review

The Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. The complaints information that is shared with the whole Governing Body will not name individuals.

As well as addressing an individual's complaints, the process of listening to, and resolving complaints will contribute to school improvement. When individual complaints are heard, the LiFE Multi Academy Trust will try to identify underlying issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the LiFE Multi Academy Trust and the Governing Body will also where appropriate be a useful tool in evaluating the school's performance.

Publicising the Procedure

There is a legal requirement for the Complaints Procedures to be publicised. The LiFE Multi Academy Trust will ensure that it is available on the school's website and staff handbook.

For further information you can request the following guidance:

ANNEX A: Section 29 of the Education Act 2002

ANNEX B: Academy complaints procedure explanation of stages

ANNEX C: Checklist for a Panel Hearing

ANNEX D: Flow Chart – Summary of dealing with complaints

ANNEX E: Complaint Form

ANNEX F: Explanation of persistent complainant and examples of model letters