



The Tiffin Girls' School

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

REVISED JUNE 2026

Approved by: Governing Board

Introduction

1. The Tiffin Girls' School (the School) endeavours to provide the best education possible for all of its students in an open and transparent environment. We welcome any feedback that we receive from parents/carers, students and third parties, and we accept that not all of this will be positive. Where concerns are raised, the School intends for these to be dealt with fairly, openly, promptly and without prejudice, whilst in compliance with the DfE's guidance on handling complaints and the **Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014**
2. The School aims to ensure that concerns are handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. Our formal complaints procedure is only necessary if efforts to resolve the concern informally are unsuccessful. Where you have a concern about any aspect of the School or your child's education or wellbeing, you should raise this with your child's form tutor, Head of Year or relevant subject teacher in the first instance. Ideally, they will be able to address your concerns on the spot, or can arrange a meeting with you to discuss. Please see Stage 1 below for further information.
3. The School is committed to on-going improvement. Therefore, 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 School will identify any underlying issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the School and the Governing Board helps us in evaluating our performance.
4. The School encourages parents and others to approach the School with any concerns and refrain from airing concerns about the School and its staff on social media sites. Posting negative comments on social media can cause damage and upset and is often counterproductive to student education.
5. All staff will be made aware of this procedure and are expected to review this document regularly in order that they are familiar with our process of dealing with concerns and can be of assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.
6. This procedure does not apply to concerns and complaints relating to the matters listed in Appendix A.
7. Anonymous concerns or complaints will not normally be investigated under this procedure. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether there are exceptional circumstances to justify conducting an investigation into the issues raised.

8. We reserve the right not to consider complaints that:
 - are, or have been, subject to legal action
 - are malicious (that is, they are without sufficient grounds and serve only to cause annoyance)
 - use obscene, racist or homophobic language
 - threaten or contain personally offensive remarks about members of our staff
 - are repeatedly submitted with only minor differences after we have fully addressed the complaint
9. In this procedure:
 - 'school days' excludes weekends, INSET days, school holidays and periods of partial or total school closure
 - 'parent' means a biological parent, carer or anyone who has parental responsibility or care for a child
 - 'meeting' means an in person or virtual meeting (i.e. by telephone or video conference where all parties can participate verbally), virtual meetings will only be held in the event that all parties have access to appropriate equipment to attend and are happy to do so. If the parties are unable to meet virtually and the meeting must take place in person, the meeting may be postponed until it is deemed safe to hold an in person meeting, at the discretion of the school.
10. Please refer to Part 1 of this procedure if you are a parent or Part 2 if you are a member of the local community.
11. To investigate your complaint properly and fairly, we have implemented a staged approach. We anticipate that all concerns and complaints that arise will be resolved at Stage 1 or Stage 2, outlined below.
12. The School acknowledges that raising concerns or complaints can be a difficult, emotional, and stressful time, particularly for parents and carers. We expect our staff to always be respectful and courteous when dealing with you. We also expect you to treat our staff with the same respect and courtesy, and for communication to remain calm at all times. We will not accept abusive and threatening behaviour towards our staff from anybody at any time. The procedure under Part 3 will only be used on very rare occasions to deal with repetitious and/or vexatious complaints or complaints pursued in an otherwise unreasonable manner.
13. Concerns or complaints should be brought to our attention as soon as possible. Any matter raised more than three months after the incident being complained of (or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents) will not be considered unless the Headteacher or Chair of Governors (as appropriate) accepts that there are exceptional circumstances to justify accepting the complaint out of time.
14. Where a complaint is received outside of term time, the School will consider it to have been received on the first school day following the holiday period.
15. On rare occasions the School may receive complaints from a number of individuals relating to the same issue. In order to deal with these complaints efficiently the School will follow the procedure set out in Part 4.
16. The timeframes referred to in this policy are our usual timeframes and the School will seek to adhere to these timeframes where possible.

