The 3-18 Education Trust

Complaints Policy and Procedure

'Every individual is in a great school.'

Approved: **Autumn Term 2025**
Review: **Autumn Term 2026**

www.3-18education.co.uk

Our Mission

To celebrate the diverse nature, culture and identity of our individual schools, whilst collaborating and enjoying the benefit of the team.

Our Values

Compassionate

To show care and understanding towards others.

Accomplished

To provide high quality education and training for all.

Resilient

To be solution focused and able to intelligently manage challenges.

The 3-18 Education Trust
101 Longden Road
Shrewsbury
SY3 9PS

Company Number: 08064698

Policy Monitoring and Review

Monitoring

The Chief Executive Officer will monitor the outcomes and impact of this policy on an annual basis.

Review

Member of Staff Responsible	Chief Executive Officer
Relevant Guidance/Advice/Legal Reference	Part 7 of the Education Regulations 2014. ESFA best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2021~~0~~
Policy Adopted By	Board of Trustees
Consultation	Local Governing Bodies
Date of Policy	Autumn Term 2025
Review Period	Annually
Date of Next Review	Autumn Term 2026

Contents

1. Introduction 4
2. Aims and Application 4
3. Key Principles 5
4. Records of Complaints 6
5. Part 1: Complaints Procedure for Parents 7
7. Part 2: Concerns or Complaints from Other Persons 13
8. Part 3: Repetitious and Vexatious Complaints and Complaints Pursued in an Otherwise Unreasonable Manner 15
9. Part 4: Complaint Campaigns 17

Appendix A – Complaints Outside the Scope of this Policy 18

Appendix B – Complaint Form 19

1. Introduction

1.1. The 3-18 Education Trust (Trust) is fully committed to the sustained improvement of the Trust and its schools. Where concerns are raised by interested parties or simply through the continual and thorough self-evaluation process, the Trust will investigate these matters thoroughly. The Trust welcomes feedback from parents/carers and other stakeholders and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible.

1.2. The formal nature of this Policy ensures the Trust meets its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents or carers (parents) of pupils at the Trust's schools, and others.

2. Aims and Application

2.1. The aims of the policy are to deal with complaints and concerns:

- about a school, the Trust or any individual connected with it by following the correct procedure;
- thoroughly; and
- in an open, honest and fair manner.

2.2. This Complaints Policy is not limited to parents of children who are registered at one of the schools within the Trust. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to an individual school within the Trust, or the Trust itself, about any provision of facilities or services that the Trust provide. Part 1 of this policy outlines how parents of registered pupils currently attending schools within the Trust can raise a concern or complaint. Concerns or complaints from other persons will be dealt with in accordance with Part 2 of this policy.

2.3. This policy does not apply to concerns and complaints relating to the matters listed in Appendix A.

2.4. Anonymous concerns or complaints will not normally be investigated under this policy. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Headteacher of the school (as appropriate), will determine whether there are exceptional circumstances to justify investigating the issues raised.

2.5. All staff will be made aware of this Complaints Policy and are expected to review this policy regularly in order that they are familiar with the Trust's process of dealing with complaints and can be of assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.

2.6. In this policy:

- 'Complaint' means an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.
- 'Concern' means an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.
- 'Meeting' means an in person or virtual meeting (i.e. 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.
- 'Parent' means a parent, carer or anyone with legal responsibility for a child.

- ‘School days’ excludes weekends and academy holidays and periods of partial or total school closure.

2.7. The timeframes referred to in this policy are our usual timeframes and the Trust will seek to adhere to these timeframes where possible.
2.8. Reasonable adjustments will be made to this policy where required to ensure that all complainants can access and complete the Complaints Procedure. For example, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

