NORTH STAR
COMMUNITY TRUST

Parents' complaint policy and procedure

Primary and Secondary Academies

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Introduction

We have a strong commitment towards working in positive partnership with, and an ethos of respecting the rights of, all members of the academy community. We work to instil this in our pupils as part of our curriculum teaching.

A school is a busy place where there are many interactions between pupils, parents, carers and staff as part of every day school life. From time to time something may go wrong, or you may think we can do something better.

Where any parental concerns are raised we aim to resolve these as quickly and as efficiently as possible. Usually any concerns that are raised can be resolved very quickly through the school's day to day communication between parents and the school staff.

However, where a parent may feel that an issue has not been dealt with appropriately it is important, for all involved, that there is a clear and transparent process for a complaint to be looked at and followed up.

Parents and pupils are stakeholders in the educational system. If they are unhappy about something, there should be a clear system and route for them to make the school aware of their concerns **even if all the response entails is an explanation of why something happens in the way that it does**. This policy is split into sections and appendices: -

Section 1	Complaint handling overview and limitations
Section 2	**The complaint procedure**
Section 3	Model procedure for a governors' complaints panel at Stage 3
Section 4	Recording and monitoring
Section 5	Vexatious complaints and communications
Section 6	Parental concerns about curriculum
Section 7	Complaints about head teachers
Section 8	Complaints about governors
Section 9	Complaints about the Trust
Appendix 1	**Complaints procedure overview**
Appendix 2	Academy contact details
Appendix 3	Complaint form (also available separately on our website)

1. Complaint handling overview and procedure limitations

1.1 The statutory requirement

1.1.1 Part 7 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 requires academies to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints about services the school provides.

1.2 What can a complaint be about?

1.2.1 This complaint procedure is for parents / carers of pupils. Examples of issues that might lead to a formal complaint being made may include:

- bullying
- discrimination
- staff actions or conduct
- the school environment

1.3.2 In each case the responsibility for initial action lies with the academy at which the pupil attends. In some cases, a complaint may lead to a disciplinary or an appeal against a decision governed by another process in which case it will be appropriate for the issue to be dealt with separately from the complaints procedure.

1.3.3 Should we be contacted by a third party who is not a parent[1] of the child to which the complaint relates, consent[2] will be sought from the individual or individuals who do before any action is taken or information disclosed.

1.3.4 Our complaints form can be found at Appendix 3, as a separate document on our website or upon request from the academy office. This can be used to assist you providing us with the key information we require to process your complaint.

1.3.5 Whilst completing a form is not essential, in order to properly process your complaint, we will require all the information the form seeks i.e. your name and contact details, detail of the complaint, any steps already taken to resolve your concern and **especially the 'Desired Outcome'.**

[1] www.gov.uk/government/publications/dealing-with-issues-relating-to-parental-responsibility/understanding-and-dealing-with-issues-relating-to-parental-responsibility

[2] As per the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018

1.4 What should the parents' complaints procedure not deal with?

1.4.1 Existing statutory procedures or processes already exist for each of the following: -

a) Admissions
Refer to the admissions appeals process

b) Allegations of abuse or child protection matters
Refer to the Safeguarding, child protection and associated procedures

c) Anonymous complaints
By virtue of not having a contact to reply to, we will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. Anonymous complaints will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and alongside the information available or provided to us.

d) Curriculum complaints
Please see Section 6 of this policy

e) Disciplinary issues relating to members of staff
Please see Section 1.5.4 of this policy

f) Legal matters
As it is not a legal process, if at any stage the complainant begins legal action in relation to the matters under consideration, the complaints process will automatically cease and all further correspondence will be with the legal representatives of North Star Community Trust.

g) Members of the public concerns about school or Trust facilities or services
An assessment will be made as to whether we can or are able to respond and complaints will be redirected as appropriate

h) Provision of collective worship and religious education
Please refer to the Relationship, health and sex education policy

i) Services provided by other suppliers who may use school premises or facilities
Complaints would need to be raised directly with the supplier

j) Statutory assessments of special educational needs or the EHCP process
Please refer to the SEND policy and information report for more information

k) Decisions relating to Suspensions or exclusions
Please refer to the Suspension and permanent exclusion policy

l) Whistleblowing
This is an internal process for staff who should refer to the Whistleblowing policy

1.4.2 Unless where impacting pupil safety or emotional well-being, schools must maintain neutrality and are not required to resolve or intervene in parental or adult disputes over which we have no jurisdiction or happen off-premises.

1.5 Resolving issues and complaints

1.5.1 Most day-to-day issues and or upset can be successfully dealt with informally, however for those situations where this is not appropriate, the formal complaints procedure exist which provides the means to identify an area of concern at an early stage and to tackle it quickly and effectively.

1.5.2 We see it as important to try to reach an early resolution with complainants. This not only promotes closure in the matter but also enables parents and teaching staff to move forward constructively. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that a complaint is valid in whole or in part and it may also be appropriate to offer one or more of the following: -

- an apology.
- an explanation.
- an admission that the situation could have been handled better or differently.
- an assurance that the incident complained about will not reoccur – and an explanation of steps taken to ensure this.
- an undertaking to review academy policies in light of the complaint
- asking the complainant what they feel they would like to see happen may help resolve the situation at any stage.

1.5.3 However, it may also be the case that the outcome, at any stage of the procedure, concludes that: -

- there is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so that the complaint cannot be upheld.
- the concern is not substantiated by the evidence.
- the concern was substantiated in part or full.
- the matter has been fully investigated and that appropriate procedures are being followed.

1.5.4 Whilst the response may explain the actions the academy is taking to resolve your complaint, the disclosure of any details of the investigation must comply with current data protection legislation (for example we will not be able to divulge the details of any disciplinary action that may be taking place as a result of a complaint).

1.5.5 When we receive a complaint we will:

- discuss the complaint with the complainant if possible / necessary.

- try to establish what has happened, who was involved and clarify the details.
- ascertain what the complainant feels would remedy the situation.
- interview those involved if appropriate and, where possible, allow them to be accompanied if they wish.
- approach any interview or discussion with an open mind.

1.5.6 A complaint will have a response timescale attached to it. If we are unable to fully respond within the specified time scales, we will inform the complainant before the deadline, giving a reason and a new deadline for reply.

1.5.7 Copies of any notes or statements made during interviews, meetings or conversations used to inform a complaint response at any stage of the complaints procedure are not routinely disclosed to a complainant, neither are they usually kept longer than the duration of the complaint process.

1.6 Timing

1.6.1 Complainants 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. We will only consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply. It is in the interests of all parties that any concerns or complaints are raised as soon as is practicable after the event to which they relate so that they can be resolved quickly and efficiently.

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

1.6.3 There is no requirement for academies to consider parental complaints once their child is no longer a pupil at the academy, but considerations may be given should a complaint have been submitted and the investigation be underway prior to their departure.

1.6.4 Parents who wait until after their child has left the academy before making a complaint should be aware that whilst they are still of statutory school age, any pupil records will have been passed onto their next school and we may have a limited amount of information available on which to pursue the investigation.

1.6.5 Other than in what the academy may deem as exceptional circumstances, it is not appropriate that the gap between the complaint stages identified in Section 2 below be significant and we will usually expect the complainant to adhere to the timescales provided.

1.6.6 Where necessary, the head teacher should interview any relevant pupils / witnesses as soon as possible whilst events are fresh. If appropriate, a member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable may be asked to attend.

1.6.7 If, after raising or escalating their complaint, a complainant refuses to engage in the process or arrangements, after a reasonable time to respond has passed we may either immediately consider the matter closed or complete the relevant stage of the procedure in their absence.

1.7 General principles

1.7.1 Complaints should be handled swiftly with clear time scales.

1.7.2 Complaint stages provide complainants with a clarity of where to turn if they are not satisfied with a response. It also provides us with a clear approach to complaint handling.

1.7.3 Where the procedure refers to a head teacher or chief executive officer, whilst the final decision will rest with them they may delegate any of their functions to a member of their senior staff to assist them if appropriate.

1.7.4 In exceptional circumstances a head teacher or the chief executive officer may appoint an independent investigator to undertake an investigation on the their behalf.

1.7.5 Covert audio or video recordings of meetings or conversations are not permitted in line with UK GDPR. The DfE also support this. In exceptional circumstances, prior notice must be given and consent of all attending parties must be sought and received before recordings take place. Consent will be documented in any notes or minutes taken.

1.7.6 Whilst based in academies, some of our support staff report to a central management team. Should a complaint relate, in whole or in part, to a member of staff over whom they do not have direct line management, the head teacher will liaise with the appropriate member of the senior management team in order to provide a response.

1.7.7 Governors personal contact details are not shared with complainants without us first seeking consent. They can be initially contacted via the Trust's independent central governance team who will ensure appropriate messages are passed to them (See Appendix 2 for contact details).

1.7.8 It is not appropriate that governors are involved in the earlier complaint stages regardless of the complainants personal preference.

2. The complaint procedure

2.1 STAGE 1 | Formal complaint

2.1.1 This is when a parent or pupil contacts the academy because they are not happy about something that has happened or is happening in school.

2.1.2 The complainant should clarify the complaint and identify the desired outcome they are looking for in order to tackle minor concerns quickly and effectively (A complaint form is also available on the website or at Appendix 3).

2.1.3 At this stage ideally a class teacher, senior manager or other individual responsible for the service can resolve the concerns (and this could be via a meeting).

2.1.4 **The response should be provided within a maximum of 15 school days from the date of receipt.**

2.1.5 The response can be oral or in writing as deemed appropriate to the situation, however details of the complaint should be retained for monitoring purposes and may be added to the pupil record as a correspondence.

2.1.6 If we are unable to respond within the time scale, we will inform the complainant before the deadline, giving a reason for any delay and a new reasonable deadline for reply.

2.1.7 As part of the response, the complainant should be advised of the next stage of the procedure in case they are not satisfied with the outcome.

2.1.8 A complainant's unreasonable refusal to attempt a local resolution may result in the procedure being terminated and this will be confirmed in writing.

2.1.9 On occasion it may be inappropriate for anyone below the role of head teacher to respond and they themself may respond at Stage 1. Similarly the head teacher may feel it appropriate to escalate the matter directly to Stage 2 of the procedure.

2.2 STAGE 2 | Formal complaint to the head teacher

2.2.1 If the complainant is not satisfied with the response at Stage 1 they should be given the opportunity to take the complaint to Stage 2 of the process in order for the head teacher to investigate (or revisit if they responded at Stage 1 as per Section 2.1.9).

2.2.2 Stage 2 complaints should be made in writing to the head teacher and must also include both the complainant's reason for their dissatisfaction and their desired outcome from the complaint. (A complaint form is also available on the website or at Appendix 3)

2.2.3 A complainant should request their complaint be escalated to Stage 2 **within 10 school working days of the Stage 1 response**

2.2.4 Oral or written acknowledgement of a complaint should be provided by the academy **within 3 school days of receipt of the complaint**

2.2.5 Where appropriate, the head teacher may provide the complainant with the opportunity to meet to either confirm the complaint details to be investigated or resolve (or partially resolve) the complaint in that meeting. It is reasonable to allow a friend or advocate to accompany the complainant to the meeting if they so wish.

2.2.6 The response to the Stage 2 complaint should be provided **within 20 school days of receipt** or once clarified after a meeting (as per Section 2.2.5 above). If it is not possible to resolve matters within this timescale an explanation as to why should be provided, with a revised target date.

2.2.7 Following the completion of all appropriate investigations, the head teacher will respond in writing to the complainant with all appropriate information in relation to the complaint and information on any outcome(s).

2.2.8 As part of the response, the complainant should be advised of the next stage of the procedure in case they are not satisfied with the outcome.

2.3 STAGE 2.5 | Consideration by the chief executive officer

2.3.1 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the headteacher's response, then they may raise a complaint in respect of the response / investigation carried out by the head teacher at Stage 2.

2.3.2 The complaint should be made in writing to the Chief Executive Officer of North Star Community Trust **within 10 school days of receiving the head teacher's response** and must also include both the complainant's reason for their dissatisfaction and their desired outcome from the complaint. The complaint can be submitted to the academy office our central governance team (Contact details can be found at Appendix 2 and complaint form is also available on the website or at Appendix 3).

2.3.3 The Chief Executive Officer will then decide who is best placed to investigate and this will be someone with no significant, prior involvement such as: -

- the Chair (or other nominated governor) of the academy advisory board
- the Chair (or nominated governor) of one of our other academy advisory boards
- a member of the Trust's Senior Management Team
- the Chief Executive Officer themself

In some circumstances it may also be appropriate for the CEO to refer elements of the complaint back to the head teacher to resolve at Stage 2 or to escalate the matter directly to Stage 3.

2.3.4 The nominated complaint investigator may provide the complainant with the opportunity to meet to either confirm the complaint details to be investigated or resolve (or partially resolve) the complaint in that meeting. It is reasonable to allow a friend or advocate to accompany the complainant to the meeting if they so wish.

2.3.5 Any investigation will consider available evidence and may include separate interviews or meetings with the complainant, the head teacher and relevant members of staff if additional evidence is required. It would not be appropriate to further question any pupils if they have been part of any previous investigation.

2.3.6 When the investigation has been concluded the complainant and head teacher will be informed in writing of the outcome **within 20 school days of receiving the complaint**.

2.3.7 Should the complainant remain dissatisfied they may request, no later than 10 school days following receipt of the response, that a panel of governors consider the matter at Stage 3. Contact details for the Trust's Central Governance Team can be found at Appendix 2.

2.4 STAGE 3 | Formal complaint to the governing body

2.4.1 Stage 3 is a review of the handling of the complaint at the previous stage(s) and it is not appropriate to introduce new matters which have not previously been addressed at previous stages of the procedure.

2.4.2 The complainants should be made in writing and addressed to the '*Trust Central Governance Team*' **no later than 10 school days following receipt of the written outcome at Stage 2** and must also include both the complainant's reason for their dissatisfaction and their desired outcome from the complaint. (Contact details can be found at Appendix 2 and complaint form is also available on the website or at Appendix 3).

2.4.3 If the Trust's Central Governance Team receive a written complaint directly from a parent, they will first consult with the academy head teacher before taking any action as it is important to ensure complaints are directed to the correct stage of the procedure if the appropriate earlier stage(s) have not first been exhausted.

2.4.4 **A written acknowledgement should be sent to the complainant within 3 school days of receiving the complaint** and will inform the complainant how the complaint will proceed. The Trust's central governance team may support with this task.

2.4.5 Should the complaint proceed to Stage 3 **the panel should ideally be held within 20 school days of receiving the complaint** and all reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate this however both complainant and governor availability will of course need to be considered.

2.4.6 The Trust's Central Governance Team will independently identify a panel of three governors.

2.4.7 It is important that the governors' complaint panel be independent. Some governors may have prior knowledge of a complaint, which might make them unable to give fair and unbiased consideration to the issue. **At least one governor from another academy will be appointed to the panel to ensure it includes one member who is fully independent from the management and running of the school to which the complaint relates**.

2.4.8 In the event that availability prevents this, a person of credibility from the local area and who has no association with the school being complained about will instead be sourced (for example a governor of a neighbouring school or academy. This person will not be a Trustee.

2.4.9 Once availability and a mutual date has been agreed, the central governance team will communicate the details back to the school in order that they may continue with the facilitation of the panel (i.e. the logistics and organisation of meeting rooms and attendees).

2.4.10 The complaint panel meeting should be arranged, with enough notice given so that everyone, including the complainant, can make arrangements to attend. **This notice period is usually at least 5 school days prior to the date of the panel meeting**.

2.4.11 At this meeting the issues around the complaint can be discussed, with everyone involved invited to put forward their case. Occasionally, the panel would also need to interview any people involved in order to get a clearer picture of the background. Any parties involved should also be invited to submit any extra evidence that has not been seen during the earlier stages.

2.4.12 A full overview of the Stage 3 panel process is available at Section 3

2.4.13 A written response to the complainant should be made as soon as possible but **within a maximum of 15 school days from the date of the panel meeting.**

2.5 Appeal to the Department for Education (DfE)

2.5.1 If, after Stage 3, the complainant believes we did not handle the complaint in accordance with our procedure or we acted unlawfully or unreasonably in our exercise of duties under education law, they can contact the DfE.

2.5.2 The DfE will usually refer any parental complaint matters back to a school to address if it has not first been through its own complaint procedure

2.5.3 The complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE at www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe

2.5.4 The DfE will not usually reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the academy. They usually consider whether we have 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.

3. Model procedure for a governors' complaints panel

3.1 The panel

3.1.1 Should a complaint proceed to Stage 3, the Chair (or other nominated governor) should arrange to convene a panel of governors. They may, and it may be necessary to, approach governors from other academies within the Trust to ensure that three independent governors are available to carry out their task within the set time.
The Trust's central governance team may support with this task.

3.1.2 The panel members should be governors who have had no prior involvement with the complaint and at least one will be fully independent of the school (as per Section 2.4.7 above). The head teacher may not be a panel member.

3.1.3 The Chair (or other nominated governor) should lead the panel unless they too have previously been involved in the complaint. On these occasions another panel chair will be appointed.

3.1.4 It may be helpful to have a governor who is also a parent on the panel. Governors will also want to be sensitive to issues of race, gender or religious affiliation.

3.1.5 The chair will make every effort to ensure that the panel will **hear the complaint within 20 school days of receiving the request to move to Stage 3** as indicated in the acknowledgement letter however this may depend upon the complainant's or governor availability.

3.1.6 The panel chair will ensure that the complainant, head teacher, any relevant witnesses, and members of the panel are informed of the date, time and place of the meeting. This should be done as soon as practicable and at **least 5 school days in advance of the panel date**. (See Section 3.2.3 below also)
The Trust's central governance team may support with this task.

3.1.7 All relevant papers regarding the complaint should be given to each panel member and the complainant as soon as practicable after the composition of the panel is confirmed at least by the 5 school days in advance of the panel date.
The Trust's central governance team may support with this task.

3.1.8 Papers should at least include the original complaint(s) and response(s) at the previous stage(s). A head teacher's report may also be required as a summary of events and should be provided to the central governance team. The Trust's central governance team may support with collating these documents.

3.1.9 If the correspondence is extensive, the panel chair should ensure a thorough summary is prepared for sending to panel members.

3.1.10 Whist new documents may be introduced to support the review, all panel members and the complainant should be provided with copies of all documents to be considered at panel in advance. The Trust's central governance team may support with distributing these documents.

3.1.11 The notification to the complainant should also inform them of their right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend / advocate / interpreter. The complainant may not be accompanied by a solicitor acting in a legal capacity. The Trust's central governance team may support with this task.

3.1.12 By reference to this procedure, the letter will also explain how the meeting will be conducted and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the panel.

3.2 Who should attend the panel?

3.2.1 The chair of the panel should invite the head teacher to attend the panel meeting who should prepare a written report for the panel in response to the complaint. The head teacher should be provided with a copy of the panel papers. The Trust's central governance team may support with this task.

3.2.2 The head teacher may also invite members of staff directly involved with matters raised in the complaint to respond to the complainant directly either in writing or in person at the panel. It is not usually appropriate for all additional witnesses all invitees to be provided with a full set of papers; they may not require any or may only require sections which relate to them directly. The Trust's central governance team may support with distributing these documents if provided with them.

3.2.3 Any relevant documents for consideration at the panel (this includes the head teacher's report), should be submitted in order to be received by the panel members and the complainant at least 5 school days prior to the panel meeting date. The Trust's central governance team may support with distributing these documents if provided with them.

3.2.4 The involvement of staff other than the head teacher is subject to the discretion of the panel chair although the investigating officer may be invited, should that be someone other than the head teacher (as per Section 2.3.3).

3.2.5 It is the responsibility of the panel chair and the school to ensure that any notes taken are properly recorded. These are only used to assist the panel draft their response following deliberations (as per Section 3.5 below) are not usually kept afterwards and are not usually shared with the complainant.

3.3 The panel meeting

3.3.1 The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that sometimes it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that their complaint has at least been taken seriously.

3.3.2 The panel should remember that many parents are unused to dealing with groups of people in formal situations and may feel inhibited when speaking to the panel. The panel chair should therefore ensure that the proceedings are as informal as possible.

3.3.3 The panel may wish to meet briefly ahead of the start of the panel

3.3.4 If previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses are introduced at the panel, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence.

3.4 The panel process

3.4.1 Any party have the right to call pre-agreed witnesses if applicable (subject to the approval of the panel chair) and all parties have the right to question all the witnesses.

3.4.2 **Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing for which they give their evidence**.

3.4.2 Whilst **the panel may ask clarifying questions of either party at any point**, the process of the complaint panel is as follows: -

a. Welcome and introductions from the panel chair

b. The panel chair explains the purpose of the meeting, the procedure and that all written evidence has been made available to all parties

c. Complainant is invited to explain their complaint, followed by their witnesses

d. The head teacher may then question both the complainant and the witnesses

e. The panel may then question both the complainant and the witnesses

f. Head teacher (and investigating officer if applicable) is invited to explain the school's actions, including those taken to address the complaint at previous stages of the complaints procedure, followed by any witnesses for the school.

g. The complainant may question the head teacher (and investigating officer if applicable) and the witnesses for the school

h. The panel may then question the head teacher (and investigating officer if applicable) and the witnesses for the school

i. Any remaining witnesses to leave

j. The head teacher (and investigating officer if applicable) is invited to make a final statement

k. The complainant is invited to make a final statement

l. The panel chair explains to the complainant and head teacher that the panel will now consider its decision, and that a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 school days

m. The complainant and the head teacher leave at the same time

n. Panel deliberations and decisions

3.5 The panel decision

3.5.1 The panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. They will: -

- Reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint
- Decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, suggest / recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

3.5.2 The Chair should provide a written statement outlining the decision of the panel to the complainant within 15 school days. The letter to the complainant should explain whether a further appeal can be made and, if so, to whom (e.g. Department for Education).

3.5.3 A copy of the statement will be made available to those subject to the complaint **only where it is appropriate to do so.**

3.5.4 Generally, this would be the end of the governors' involvement in the complaint process however they may also consider an appeal if a complainant is able to demonstrate that new information or evidence has come to light which was not available at the time of, and directly relates to, the original complaint which might significantly affect the findings of the complaints panel.

3.5.5 The school should ensure that a copy of all correspondence and relevant notes are kept on file in the school's records. (See Section 4)

3.5.6 A copy of Stage 3 panel findings and recommendations will be kept on the school premises available for inspection by the head teacher, chief executive officer and Trustees (the proprietor)

3.6 Summary of timescales of complaint panel process

3.6.1 Written acknowledgement sent within 3 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 request

3.6.2 If proceeding with a panel, acknowledgment to inform the complainant that the complaint is to be heard within 20 school days of the complaint receipt date (subject to the reasonable availability of the complainant and panel members).

3.6.3 Once agreed, panel chair to inform relevant parties of the date / time / location of the meeting at least 5 school days in advance of the date

3.6.4 Any relevant and / or additional documents to be considered at the panel (including the head teacher's report) should be received by all concerned – including the complainant - prior to the meeting

3.6.5 The panel chair will send a written decision to both head teacher and complainant within 15 school days of the panel date

4. Recording and monitoring

4.1 Monitoring and recording complaints

4.1.1 The school will monitor and keep a written record of complaints. Details to include: -

- name of complainant
- when the complaint was made
- details of the complaint
- the stage at which the complaint was investigated (as per Section 4.1.2)
- summary of the results and conclusion of any investigation(s)
- the outcome (as per Section 4.1.3)
- summary of any action taken as a result of the complaint (regardless of the outcome)

4.1.2 Complaint outcomes should be recorded in a manner which indicates which stage(s) of the procedure they have been considered.

4.1.3 Complaint outcomes should be listed as either: -

- upheld
- not upheld or
- partially upheld

4.1.4 One complaint can have several stages each with a different outcome. There should also be an indication as to what the response time scale is (dependent on the stage) and whether or not the response time scales have been met.

4.1.5 Sex, ethnicity and any disability of complainants may be anonymously monitored in order to address any possible equality issues.

4.1.6 As per the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, all correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the Education and Skill Act 2008 requests access to them. (Stage 3 findings and recommendations will be kept as per Section 3.5.6)

4.1.7 Records of complaints will be securely destroyed or transferred as appropriate in line with the pupil record to which they belong.

4.1.8 Unless there are ongoing or contentious disputes, records relating to complaints which were considered by governors at Stage 3 will be securely destroyed after 6 years from the complaint response

4.2 Publicising the complaint procedure

4.2.1 The complaint procedure and complaints form will be publicised on the academy website.

5. Vexatious complaints and communications

5.1 Overview

5.1.1 The term 'vexatious' reaches wider than complaints. The characteristics of vexatious or frivolous complaints (or communications) include but are not limited to: -

- complaints which are obsessive;
- complaints which are persistent;
- complaints which are harassing;
- complaints which are prolific;
- complaints which are repetitious
- insistence upon pursuing unworthy complaints and / or unrealistic outcomes beyond that which is reasonable
- insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner
- complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value

5.1.2 It is not appropriate to make personal accusations or attacks on members of school staff, or to raise matters that are not about education or a child's well-being. It is also not appropriate to make unsubstantiated allegations against the school, or to behave unreasonably by not engaging with the school to attempt a joint resolution.

5.1.3 If someone attempts to reopen issues that have already been dealt with through the complaints procedure it will be explained that the procedure has been exhausted and the school may choose not to respond.

5.1.4 If a complainant acts unreasonably by continuing to raise similar issues or raising a range of unrelated issues on a repeated basis, then the school can reserve the right not to respond.

5.1.5 Should we need to bar or remove someone from premises we will follow DfE guidance as outlined in the 'Parent and visitor conduct policy' available on our website.

5.2 Vexatious complaint and communication handling

5.2.1 The school may take steps to limit or in some way ration contact for example:-

- directing the parent to a specific teacher or other member of staff as a contact point.

- responding to the correspondence at specific intervals.
- informal or formal written warnings given as to future behaviour and the consequences of that behaviour.

5.2.2 When rationing contact, care will be taken not to dismiss any new complaints which may have been raised alongside previous complaints.

5.2.3 Any new issues should be addressed separately under the relevant stage of the complaints procedure and a continued dialogue with the academy is seen as extremely important as part of ensuring the best possible outcomes for pupils and a significant benefit of doubt should be given to parents / carers.

5.2.4 If a complainant in this category refuses to engage in the school's formal complaints procedures, but continues to complain, then the head teacher / chief executive officer will consider informing the complainant that the complaints are vexatious or frivolous.

5.2.5 If a complainant believes that the academy has acted unreasonably then they may appeal to the Department for Education as outlined in Section 2.5 above.

5.3 Complaint campaigns or group complaints

5.3.1 Schools are not obliged to respond to every piece of correspondence they receive, especially if it has little / no merit

5.3.2 If we receive large volumes of complaints all regarding the same subject matter or from individuals unconnected to the school or Trust we will assess on a case-by-case basis and decide how best to respond.

For example we may: -

- Publish a statement on the school / Trust website
- Send a template response to all complainants

5.3.3 Parents' right to complain rests on their position as the parent / carer of their child(ren). They cannot raise a complaint on behalf of other pupils / group of pupils (as per Section 1.3.3 above).

6. Parental concerns about curriculum

6.1 Overview

6.1.1 Whilst they must teach a broad and balanced curriculum which includes English, maths, science and religious education, academy schools do not have to follow the national curriculum. Any parental concerns about curriculum should be raised as per Phase 1 and 2 below.

6.1.2 Parents / carers can withdraw their child from non-statutory elements of relationships health and sex education and how to do so is outlined in the 'Relationship, health and sex education policy' available on the policy page of the school website.

6.1.3 The Board of Trustees is responsible for the curriculum of the academy schools.

6.1.4 All parents are aware of the curriculum prior to registering for a place at the Academy. Neither the academy staff, trustees or governors will enter into discussions about whether a specific subject should or should not be on the curriculum.

6.1.5 If the concerns raised become personalised or about matters not related to the general curriculum, the head teacher reserves the right to refer the matter to the academy complaints procedure as outlined in Sections 1 – 5 of this policy.

6.2 Phase 1 (Informal)

6.2.1 Raise with the class teacher if it is a specific matter related to the work of the class.

6.2.2 Raise with the head teacher if there is a more general concern or the parent feels that the matter has not been satisfactorily addressed.

6.2.3 The head teacher may need to gather information before responding.

6.3 Phase 2 (The Chief Executive Officer)

6.3.1 If the parent feels the matter remains unresolved, they may write to the Chief Executive Officer for further consideration.

6.3.2 Should the Chief Executive Officer feel it appropriate, they may refer the matter for consideration by the Board of North Star Community Trust but there is no requirement to do so.

6.3.3 The decision of the Chief Executive Officer (or the Board of Trustees) is final. The decision will be communicated to the parent via the school.

7. Complaints about the head teacher

7.1 Overview

7.1.1 This process should not be seen as a ways to raise concerns about professional, formal decisions a head teacher has made as this is covered by the complaints procedure outlined in Section 2 and such matters will be redirected there. **Any parental issues not relating to the head teacher which have not first been through the complaints procedure will be directed back to the school.**

7.1.2 Complaints specifically about a head teacher should be in writing and directed to the Chief Executive Officer (or the Trust's clerk in central governance team who will ensure it gets to the chief Executive Officer) and must also include both the complainant's reason for their dissatisfaction and their desired outcome from the complaint.

See Appendix 2 for the central governance team's contact details

7.1.3 The Chief Executive Officer will then decide who is best placed to investigate and this will be someone with no significant, prior involvement such as: -

- the Chair of the academy advisory board
- the Chair of one of our other academy advisory boards
- a member of the Trust's Senior Management Team
- the Chief Executive Officer themself

7.1.4 The complainant will be informed of the planned approach within 5 school days along with an appropriate timescale for an expected response.

7.1.5 The nominated complaint investigator may provide the complainant with the opportunity to meet to either confirm the complaint details to be investigated or resolve (or partially resolve) the complaint in that meeting. It is reasonable to allow a friend or advocate to accompany the complainant to the meeting if they so wish.

7.1.6 Any investigation will consider available evidence and may include separate interviews or meetings with the complainant, the head teacher and relevant members of staff if additional evidence is required. It would not be appropriate to further question any pupils if they have been part of any previous investigation.

7.1.7 When the investigation has been concluded the complainant and head teacher will be informed in writing of the outcome **within 20 school days of receiving the complaint**.

7.1.8 Should the complainant remain dissatisfied they may request, no later than 10 school days following receipt of the response, to escalate the matter and again must include both the reason for their dissatisfaction and their desired outcome from the complaint.

7.1.9 The complaint may: -

- be sent to the Chair or panel of governors for a response; *or*
- be sent to a Trustee for a response; *or*
- be sent to the Chair of the Trust for a response; *or*
- heard by a panel of Trustees

8. Complaints about governors

8.1 Overview

8.1.1 This process should not be seen as a further, fourth stage to the complaints procedure outlined in Section 2 nor as a process to raise concerns about professional, formal decisions they have made.

8.1.2 Complaints specifically about governors should be directed to the Trust's clerk in the central governance team who will assess the issues raised and determine the appropriate forwards.

See Appendix 2 for the central governance team's contact details

8.1.3 Any parental issues which have not first been through the complaints procedure will be directed back to the school.

8.1.4 The complainant will be informed of the planned approach within 5 school days along with an appropriate timescale for an expected response.

8.2 Complaints about individual governors

8.2.1 The complaint may: -

- be sent to the Chair of governors for a response
- heard by a panel of governors
- sent to the Trust's CEO for a response / decision

8.3 Complaints about the Chair of governors / governing body

8.3.1 The complaint may: -

- be sent to the Trust's CEO for a response
- be escalated to a Trustee for a response
- escalated to the Trust board for a response / decision

9. Complaints about the Trust

9.1 Overview

9.1.1 This process should not be seen as a further, fourth stage to the complaints procedure outlined in Section 2 nor as a process to raise concerns about professional, formal decisions they have made.

9.1.2 Complaints should be directed to the Trust's clerk in the central governance team who will assess the issues raised and determine the appropriate forwards.

See Appendix 2 for the central governance team's contact details

9.1.3 Any parental issues which have not first been through the complaints procedure will be directed back to the school.

9.1.4 The complainant will be informed of the planned approach within 5 school days along with an appropriate timescale for an expected response.

9.2 Complaints about Trust services

9.2.1 The complaint will be referred to the CEO who may: -

- refer it to the appropriate head of service for an initial response
- respond directly

9.3 Complaints about the CEO

9.3.1 The complaint may: -

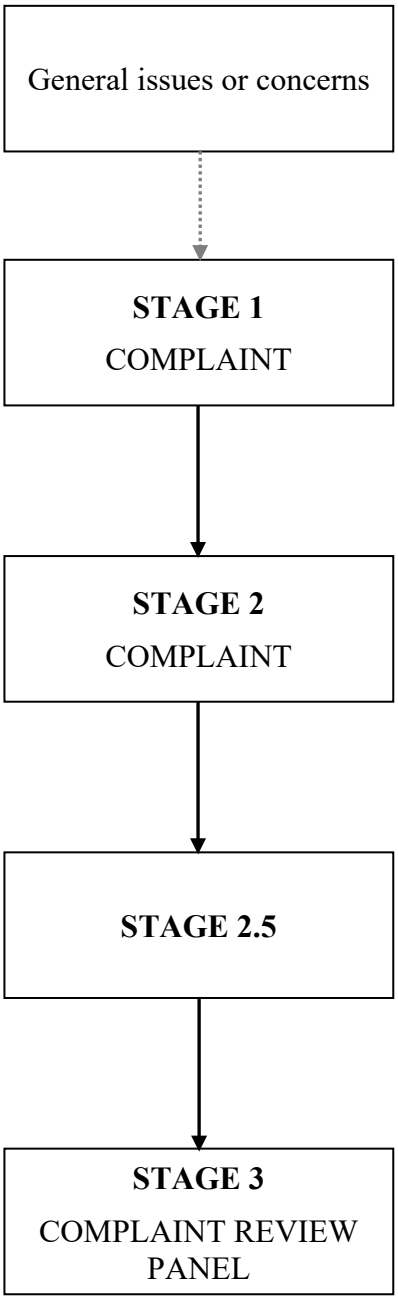
- be sent to a Trustee for a response
- be sent to the Chair of the Trust for a response
- heard by a panel of Trustees

9.4 Complaints about Trustees

9.4.1 The complaint may: -

- be sent to the Chair of the Trust
- heard by an independent committee panel

Parent complaints procedure overview



Dealt with locally "there and then"
Repetition of issues can potentially lead to a Stage 1

Oral or written response from staff / SLT member or the head teacher.
Nature of complaint may mean escalation directly to Stage 2

Possible investigation.
Written response from head teacher

Considerations by the Chief Executive Officer to decide who best to respond (or if direct escalation to Stage 3 is required)

Governors panel to review the Stage 2 or Stage 2.5 investigation and response(s)

Further action

Complaints about school problems are almost always settled within schools but in exceptional cases it may be possible to refer the problem to an outside body once the formal complaints process is completed such as the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

Other complaints

Some education matters have their own complaints or appeals policies and procedures (such as curriculum, admissions etc.) and must be addressed via those routes.

Individual academy contact details

Enfield Heights Academy
1-3 Pitfield Way, Enfield, Middlesex EN3 5BY
020 8805 9811
heights@northstartrust.org.uk

Heron Hall Academy
46 Queensway, Ponders End, London EN3 4SA
020 8443 9631
heron@northstartrust.org.uk

Kingfisher Hall Academy
40 The Ride, Enfield, London EN3 7GB
020 8344 9890
kingfisher@northstartrust.org.uk

Woodpecker Hall Academy
Cuckoo Hall Lane, Edmonton, London N9 8DR
020 8804 4126
woodpecker@northstartrust.org.uk

Trust central governance team / Contacting governors

Governors or the CEO can be contacted via our central governance team who are independent from our schools.

They will forward messages directly to them
(as per Section 1.7.7 of the complaints procedure)

governors@northstartrust.org.uk

Parental complaint form

APPENDIX 3

Whilst not essential they use it, this form helps guides parents to ensure they provide all the information we need process a complaint. **Please ensure you provide us with your 'desired outcome'** as per Section 1.3.5 and include extra sheets if necessary. An editable electronic version is also available on the website.

Your name:	
Pupil's name and school:	
Your relationship to pupil:	
Your address and postcode:	
Your daytime telephone number:	
Your evening telephone number:	
Please give details of your complaint:	

Parental complaint form

APPENDIX 3

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint?
(Who did you speak to and what was the response?)

Desired outcome
What do you feel we should do to resolve your complaint at this stage?

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

Signature*:		**Date:**	

*Alternatively, we will accept a *verified* contact email address as proof of authenticity

Please complete and return to the school.

Your complaint will be acknowledged with an explanation of what happens next.