17. If it becomes necessary to alter the time limits and deadlines set out within this procedure, you will be advised accordingly and given an explanation as to why this has been the case and provided with revised timescales. This may include processing a subject access request linked to the complaint. If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority safeguarding teams or tribunals/courts, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.
18. Where a complaint is raised but we do not have clarity from the complainant on the issues and/or desired outcomes, we will inform the complainant what information we need to progress the complaint and pause this procedure until reasonable clarity is achieved.
19. Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. Governors have no power to act on an individual basis and it may prevent them from considering complaints at later stages.
20. If a complainant commences legal action against the School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether it would be appropriate to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.
21. At each stage in the procedure, the School's aim is 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
22. If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.
23. A record will be kept of all written formal complaints, including at what stage they were resolved and action taken by us as a result of those complaints regardless of whether they were upheld. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where:
 - access is requested by the Secretary of State
 - disclosure is required in the course of a school inspection
 - an individual has a legal right to access their own personal data contained within such documentation
 - access is granted if requested by the complainant through a Freedom of Information or subject access request.
 - under other legal authority
24. Findings and recommendations are reported to the Pay and Personnel Committee and the Headteacher. The Committee will in turn report to the Governing Board.
25. If at any formal stage of the complaint it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are necessary in order to resolve the issue, the details of this action will

remain confidential to the Headteacher. The complainant is not entitled to participate in the proceedings or receive any detail about them.

26. In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

PART 1: COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

Stage 1: Informal concerns

27. An informal concern can be raised in person, by email or by telephone. Concerns may also be raised by a third party acting on behalf of a parent, if they have appropriate authority to do so. Most enquiries and concerns can be dealt with satisfactorily by the relevant class teacher, form tutor, Head of Year or Head of Department without the need to resort to the formal procedure. We value informal meetings and discussions and encourage parents to approach staff with any concerns they may have, and aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding. This will usually be the most effective way to swiftly resolve any concerns.
28. It is always helpful if you can fully explain the nature of the concern and identify the outcome you are looking for. Where appropriate, you may be invited to an informal meeting with the member of staff most appropriate for dealing with that concern. The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure that you are clear on what action (if any) has been agreed. This may be put in writing if appropriate.
29. If the matter is brought to the attention of the Headteacher, they may decide to deal with your concerns directly at this stage. If the concerns are about the Headteacher, these should be referred directly to the Governance Professional under Stage 2.
30. The School will respect the views of a parent who indicates that they would have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff. In this case, the Headteacher will refer the parent to another designated member of staff. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved in the circumstances leading to the concern feels the same, the Headteacher may consider referring the parent to another member of staff.
31. Staff members should log all informal concerns on the school management information system and inform the Headteacher of any serious concerns.
32. There is no suggested timescale for resolution at this stage given the importance of informal discussion, although it would be expected that most issues will be resolved within 15 school days. Where no satisfactory solution has been found, you will be advised that if you wish your concerns to be considered further you should write to the Headteacher under Stage 2 of this procedure within 10 school days.

Stage 2: Formal written complaints

- 33.** If your concerns are not resolved under Stage 1, you are entitled to put your complaint in writing and send this to the Headteacher. Please use 'complaint' as the subject of your email or mark it clearly on your letter. This will ensure your correspondence gets the priority it deserves from a large volume of communications the School receives each day.
- 34.** It is important that you describe your complaint clearly and include a clear statement of the actions that you would like the School to take to resolve your complaint. We strongly encourage you to use the Complaint Form provided at Appendix B of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the School office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you. In all cases your written complaint must include:
 - the nature of the complaint
 - details of how the matter has been dealt with so far
 - the names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events and copies of relevant documentation
 - a clear statement of the actions that you would like us to take to resolve your complaint
- 35.** Your complaint will normally be acknowledged in writing within five school days of receipt. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This will normally be within 25 school days of receipt.
- 36.** If appropriate, the Headteacher (or someone appointed by them) may invite you to a meeting to clarify your complaint and to explore possible resolutions. If you accept that invitation, you may be accompanied by one other person, such as a friend, relative or interpreter, to assist you. Where possible, this meeting will take place within 15 school days of receipt of the written complaint.
- 37.** If necessary, those involved in the matter and/or those against which a complaint has been made will be interviewed. If the complaint centres on a student, the student will usually be interviewed.
- 38.** Students should normally be interviewed with their parent present, but if this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious or urgent complaint or if the student has specifically said they would prefer that their parents were not involved, another member of staff with whom the student feels comfortable should be present.
- 39.** If the matter includes a complaint relating to a member of staff, the member of staff will have the opportunity to respond to the complaint.
- 40.** Once the relevant information relating to the complaint has been reviewed, you will be provided with a written response to the complaint, including an explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the School will take to resolve the complaint.
- 41.** You will be advised that if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint, you may request that your complaint be heard by the Complaints Committee under Stage 3 of this procedure.

42. The School may engage an independent, external person to carry out the investigation into the Stage 2 complaint or to review the investigation and response at Stage 2. This may be appropriate where the complaint is particularly complex or involves legal issues.
43. If the complaint is about the Headteacher or the Headteacher has already considered your complaint under Stage 1, your complaint should be sent to the Governance Professional via governance@tiffingirls.org who will arrange for a governor to carry out the Stage 2 procedure.
44. If the complaint is about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or member of the academy trust, your complaint should be sent to the Governance Professional via governance@tiffingirls.org. The Governance Professional will arrange for another governor with no connection to the complaint to investigate the concerns in accordance with Stage 2.
45. If the complaint is about the Governing Board as a whole, your complaint should be sent to the Governance Professional via governance@tiffingirls.org. The Governance Professional will arrange for the matter to be independently investigated.
46. If the complaint is about the Governance Professional, your complaint should be sent to the Chair of Governors via chair@tiffingirls.org.
47. Please be aware that where your complaint relates to a staff member, a copy of the complaint may be shared with them in order to investigate the issues raised.

Stage 3: Referral to the Complaints Committee

48. If you are dissatisfied with the decision under Stage 2, you may request that a Complaints Committee (the Committee) be convened to hear your complaint. The Committee will principally consider how the complaint was handled at the previous stages but has discretion to review other aspects of the complaint as it sees fit. This is the final stage of the School's complaints procedure.
49. The aim of the hearing should be reconciliation and to put right things that may have gone wrong.
50. If the complaint is about the Headteacher or a member of the Governing Board (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), Stage 3 will be heard by a completely independent committee panel.
51. The Committee will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.
52. To request a referral to the Committee, you should write to the Governance Professional via governance@tiffingirls.org within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome of Stage 2. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. You should ensure that you provide copies of all relevant documents and state all the grounds for your complaint and the outcome that you are looking for.
53. Your written request will be acknowledged within five school days of receipt.

- 54.** The Governance Professional will arrange for a Committee to be convened, made up of at least three members, including:
- Two governors of the School with no prior involvement in the matter
 - One person who is independent of the management and running of the School, for example, this might be a governor from a local school or an educational professional who has no link to the School.
- 55.** The Governance Professional shall appoint one of these committee members to be the Chair of the Committee.
- 56.** Every effort will be made to convene a hearing within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 request, dependent on the availability of the Committee members. If this is not possible, the Governance Professional will provide an anticipated date and keep you informed.
- 57.** If the first identified date is not convenient for you, one further date will be offered. If this date fails to be suitable, the Committee will proceed in private and their considerations will be based on the documentation previously provided by you and the School representative. This is to ensure that the matter is resolved as soon as possible in the best interests of all parties.
- 58.** As soon as reasonably practicable and in any event at least 5 school days before the hearing, you will be sent written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing, together with brief details of the Committee members who will be present. Fair consideration will be given to any bona fide objection to a particular member of the Committee. You will also be informed of the name of the person who will be presenting the case on behalf of the School (referred to in this policy as the ‘School representative’). This may be the person who undertook the investigation at Stage 2 or another person with sufficient knowledge of the matter.
- 59.** You have the right to be accompanied to the hearing by a friend, relative or interpreter. You should notify the Governance Professional in advance if you intend to bring anyone with you. We do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the Committee hearing. Companions may not address the Committee unless they are either supporting an individual’s access arrangements (e.g. a translator or sign language interpreter) or invited to do so by and at the Committee’s discretion. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend. The Committee itself may take legal advice and/or be supported by a legal advisor at the hearing on matters of law and procedure.
- 60.** A staff member attending the hearing may wish to be supported by union representation.
- 61.** A copy of the complaint and any other documents provided by you in support of your complaint, or by the School representative in defence of the complaint, will be provided to the Committee as soon as practicable upon receipt. Copies of these documents shall also be provided to you or School representative (as applicable) at least three school days before the hearing.
- 62.** The Committee reserves the right not to consider any documentation presented by either party less than three school days prior to the meeting. The Committee is under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account. Neither the complainant nor the school representative may question any witnesses invited by the Committee to provide evidence. The Committee will not normally accept recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

63. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and informed consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.
64. The hearing will be conducted to ensure that each party has the opportunity to address the Committee. The procedure to be followed during the hearing will be explained to the parties by letter in advance of the hearing. The Governance Professional will ensure that sufficient notes are taken to record an accurate reflection of the points considered and any decisions taken or actions agreed. Electronic recordings of the hearing will not normally be permitted and, in any event, would require the consent of all those present.
65. The meeting will be held in private.
66. Unless otherwise stated, the procedure for the hearing is as follows:
- the parent and School representative will enter the meeting together
 - the Chair of the Committee will introduce the Committee members and outline the process
 - the parent will explain the complaint
 - the School representative and Committee members will question the parent
 - the School representative will explain the School's actions
 - the parent and the Committee members will question the School representative
 - the parent will sum up their complaint
 - the School representative will sum up the School's actions
 - the Chair of the Committee will explain that both parties will hear from the Committee within ten school days
 - both parties will leave together while the Committee deliberates
 - the Governance Professional and any legal advisor assisting the Committee (if applicable) will stay to assist the Committee with its decision making
67. The Governance Professional and or Committee reserves the right to modify the above procedure at their sole discretion, for example requiring the parent and the School representative to present their complaint/actions separately to the Committee in the absence of the other party.
68. A Committee may be adjourned if the Committee require further evidence or in exceptional circumstances, for example, if clarification sought by the Committee is essential to the proceedings. The adjourned date must be as soon as possible.
69. After the meeting, the Committee will consider their decision and inform you and, where relevant, the person complained about, of their decision in writing within ten school days. The letter will set out the decision of the Committee together with the reasons underpinning that decision. The Committee can (by a majority if necessary):
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
 - uphold the complaint in whole or in part
70. 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 ensure that issues of a similar nature do not happen again.
71. The decision reached by the Committee is final.

Stage 4: Referral of Complaint to Department for Education

72. If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the Complaints Committee, you are entitled to refer your complaint to the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE will only investigate the complaint in limited circumstances.
73. At the time of writing this procedure, the DfE procedure is published here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy and the online complaints form is available here: www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The role of the Governance Professional

74. The Governance Professional is the contact point for the complainant and the Complaints Committee, and should:
- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
 - liaise with staff, Headteacher and Chair of Governors (as applicable) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
 - be mindful of the timescales to respond to complaints
 - ensure that all people involved in the complaints process are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
 - ensure that the Complaints Committee has access to legal advice, where appropriate
 - set the date, time and venue of the hearing, taking reasonable steps to find a date that is convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
 - collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example: Stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing within an agreed timescale
 - minute the hearing
 - notify all parties of the Complaint Committee's decision
 - assist the academy in issuing a summary letter to the complainant

The role of the Headteacher

75. At Stage 2 of this procedure the Headteacher should:
- ensure that the complainant is fully updated throughout the Stage 2 procedure
 - ensure that the correct procedure has been followed
 - ensure that an investigation is carried out, and a report compiled
 - notify the Governance Professional if the complaint is being referred to Stage 3
76. If the complaint is regarding the Headteacher, these responsibilities will be fulfilled by the Chair of Governors.

The role of the Chair of the Complaints Committee

77. The Chair of the Complaints Committee has a key role, ensuring that:
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
 - complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease

- the remit of the Complaints Committee is explained to the complainant
- the written material is seen by everyone in attendance (provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR)
- key findings of fact are made, and that any issues not previously mentioned in writing should not be raised at the hearing and, if they are mentioned at the hearing, these should not be noted or considered by the Complaints Committee
- both the complainant and the School are given the opportunity to make their case, and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the hearing, or verbally in the hearing itself
- the Complaints Committee is open-minded, acts independently and no committee member has an external interest in the outcome or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the hearing is minuted

Summary of Complaints Procedure for Parents and Carers

Stage 1: Informal Concern	● Parent brings concern to attention of member of staff ● Issue to be resolved within 15 school days ● Where no satisfactory solution has been found, parent to be advised that they should proceed to Stage 2 within 10 school days
Stage 2: Formal Written Complaint	● Parent to put complaint in writing, preferably using Complaint Form, within 10 school days of completion of Stage 1 ● Complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school days of receipt ● Meeting with parent within 15 school days of receipt of formal complaint (where appropriate) ● Outcome of Stage 2 investigation sent to parent within 25 school days of receipt of formal complaint ● Where no satisfactory solution has been found, parent to be advised that they should proceed to Stage 3 within 10 school days
Stage 3: Referral to Complaints Committee	● Parent to request referral to Complaints Committee within 10 school days of receiving notice of the outcome of Stage 2 ● Request to be acknowledged within 5 school days of receipt ● Hearing to take place within 20 school days of receipt of request wherever possible, depending on availability of Committee ● Notification of date, time and place of the hearing and details of the Committee members present sent at least 5 school days before the hearing ● School representative and parents to submit documentation in support of their case to the Governance Professional at least 3 school days before the hearing ● Complaints Committee decision sent not more than 10 school days after the hearing

PART 2: CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS FROM OTHER PERSONS

- 78.** Part 1 of this Complaints Procedure applies only to complaints made by parents or carers of current registered students of the School. However, the School wishes to work closely with other members of the local community and will deal with their concerns and complaints as follows:
- 79.** Stage 1 - a concern regarding the School or its operations may be made to any member of staff. That member of staff will attempt to resolve the matter immediately or may, if appropriate, refer the matter to their line manager or member of the senior leadership team (SLT) who is best placed to deal with the concern. It is expected that most concerns will be responded to orally or in writing within 15 school days. If a longer period is required, you will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation.
- 80.** Stage 2 - where a concern is not resolved at Stage 1, or you wish your concerns to be dealt with immediately as a formal complaint, you should put your complaint in writing and send this to the Headteacher to investigate. You should write to the Headteacher within 10 school days of receipt of the outcome of Stage 1. The Headteacher may delegate the task of investigation and/or responding to the complaint to a member of SLT or may escalate the complaint straight to Stage 3. A formal response to the complaint will usually be provided within 25 school days of receipt of the letter of complaint although if a longer period is required to respond, you will be kept updated.
- 81.** Stage 3 - if you are not satisfied with the response at Stage 2, you may request a review by writing to the Governance Professional. You should write to the Governance Professional within 10 school days of receipt of the letter at Stage 2. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. The Governance Professional will usually arrange for a governor to consider the complaint alone or may convene a complaints committee on the same terms as set out in Part 1 of this complaints procedure. The decision at this stage will usually be sent to you within 30 school days of receipt of the request for a review. The decision at Stage 3 exhausts the School's complaints procedure.
- 82.** Stage 4 - if you are dissatisfied with the decision at Stage 3, you are entitled to refer your complaint to the Department for Education (DfE) as outlined in Part 1 of this Complaints Procedure.
- 83.** Concerns or complaints regarding the Headteacher or the School as a whole should be referred direct to the Governance Professional who will arrange for the stages above to be considered by an appropriate person.

PART 3: REPETITIOUS AND VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS AND COMPLAINTS PURSUED IN AN OTHERWISE UNREASONABLE MANNER

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

Repetitious, including serial and/or persistent complaints

85. Where the complainant's complaint is the same, similar to or based on the same facts of a complaint which has already been considered in full and we have:
- taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns; and
 - given the complainant a clear statement of our position and their options

we will write to the complainant to advise that the Complaints Procedure has been exhausted and that we will not be responding to any further correspondence in relation to these matters. The complainant will be referred to Stage 4.

Vexatious complaints

86. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines the characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaint as:
- complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
 - insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
 - insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
 - complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
 - demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value
87. Examples include but are not limited to:
- refusal to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
 - refusal to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
 - refusal to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
 - insistence on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
 - introducing trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
 - raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
 - making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
 - changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
 - seeking an unrealistic outcome, such as the inappropriate dismissal of staff
 - making excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
 - knowingly providing falsified information
 - publishing unacceptable and/or confidential information on social media or other public forums

Complaints pursued in an otherwise unreasonable manner

88. Where the complainant's behaviour or language towards staff, governors or members of the academy trust is aggressive, abusive, offensive, discriminatory or threatening or insulting personal comments are made about, or threats are made towards staff.
89. In the circumstances outlined in paragraphs 84 – 86 above, we may:
- inform the complainant that we consider their complaint to be vexatious or the manner in which they are pursuing their complaint to be unreasonable and why, and ask them to desist
 - conduct the Complaints Committee on the papers only i.e. not hold a hearing
 - refuse to consider the complaint and refer the complainant directly to Stage 4.
90. We may also restrict the complainant's access to the School e.g. requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only), requiring contact to take place with a named person only, restricting telephone calls to specified days and times or banning the complainant from the School's premises.
91. Where the complainant's behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, governors or members of the Academy Trust, we will consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.

PART 4: COMPLAINT CAMPAIGNS

Where the School determines that a complaint campaign exists, the standard staged procedure in Parts 1–3 of this policy will not apply. Instead, the School will follow the process set out in this Part 4

92. Definition: For the purposes of this procedure, a "complaint campaign" as occurring when the school receives large volumes of complaints. For the purposes of this policy this is defined as a complaint from ten or more separate individuals (whether or not connected with the School) which are all based on the same subject, and it is not reasonably practical to address each complaint individually through the standard procedure.

93. Notification to complainants: The decision to classify a matter as a "complaint campaign" rests with the Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors, and this decision will be communicated to complainants in writing. The notification will include:

- an explanation of why the matter has been classified as a "complaint campaign"
- a description of the process that will be followed
- the expected timeframe for a response
- the complainant's right to refer to the DfE if dissatisfied with the outcome

To ensure the matter is handled efficiently, the School will no longer provide individual responses to each complainant.

94. Timescales: The School will aim to acknowledge complaints in writing within five school days of receipt. The acknowledgement will provide confirmation on whether the complaint is being classified as a "Complaints Campaign" and provide an outline of the procedure and

a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This will normally be within 25 school days of receipt.

95. Investigation and Merits: The investigation will be conducted by a committee of governors appointed for this purpose, or by the Headteacher as delegated by the Governing Board, dependent on the nature of the complaint. Those conducting the investigation will have had no prior involvement in the subject matter of the complaint and no conflict of interest."

Complainants will be given an opportunity to provide information into the investigation, unless the School determines there are specific reasons why this is not appropriate in a particular case, for example, where the issues are sufficiently clear from the written representations already received.

If the complaint is investigated by the Headteacher and the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision, the complainant may submit a request to the Governing Board to convene a committee of governors to review the complaint.

If the initial investigation is conducted by a committee of governors, there is no further internal right of appeal. Dissatisfied complainants may escalate their complaint directly to the Department for Education (DfE)."

96. Governing Board involvement: The Governing Board operates in a strategic capacity and where a "complaint campaign" relates to an operational decision, the Governing Board will provide oversight and scrutiny of the decision rather than substituting its own operational judgement. A Governor Committee may be established to review the complaint in appropriate cases. Any Governor who has a personal interest in the subject matter of the complaint must withdraw entirely from any discussion and decision-making relating to the complaint, and that such withdrawal will be recorded in the Governing Board minutes.

97. Communication of Findings: When communicating the outcome or findings of the investigation, the School will provide its findings and recommendations by:

- Sending a template response to all complainants; and/or
- Publishing a single response on the School's website

In accordance with the duty to publish complaints procedures online under the School Information (England) Regulations 2008, any alternative process must be included in the published complaints procedure, and that complainants may be signposted to the DfE if dissatisfied with the school's response.

In line with our commitment to school improvement, the School will identify any underlying issues and lessons learned that need to be addressed as a result of the complaint campaign. The Governing Board will delegate responsibility for addressing any lessons learned to the Headteacher.

98. Escalation Rights and DfE Referral: The provision of a complaint campaign response (via template or website) represents the conclusion of the School's internal complaints procedure. If complainants remain unsatisfied with this final response, they may refer their concern directly to the Department for Education (DfE).

At the time of writing this procedure, the DfE procedure is published here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy and the online complaints form is available here: www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe

Appendix A Matters excluded from scope of the Complaints Procedure

Excluded Matters	Signposting
Admissions	The process for challenging admissions decisions is set out in our admissions policy in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.
Child protection matters	You should raise concerns with your local authority designated officer (LADO) and/or the Director of Children's Services using the report child abuse to local council GOV.UK page
Criminal cases	You should report these to the police
Data protection	The process for making a complaint in relation to Data Protection matters is set out in paragraphs 118-120 of our Data Protection Policy.
Discrimination	You can raise complaints with the Equality Advisory Support Service
Education, Health and Care Plans	You may find speaking with your local information, advice and support service helpful. This body is independent of the local authority and can provide impartial advice about the law on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), local SEND arrangements and support for your child's needs. More information about SEND is available on the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) webpage
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed
Exam malpractice or maladministration	You should raise any complaints with the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) or the relevant awarding body
Exclusions and Suspensions	The process for challenging exclusions and suspensions decisions is set out in the DfE's statutory guidance and information
The quality of education or leadership, or concerns affecting the school as a whole	OFSTED addresses these through inspections (see the schools inspection guide for parents)
National Curriculum content	Please contact the Department for Education at www.education.gov.uk/contactus
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
Teacher misconduct	You should refer the matter to the Teaching Regulation Agency

Excluded Matters	Signposting
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/blowing-the-whistle-to-the-department-for-education. Volunteer staff who have concerns should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of the complaint



Appendix B

Complaint Form – Stage 2: Formal Investigation

This form should only be used if a complaint has not been resolved at Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure.

Your name:	
Name of student, year group and your relationship to them:	
Your address:	
Your daytime telephone number:	
Your email address:	
If attending a meeting, do you require a translator or have a disability or impairment that the school should be aware of? If yes, please provide details:	

Your complaint is:
What action have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint informally? (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)
What would you like as an outcome from your complaint?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, give details here:

Your signature..... Date

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

Please complete and return to the School office in a sealed envelope addressed to the Headteacher or the Governance and Compliance Lead as appropriate.

For School use only:		
Date received	Date:	Staff Initials:
Date acknowledgement sent	Date:	Staff Initials:
Responsible member of staff	Date:	Staff Initials: