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The Education Fellowship schools are committed to developing a strong sense of partnership with staff, parents/carers and other members of the local community. This provides a good basis for understanding and resolution when things appear to go wrong.

This policy is in place to ensure that staff, parents/carers and others are able to express their concerns in an open and transparent way in accordance with published and agreed guidance designed to:

-  encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
-  be easily accessible and well-publicised
-  be simple to understand and use
-  be impartial
-  be non-adversarial
-  allow timely handling, with established time limits for action, and keep people
-  informed of progress
-  ensure a full and fair investigation
-  ensure confidentiality
-  ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
-  address all the points at issue, and provide an effective response
-  provide information to school's leadership team so that services can be improved

## **Investigating complaints**

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint will make sure 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
-  clarify an agreed and acceptable resolution

- 🤝 interview those involved in the matter
- 🤝 conduct the interview with an open mind
- 🤝 keep notes of the interview
- 🤝 ensure good communication to all parties

## Response to complaints

We believe that most complaints can be resolved satisfactorily by informal discussion involving the key people involved. We will acknowledge complaints within 5 working days and give a full response to complainants within 10 working days. Complainants will be kept informed of progress if a lengthy investigation is involved. The main aim throughout the process is to resolve the matter as quickly and effectively as possible, to everybody's satisfaction.

The complaints procedure follows three stages:

- 🤝 **Informal** through discussion with a senior member of staff;
- 🤝 **Formal** with the complaint made in writing and usually responded to by the chair of the Academy Advisory Board (AAB); and
- 🤝 **Appeal** through a hearing with a panel set up by The Education Fellowship, comprising of at least three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the school

### Stage One: Informal Complaints

- 🤝 Parents/carers and others should raise informal complaints or concerns with the pupil's class teacher or tutor in the first instance
- 🤝 If the complaint involves the class teacher or tutor then the year head or deputy should be approached
- 🤝 Where staff wish to raise a complaint, they should go to their immediate line manager or second line manager if their immediate line manager is implicated
- 🤝 The complainant will be encouraged to make prior appointments to discuss any issues that are not of a routine nature
- 🤝 Criticisms of the professional conduct or competence of a member of staff which may be brought to their attention will be referred to the Principal/Headteacher
- 🤝 If the complainant believes that a complaint or concern is sufficiently serious or sensitive they should talk to the deputy head or Principal/Headteacher, who will investigate or arrange for the complaint to be investigated

- 🤝 Every effort will always be made to resolve the problem at this informal stage
- 🤝 Complainants who remain dissatisfied at this stage will be informed that they have the opportunity to make a formal complaint.

## **Stage Two: Formal Complaints**

- 🤝 Formal complaints should be made in writing and will normally be investigated by the Principal/Headteacher or a member of the leadership team designated by them
- 🤝 If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Principal/Headteachers response, they should contact the Chair of AAB
- 🤝 If the complaint directly concerns the Principal/Headteacher, complainants should contact the Chair of AAB who will liaise with The Education Fellowship regarding next steps
- 🤝 Governors in receipt of complaints will refer them directly to the Principal/Headteacher or the Chair of AAB, as appropriate, and must not become further involved themselves unless requested by the Chair of AAB
- 🤝 The complainant will receive a written response to his/her complaint. A meeting may also be arranged to convey the response to the complaint
- 🤝 In some cases, a complaint may lead to disciplinary action against an individual, for which there are separate procedures. If this is the case, the complainant will be informed that the complaint will be pursued through disciplinary action. Under the fellowships disciplinary procedures, the outcome of these procedures is confidential.

## **Stage Three: Appeal**

- 🤝 If the complainant remains dissatisfied following stage two investigations, complainants may appeal directly to The Education Fellowship CEO for a final resolution to their complaint
- 🤝 An appeal must be lodged, in writing, within 10 working days of the academy's decision made in accordance with stage two procedures
- 🤝 The appeal letter must include a list of the complaints against the academy and which they believe to have been resolved unsatisfactorily by the stage two process
- 🤝 The fellowship will convene a panel, within 20 working days, to hear the complaint and any action taken to date
- 🤝 The panel will comprise of two governors from the Academy Advisory Board who have not previously been involved in the complaint, one person independent of the management and running of the school

who will be selected from the Academy Advisory Board of another fellowship academy

- 🤝 This resolution will be conveyed to the complainant in writing
- 🤝 Under this complaints procedure there is no provision for further appeal beyond consideration by the CEO

## **School admissions and exclusions**

Separate complaint and appeal procedures exist for these matters, and appropriate information is available on request from the school.

## **Complaints against school staff**

If your complaint amounts to or includes an allegation against a member of staff, this may need to be considered under The Education Fellowships disciplinary procedure for employees, rather than the complaint procedure or Safeguarding processes. You will be advised if these procedures are to be used in dealing with your complaint.

## **Procedure for dealing with complaints about academy trusts**

Although parents are encouraged to raise their concerns/complaints with school staff, we recognise that parents may, on occasion, wish to take their complaint to the Secretary of State for Education.

The Secretary of State is not required to intervene in every case that is brought to his attention but he must always consider whether, in light of the information provided to him by a complainant, he should exercise his powers.

Generally, the Secretary of State can only look at complaints about academy trusts that fall into the following areas:

- 🤝 The academy trust did not comply with its own complaints procedure when considering a complaint or the academy's complaints procedure does not comply with statutory requirements
- 🤝 The academy trust has failed to comply with a duty imposed on it under its funding agreement with the Secretary of State.

For further information please refer to the EFA complaints procedure.

## **Conclusion**

By the school having a clear, published procedure, The Education Fellowship believes this will help resolve problems and confirm good working relationships between all people involved with the school.

## Formal complaints form (stage 2 only)

Please complete and return to the Principal/Headteacher or Chair of Governors (please refer to the procedure guidelines) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Formal complaints form for parents/carers or others			
Your name:		Pupil's name:	
Pupil's year group:		Your relationship to pupil:	
Your address:		Postcode:	
Daytime contact No:		Evening contact No:	
Please give details of your complaint:			
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (include who you spoke to and the response)?			
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?			
Are you attaching any supporting paperwork? If so, please give details:			
Signature:		Date:	
For official use only:			
Date received:		Date acknowledged:	
By whom:		Complaint referred to:	
Action:			

<b>Formal complaints form for staff</b>			
Your name:		Your role:	
Your department:		Your line manager:	
Your address:		Postcode:	
Daytime contact No:		Evening contact No:	
Please give details of your complaint:			
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (include who you spoke to and the response)?			
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?			
Are you attaching any supporting paperwork? If so, please give details:			
Signature:		Date:	
<b>For official use only:</b>			
Date received:		Date acknowledged:	
By whom:		Complaint referred to:	
Action:			