3. Key Principles

3.1. The Trust expects all complainants to make reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution.
3.2. The Trust encourages parents and others to approach the Trust/school with any concerns and refrain from airing concerns about the Trust/school and its staff on social media sites. Posting negative comments on social media can cause damage and upset and is often counter-productive to pupil education.
3.3. To investigate the complaint properly and fairly, the Trust has implemented a staged approach. The Trust anticipates that almost all complaints that arise will be resolved at Stage 1 or Stage 2 outlined below.
3.4. The Trust expects members of staff to be addressed in a respectful manner and for communication to remain calm at all times. 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.
3.5. Concerns or complaints should be brought to The Trusts attention as soon as possible. Any matter raised more than 3 months after the incident being complained of (or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within 3 months of the last of these incidents) will not be considered unless the CEO or Headteacher accepts that there are good reasons to explain the delay, or the complaint is about a particularly serious matter.
3.6. Where a complaint is received outside of term time, The Trust will consider it to have been received on the first school day following the holiday period.
3.7. On rare occasions a school or the Trust may receive complaints from a number of individuals relating to the same issue. In order to deal with these complaints efficiently the school/Trust will follow the procedure set out in Part 4.
3.8. If it becomes necessary to alter the time limits and deadlines set out within this policy, the complainant will be advised accordingly and given an explanation as to why this has been the case and provided with revised timescales. If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority safeguarding teams or tribunals/courts, this may impact on the Trusts ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. Where a complaint is raised but the Trust do not have clarity from the complainant on the issues and/or desired outcomes, the Trust will inform the complainant what information the Trust need to progress the complaint and pause this procedure until reasonable clarity is achieved.
3.9. Complainants should not approach individual Trustees or Local Governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may prevent them from considering complaints at later stages.

3.10. If a complainant commences legal action against the Trust in relation to their complaint, the Trust will consider whether it would be appropriate to suspend the Complaints Procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

3.11. If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, the Trust will ask them to confirm this in writing.

4. Records of Complaints

4.1. 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 an academy inspection.
- An individual has a legal right to access their own personal data contained within such documentation.
- Under other legal authority.

4.2. The Trust will make the findings and recommendations of the Complaints Committee available for inspection on the Trust/school premises.

5. Part 1: Complaints Procedure for Parents

5.1. Stage 1 Informal Concerns

An informal concern can be raised in person or by telephone. Concerns may also be raised by a third party acting on behalf of a parent, as long as they have appropriate authority to do so. Most enquiries and concerns can be dealt with satisfactorily by the Class Teacher or the Head of Year/House or other members of staff 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.

5.2. It is always helpful if the complainant can fully explain the nature of the concern and identify the outcome they are looking for. Where appropriate, the complainant 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 they are clear on what action (if any) has been agreed. This may be put in writing if appropriate.

5.3. If the matter is brought to the attention of the Headteacher they may decide to deal with the complainant concerns directly at this stage. If the concerns are about the Headteacher these should be referred directly to the Governance Professional of the Trust under Stage 2.

5.4. 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 too compromised to deal with it, the Headteacher may consider referring the parent to another member of staff. The member of staff may be more senior, but this is not essential.

5.5. Staff members should log all informal concerns on the school's management information system and inform the Headteacher of any serious concerns.

5.6. There is no suggested timescale for resolution at this stage given the importance of dialogue through 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 15 school days.

5.7. Stage 2 Formal Written Complaints

If the complainants concerns are not resolved under Stage 1, they are entitled to put their complaint in writing and send this to the Headteacher of the relevant school.

5.8. It is very important that the complainant include a clear statement of the actions that they would like us to take to resolve the complaint. The Trust strongly encourage the complainant to use the Complaint Form. If the complainant requires help in completing the form, please contact the school office. The complainant can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help. In all cases a 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 all relevant documents.
- A clear statement of the actions that the complainant would like the Trust to take to resolve the complaint.

5.9. The complaint will normally be acknowledged in writing within five school days of receipt. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the Complaints Procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This will normally be within 20 school days of receipt.

5.10. If appropriate, the Headteacher (or someone appointed by them) may invite the complainant to a meeting to clarify the complaint and to explore possible resolutions. If the invitation is accepted, the complainant may be accompanied by one other person, such as a friend, relative or interpreter, to assist. Where possible, this meeting will take place within 10 school days of receipt of the written complaint.

5.11. If necessary, witnesses will be interviewed, and statements taken from those involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil will usually be interviewed. Pupils will normally be interviewed with their parent present, but if this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious or urgent complaint or if the pupil has specifically said that they would prefer that their parents were not involved, another member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable will be present. 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.

5.12. Please be aware that where the complaint relates to a member of staff a copy of the complaint may be shared with them in order to investigate the issues raised.

5.13. Once the relevant facts have been established as far as possible, the complainant will be provided with a written response to the complaint, including an explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. This will include what action will be taken to resolve the complaint (if any). The complainant will be advised that if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint, they may request that the complaint be heard by the Complaints Committee under Stage 3 of this procedure.

5.14. The Trust 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.

5.15. How to Direct Your Complaint

5.16. If the complaint is about the Headteacher or the Headteacher has already considered the complaint under Stage 1.

In these cases, the complaint should be sent to the Governance Professional of the Trust by email or to the Trust's address. Please mark the correspondence as Private and Confidential. The Governance Professional will arrange for the CEO, an Executive or Local Governor to carry out the Stage 2 procedure.

5.17. If the complaint is about a Local Governor on the Local Governing Body.

If the complaint is about the Chair of the Local Governing Body, any individual Local Governor, or the whole Local Governing Body the complaint should be sent to the Governance Professional of the Trust by email or to the Trust's address. Please mark the correspondence as Private and Confidential. The Governance Professional will arrange for another Local Governor from another school or Trustee (as applicable) to investigate the concerns in accordance with Stage 2.

5.18. If the complaint is about the CEO.

If the complaint is about the CEO of the Trust, or if they have been closely involved at Stage 1, the complaint should be sent to Governance Professional of the Trust by email or

to the Trust's address. Please mark the complaint as Private and Confidential. The Governance Professional will arrange for a Trustee to carry out all the Stage 2 procedures.

5.19. If the complaint is about a Trustee or a Member of the Trust.

In these cases, the complaint should be sent to Governance Professional of the Trust by email or to the Trust's address. Please mark the correspondence as Private and Confidential. The Governance Professional will arrange for another Trustee to carry out all the Stage 2 procedures.

5.20. If the complaint is about the Trust Board as a whole.

If the complaint is about the Trustee Board as a whole, the complainant should send the complaint to the Governance Professional of the Trust by email or to the Trust's address. Please mark the correspondence as Private and Confidential. The Governance Professional will arrange for the matter to be independently investigated.

5.21. If the complaint is about the Governance Professional or a member of the Governance Support Team?

In these cases, the complaint should be sent to the Chair of the Trust Board by email or to the Trust's address. Please mark the correspondence as Private and Confidential. The Chair of the Trust Board will then determine the most appropriate action with regards to Stage 2 and Stage 3.

6. Stage 3 Referral to the Complaints Committee

6.1. If you the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision under Stage 2, they may request that a Complaints Committee be convened to consider the complaint. The Complaints 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. The Complaints 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.

6.2. To request a hearing before the Complaints Committee, the complainant should write to the Governance Professional of the Trust at the Trust's address 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. The complainant should ensure that they provide copies of all relevant documents and state all the grounds for the complaint and the outcome that they are looking for.

6.3. The written request will be acknowledged within five school days of receipt.

6.4. The Governance Professional will arrange for a Complaints Committee to be convened, made up of at least three committee members, including:

- Local Governors of the Trust and/or Trustees (as appropriate) with no prior involvement in the matter; and,
- one person who is independent of the management and running of the school.

6.5. The Governance Professional shall appoint one of these committee members to be the Chair of the Committee.

6.6. Every effort will be made to enable the hearing to take place within 20 school days of the receipt of the request. As soon as reasonably practicable and in any event at least five school days before the hearing, the complainant 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. The complainant will also be informed of the name of the

person who will be presenting the case on behalf of the school/Trust (referred to in this policy as the 'Trust representative'). This may be the person who is the subject of the complaint, the person who undertook the investigation at Stage 2 and/or another person with sufficient knowledge of the matter.

6.7. If, despite best efforts, it is not possible to find a mutually convenient date and time for a hearing within a reasonable timeframe, the Governance Professional may determine that the hearing proceeds on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

6.8. The complainant has the right to be accompanied to the hearing by a friend, relative or interpreter. The Governance Professional should be notified in advance if the complainant intends to bring anyone to the hearing. The Trust do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the Complaints Committee meeting. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend. The Complaints Committee itself may take legal advice and/or be supported by a legal advisor at the hearing on matters of law and procedure.

6.9. A copy of the complaint and any other documents provided by to the complainant in support of the complaint, or by the Trust representative in defence of the complaint, will be provided to the Complaints Committee as soon as practicable upon receipt. Copies of these documents shall also be provided to the complainant or Trust representative (as applicable) at least 3 school days before the hearing. The Complaints Committee reserves the right not to consider any documentation presented by either party less than 3 school days prior to the hearing. The Complaints Committee is under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account. The Complaints Committee will not normally accept recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

6.10. The hearing will be conducted to ensure that each party has the opportunity to address the Complaints 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.

6.11. Unless otherwise stated, the procedure for the Stage 3 hearing is as follows:

- The parent and Trust representative will enter the hearing together.
- The Chair of the Committee will introduce the committee members and outline the process.
- The parent will explain the complaint.
- The Trust representative and committee members will question the parent.
- The Trust representative will explain the school/Trust's actions.
- The parent and the committee members will question the Trust representative.
- The parent will sum up their complaint.
- The Trust representative will sum up the school/Trust's actions.
- The Chair of the Committee will explain that both parties will hear from the Complaints Committee within five school days.
- Both parties will leave together while the Complaints committee decides.
- the Governance Professional, and any legal advisor assisting the committee (if applicable), will stay to assist the committee with its decision making.

6.12. The Governance Professional and/or Complaints 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 Complaints Committee in the absence of the other party.

6.13. A Complaints Committee may be adjourned if the Complaints Committee require further evidence or in exceptional circumstances (for example, if clarification sought by the Complaints Committee is essential to the proceedings). The adjourned date must be as soon as possible.

6.14. After the hearing, the Complaints Committee will consider their decision and inform the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about of their decision in writing within five school days. The letter will set out the decision of the Complaints committee together with the reasons underpinning that decision. The Complaints Committee can (by a majority if necessary):

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.
- Recommend changes to the school or Trust systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

6.15. Referral of Complaint to the Department for Education

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision of the Complaints Committee, they are entitled to refer the complaint to the Department for Education (DfE) The DfE will only investigate whether the complaint was handled properly and in accordance with education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

6.16. At the time of writing this procedure, details about the DfE procedure and the DfE academy complaints form are available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy/complain-about-an-academy

6.17. Or the complainant can write to the DfE at the following address:

Department for Education
School complaints compliance unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

6.18. Roles and Responsibilities

6.19. The role of the Governance Professional

The Governance Professional is the contact point for the complainant and the Complaints Committee, and either he/she or a member of the Governance Support team will:

- Ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure.
- Liaise with staff, Headteacher, the CEO, Chair of the Local Governing Body of the school and Chair of the Trustee Board (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 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).
- Ensure that the Complaints Committee has access to legal advice, where appropriate.
- Set the date, time and venue of the meeting, 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 meeting within an agreed timescale.
- Minute the meeting.
- Notify all parties of the Complaint Committee's decision.
- Assist the school/Trust in issuing a summary letter to the complainant.

6.20. The role of the Headteacher (or other party investigating as applicable in accordance with the procedure) at Stage 2

The Headteacher (or other party investigating as applicable in accordance with the procedure) at Stage 2 will:

- Ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure.
- Ensure that the correct procedure has been followed.
- Ensure that an investigation is carried out, and a report compiled.
- Meet the complainant, if appropriate.
- If the complaint is being referred to Stage 3, notify the Governance Professional to arrange the Complaints Committee.

6.21. The role of the Chair of the Complaints Committee

The Chair of the Complaints Committee has a key role, ensuring that:

- The meeting 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 meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child.
- 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 meeting and, if they are mentioned at the meeting, these should not be noted or considered by the Complaints Committee.
- Both the complainant and the school/Trust are given the opportunity to make their case, and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting, or verbally in the meeting 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 meeting is minuted.

7. Part 2: Concerns or Complaints from Other Persons

7.1. Part 1 of this Complaints Policy applies only to complaints made by parents or carers of current registered pupils of the Trust. However, the Trust wishes to work closely with other members of the local community and will deal with their concerns and complaints as follows:

7.2. Stage 1 - A concern regarding a school or its operations

7.3. A concern regarding a school or its operations may be made to any member of staff. That member of staff will attempt to resolve the matter 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, the complainant will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation.

7.4. Stage 2 - A concern is not resolved at Stage 1, or a concern to be dealt with immediately as a formal complaint.

Where a concern is not resolved at Stage 1, or the complainant wishes their concerns to be dealt with immediately as a formal complaint, they should put their complaint in writing and send this to the Headteacher of the relevant school to investigate. 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 20 school days of receipt of the letter of complaint although if a longer period is required to respond, the complainant will be kept updated.

7.5. **Stage 3 - If the complainant is not satisfied with the response at Stage 2**.

if the complainant is not satisfied with the response at Stage 2, they may request a review by writing to the Governance Professional of the Trust. They 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 Local 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 Policy. The decision at this stage will usually be sent within 15 school days of receipt of the request for a review or within five school days of the Complaints Committee hearing (as applicable).

7.6. Referral of Complaint to the Department for Education

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision of the Complaints Committee, they are entitled to refer the complaint to the Department for Education (DfE) The DfE will only investigate whether the complaint was handled properly and in accordance with education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

7.7. At the time of writing this procedure, details about the DfE procedure and the DfE academy complaints form are available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy/complain-about-an-academy

7.8. Or the complainant can write to the DfE at the following address:

Department for Education
School complaints compliance unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

7.9. Concerns or complaints regarding the Headteacher or the Trust should be referred direct to the Governance Professional of the Trust by email or to the Trust's address. Please mark the correspondence as Private and Confidential. The Governance Professional who will arrange for the stages above to be considered by an appropriate person.

8. Part 3: Repetitious and Vexatious Complaints and Complaints Pursued in an Otherwise Unreasonable Manner

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

8.2. Repetitious, including serial and/or persistent, complaints.
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,

8.3. 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.

8.4. Vexatious complaints
The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines the characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaint as:

- Complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific or 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.

8.5. 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 complaint's 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 information on social media or other public forums.

8.6. Complaints pursued in an otherwise unreasonable manner.

Where the complainant's behaviour or language towards staff, Local Governors, Trustees or Members is aggressive, abusive, offensive, discriminatory or threatening or insulting personal comments are made about, or threats are made towards, staff.

8.7. In the circumstances outlined in repetitious, including serial and/or persistent, complaints and vexatious complaints 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 ask them to desist.
- Conduct the Complaints Committee on the papers only i.e. not hold a hearing.
- Refuse to consider the complaint any further and refer the complainant directly to Stage 4.

8.8. We may also restrict the complainant's access to the Trust and schools, 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 number of contacts or banning the complainant from the Trust and/or schools' premises.

8.9. Where the complainant's behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, Local Governors, Trustees or Members 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.

9. Part 4: Complaint Campaigns

9.1. For the purposes of this policy, a complaint campaign is defined as a complaint from three or more separate individuals (whether or not connected with the academy) which are all based on the same subject.

9.2. Depending on the subject in question, we may deviate from the procedure set out in this policy and instead:

- send a template response to all complainants; and/or
- publish a single response on the academy's website (as applicable).

Appendix A – Complaints Outside the Scope of this Policy

Excluded Matters	Who to contact
Admissions to schools	The process for challenging admissions decisions is set out in relevant statutory guidance.
Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs	Concerns about statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, should be raised with the Local Authority
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under the Trust's Child Protection Policy and Procedure and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding.
Suspensions and exclusion of pupils from school.	The process for challenging exclusions decisions is set out in the DfE's statutory guidance and information can be found at https://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions
National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus
School re-organisation proposals	Where concerns are not adequately addressed by the Trust, complaints can be raised direct with the Department for Education
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 directly.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the Trust's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the Trust'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.
Whistleblowing	The Trust has an internal whistleblowing procedure for all employees in the Trust, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns should raise them through this Complaints Policy. Volunteer staff may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of the complaint.

Appendix B – Complaint Form

You will find a word document copy of this form on the Trust / schools' websites. Boxes will expand to fit your text. If you need support with this, please contact the school/Trust. Hard copies can be posted upon request.

In accordance with equality law, the Trust 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.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:**
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school/Trust about it, and any action taken to date.
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork, including electronic evidence. If so, please give details
Signature: **Date:**
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By whom:

Complaint referred to:
Date: