



Schools for Every Child

Concerns & Complaints Policy

We are an education Trust that is committed to running dynamic, ever-improving schools. We work to make sure that every child feels they belong in their school where they feel safe and inspired by learning. For us, learning is an adventure. It is a privilege and a responsibility for all who work with us to ensure that the journey through school is exciting, challenging, caring and enriching, and that every child experiences joy, wonder, calm and success.

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| Approval Level | Board |
| Author | Lee Faris |
| Approval Date | 31/07/2025 |
| Trust/Template/School level | Trust |
| Review cycle | Annual |

*“The purpose of governance is to provide confident, strategic leadership and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance”.
(DfE)*

Approval History

| Committee Approval | Status | Next Review Date |
|--------------------------------|--|------------------|
| R&A 07/07/25 Board 14/07/25 | Review in progress Submitted for Ratification Live Policy | July '26 |

Typo changes

**Addition based on the Dfe Model 2025, CEOS to get a copy of all outcomes
Added in a step for Schools with an EHT (2.b)**

This procedure works in conjunction with the following Schools for Every Child policies and procedures, which are all available on the Schools for Every Child website

- **Equalities strategy**
- **Wellbeing strategy**
- **Capability management procedure**
- **Disciplinary procedure**
- **Grievance procedure**
- **Staff code of conduct**

Schools for Every Child is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not usually limit the contact that the complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive, or threatening.

Contents

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may complain to <Academy Name> about any provision of facilities or services we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be *'an expression of dissatisfaction, however, made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved as soon as possible. Many issues can be resolved informally without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint procedure. We take concerns seriously and will try to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

We will respect your views if you need help discussing a concern with a particular staff member. In these cases, the headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior, but it does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in writing. If the complainant has appropriate consent, a third party acting on behalf of the complainant may also make it.

- Complaints against school staff (except the Head Teacher) should be made first to the Head Teacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
- Complaints involving or about the Head Teacher should be addressed to The Chair of the LSB via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
- Complaints about the LSB should be addressed to the LSB clerk via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
- Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or a Trustee of the Trust, should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Please use the complaints form attached to this policy. (appendix 2)

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, we could provide information in alternative formats, assist (administratively) complainants in raising a formal complaint, or hold meetings in accessible locations.

Anonymous complaints

We will not usually investigate anonymous complaints. However, if appropriate, the head teacher or Chair of LSB will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Time scales

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

Complaints received outside of term time

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

Scope of this complaint's procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about providing community facilities or services directly provided by Schools for Every Child. Other than complaints handled under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

| Exceptions | Who to contact |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admissions to schools | Concerns about admissions should be handled separately, either through the appeals process or via the local authority. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation | Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and by relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) with local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* | Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions . <i>*complaints about applying the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise concerns directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at www.education.gov.uk/contactus . Volunteer staff with concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. They will be afforded whistleblower protections. Depending on the substance of your complaint, you may also be able to complain directly to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above). |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances | Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 due to a complaint. However, |

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| | the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed. |
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If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, such as the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams, or Tribunals, this may impact our ability to adhere to the timescales within this

procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action against us regarding their complaint, we will usually suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, we want to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or 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 considering the complaint
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a complaint

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

Stage 1 – Informal complaints

It is hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved informally.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher, year head / subject head, or Head teacher.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis, and this may also prevent them from considering complaints at stage 4 of the procedure.

After their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response within 10 school days of receiving the complaint.

If the issue remains unresolved (in the opinion of the complainant) the next step is to complain to the Headteacher formally.

Stage 2a – Formal complaints (for schools that have a HoS & EHT, then Stage 2a refers to HoS when it mentions Headteacher)

After stage 1, formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher) via the school office. This can be done using the attached Complaint Form (appendix 2)

The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days.

In this response, the Headteacher may seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved, and ask what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team, but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the Headteacher (or investigator) will:

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

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within 15 school days of receiving the complaint.

If the Headteacher cannot meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint, explain the decision and the reason(s) for it, and, where appropriate, include details of actions we will take to resolve the complaint. The Headteacher will advise the complainant on how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

If the complaint concerns the Headteacher or Central Trust, the CEO or LSB chair will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2. The CEO or LSB chair will normally delegate the investigation to another person, but not the decision to be made.

Complaints about the Headteacher/ EHT or a member of the LSB must be made via the school office. If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair of the LSB or
- the entire LSB or
- most of the LSB

Stage 2 will be escalated to the CEO of the Trust.

If the complaint concerns the CEO, the Trust Chair will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2. The Trust Chair will normally delegate the investigation to another person but not the decision to be made. If the complaint concerns the Trust Chair or Trustees, then the Trust Vice Chair will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2. *The Trust Vice Chair will normally delegate the investigation to another person, but not the decision to be taken.*

Stage 2b – Formal complaints (Only for schools that have an EHT)

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2a and wishes to take the matter further, the EHT will review the complaint within 10 school days of the appeal and provide a letter to the complainant outlining their findings and decision.

Stage 3 – Review

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 (a and/or b) and wishes to take the matter further, the CEO (or the CFOO or Chair of Trust, if the CEO led stage 2 or if the complaint involves the CEO) will review the complaint.

The CEO / CFOO/ CoFT may delegate the investigation to another, but not the decision to be taken.

They will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days.

After reviewing the complaint, they will provide a formal written response within 15 school days of receiving it.

Stage 3 Reviews will usually consider:

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| How did the school attempt to address this complaint? |
| Did the school seek legal or policy advice? |
| Was relevant information (available at the time) considered when making the decision? |
| Did the school act within the bounds of its authority? |
| Were multiple reasonable options available, and was the chosen option within the spectrum of those reasonable options? |
| Did the school consider the values of altruism, being pioneering, and ethics? |
| Were the actions taken in the children's best interests and/or Health & Safety? |

Stage 4 – Panel Hearing

Suppose the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 3 and wishes to take the matter further. In that case, they can escalate the complaint to stage 4 – a panel hearing consisting of at least three people (usually LSB members) who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one panel member independent of the specific school's management and running (an LSB member from another Schools for Every Child school may count as independent). This is the final stage of the complaint procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 4 must be made to the Clerk via the school office within five school days of receipt of the Stage 3 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days.

Requests received outside this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the meeting date. They aim to convene a meeting within 20 school days of receiving the Stage 4 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and inform the complainant.

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

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the LSB Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire LSB body or
- the majority of the LSB body

Then Stage 4 will be heard by the 2 trustees and an independent panel member (eg an LSB member from another school).

A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support, such as a relative or friend. We generally do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a school employee is called a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and legal representation.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure.

Complainants will be advised that any complaints about misconduct will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

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

- Confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- You are required to submit copies of any further written material to the committee at least seven school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least five school days before the meeting date. The committee will not usually accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

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

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

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

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

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

The Chair of the Committee will write to the complainant and Trust within five school days and provide a full

explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it.

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

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

A written record will be kept of all complaints, whether resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeding to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body inspecting section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access.

Stage 4: Complaints about the CEO, Trustee, HQ Employee or EHT

The Complaint Panel will consist of 3 people: 2 trustees or members. None of the three panel members will have been involved in the incidents or events that led to the complaint, have been involved in dealing with the complaint in the previous stages, or have any detailed prior knowledge of the complaint.

One of the Complaint Panel members will be independent of the Academy Trust's management and running. This means that the independent Complaint Panel member will not be a Trustee, member or employee of the Trust (e.g. they may be a headteacher/ CEO/ CFO/ TFM/ HR / LSB/ Trustee etc from another school or an employed but independent advisor).

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair, or
- the entire trust board or
- The majority of the trust board

Two members and two independent people will hear stage 4

Next Steps

A copy of all complaint outcomes will be provided to the CEO.

Suppose the complainant believes the School/ Trust did not handle their complaint by the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law. In that case, they can contact the ESFA after they have completed stage 4.

The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made in line with Schools for Every Child. They will consider whether Schools for Every Child has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed [Part 7 of the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

The complainant can refer their complaint to the ESFA online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone at: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

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

Complaints about services provided by another supplier who may use the school premises or facilities

You should direct complainants to follow the external provider's complaints procedure for those hiring the academy facilities.

Managing serial and persistent complaints

There will be occasions when, despite following all stages of the complaint procedure, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, we will inform them that the procedure has been completed and the matter is now closed.

If the complainant contacts us again on the same issue, the correspondence may be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent', and we may choose not to respond. However, we will **not** mark a complaint as 'serial' before the complainant has completed the procedure.

We may receive complaints we consider to be vexatious. The characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaint are:

- complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
- insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and 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

When to stop responding

The decision to stop responding is never taken lightly.

The case to stop responding is more robust if we agree with one or more of these statements:

- The letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive
- They make insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
- We have reason to believe the individual is making contact to cause disruption or inconvenience

Communication strategy for persistent correspondents

If an individual's behaviour is causing a significant disruption, regardless of whether or not they have raised a complaint, academies can implement a tailored communication strategy. For example, they can:

- restrict the individual to a single point of contact via an email address
- limit the number of times they can make contact, such as a fixed number of contacts per term

However, regardless of the application of any communication strategy, we will provide parents and carers with the information they are entitled to under The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005 within the statutory time frame.

Different procedures apply to freedom of information (FOI) and data protection (DP) correspondence. You should talk to your FOI and DP advisor about those or approach the [Information Commissioner's Office](#) for further advice.

We suggest the complainant ask a third party, such as the local Citizens Advice Bureau, to act on your behalf.

If an individual persists to the point that may constitute harassment, we will seek legal advice. In some cases, injunctions and other court orders have been issued to individuals preventing them from contacting academies direct

Barring from school premises

Although they fulfil a public function, academies are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Schools will, therefore, need to act to ensure they remain safe places for pupils, staff, and other members of their community.

If an individual's behaviour is a cause for concern, a head teacher can ask them to leave the school premises. In some cases, individuals can be barred from entering school premises.

The head teacher's decision to bar should then be reviewed by either:

- the chair of LSB
- a committee of governors

They should consider any representations made by the individual and decide whether to either confirm or lift the bar. If the decision is confirmed, the individual should be notified in writing, explaining:

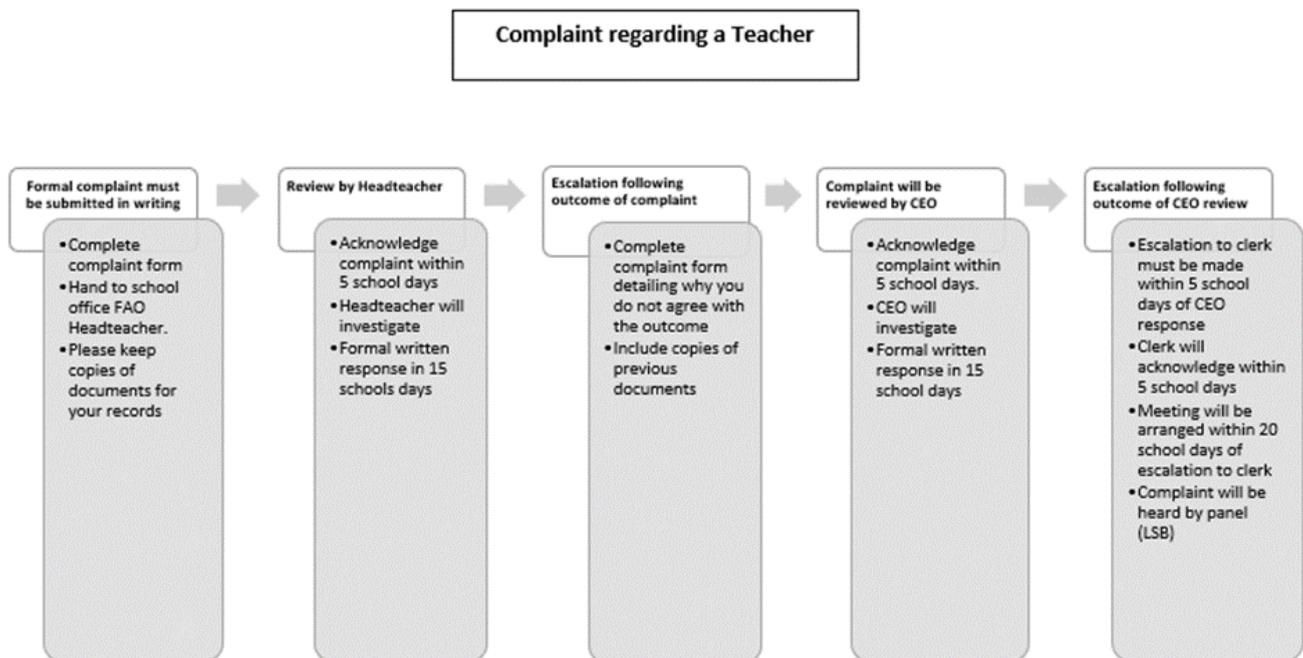
1. how long the bar will be in place
2. when the decision will be reviewed

Once the school's appeal process has been completed, individuals may be able to apply to the Courts. Individuals wishing to exercise this option should seek independent legal advice.

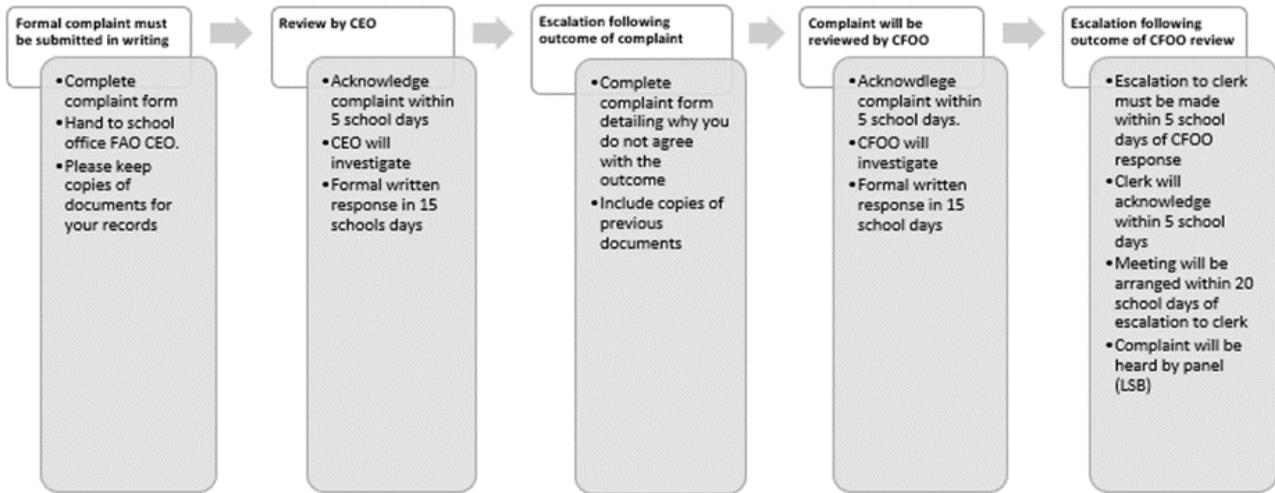
Controlling access to school premises provides more guidance on access to school premises.

Appendix 1

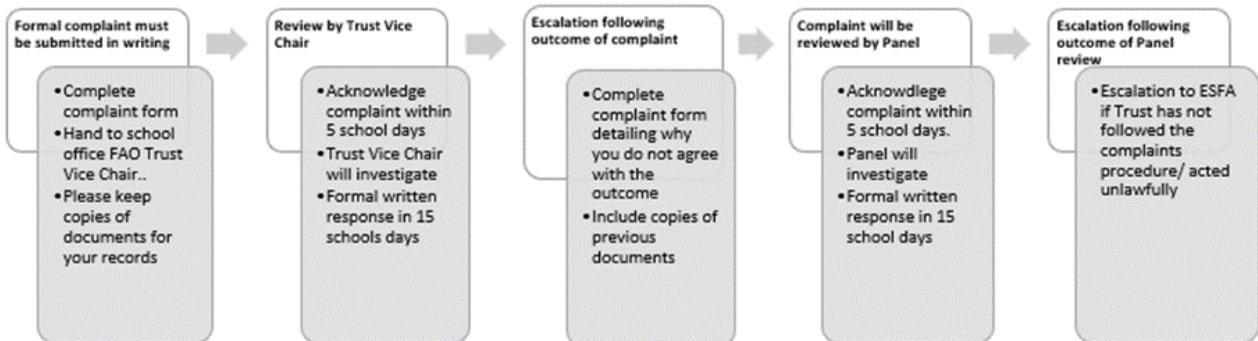
Complaints Process Flow Chart

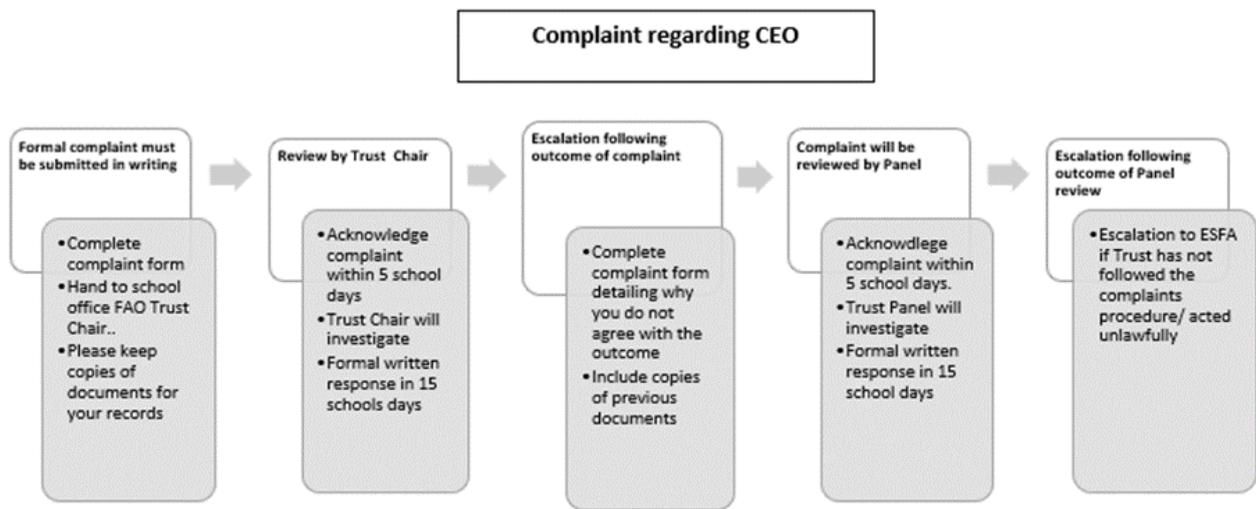


Complaint regarding Headteacher



Complaint regarding Trust/ Trustee





Appendix 2

Formal Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the school office

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| Your name: |
| Pupil's name (if relevant): |
| School Name |
| Address: |
| Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number: Email address: |
| Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant): |
| Complaint in relation to: (please circle) |
| Teacher Headteacher Trustee LSB Trust Staff Other (provide details) |
| Name of person whom your complaint is regarding: |

What actions might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date received:

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Action taken:

Date:

