



## COMPLAINTS POLICY

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## **INSPIRE MULTI ACADEMY TRUST Complaints Policy**

### **1.0 Availability of the Complaints Policy**

- 1.1 This policy will be used across each Academy within Inspire Multi Academy Trust, utilised for all complaints from parents/guardians or any other parties.
- 1.2 A copy of the complaints procedure is available from Academy Reception points or via the trust or Academy websites.

### **2.0 Introduction**

- 2.1 We believe that our academies provide a good education for all our children, and that the headteachers and other staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the Trust is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or other parties.
- 2.2 If any parent/guardian/complainant is unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or has any concern relating to their child's school, we encourage that person to talk to the child's class teacher immediately.
- 2.3 We deal with all complaints in compliance with guidance/regulation set out by the Department for Education, the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations.

We have adopted a three-stage process for dealing with complaints:

- Stage 1 – Complaint heard by member of staff
- Stage 2 – Complaint heard by Investigating Officer
- Stage 3 – Complaint heard by Complaint Panel

### **3.0 Aims and Objectives**

- 3.1 Our Trust aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. When considering a complaint we endeavour to deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child above all other issues. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.

### **4.0 Complaints Procedure**

- 4.1 Our Complaints Procedure will:

- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- Be easily accessible and publicised;
- Be simple to understand and use;
- Be impartial;
- Be non-adversarial;

- Allow swift handling with established time limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality;
- Address all the points at issue and provide effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
- Provide information to the Academy's senior management team to enable services to be improved.

4.2 The Academy will be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. We will take concerns seriously at the earliest stage to reduce the numbers that develop into complaints.

#### 5.0 **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

5.1 Most concerns will be dealt with informally and parents/guardians or other parties are encouraged to speak to a member of staff to discuss your concerns. The formal procedures set out below will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

5.2 If a parent/guardian or other party is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing within our Trust, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and are making good progress; they always want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before the problem seriously affects the child's progress.

5.3 Our Academies operate an open door policy and as such, parents/guardians may wish to book in some time to talk to us, if this would be beneficial in resolving your concern informally.

5.4 Should the complaint be about the Headteacher, the Chief Executive Headteacher or Chair of the Local Governing Body will do all they can to resolve the issue informally through a dialogue with the persons concerned.

5.5 Should the complaint be about the Chief Executive Headteacher the Chair or Vice-chair of the Trust Board will do all they can to resolve the issue informally through a dialogue with the persons concerned.

#### 6.0 **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

6.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis (as set out in the above paragraphs), then parents/guardians/complainants should put their complaint in writing (if you wish you can do so using Appendix 1 attached) and hand this in to the Academy for the attention of the Headteacher.

6.2 The Headteacher will usually act as Investigating Officer unless the complaint involves them. In such cases another Investigating Officer will be appointed. The complaint will be investigated thoroughly by the appointed Investigating Officer.

Should the complaint be about the Headteacher they will not be appointed as Investigating Officer, the Chief Executive Headteacher or Chair of the Local Governing Body would usually take on this role under these circumstances or appoint an appropriate Investigating Officer to conduct the investigation on their behalf.

Should the complaint be about the Chief Executive Headteacher, it will then be considered by a director on the Board of Trustees, usually the Chair or Vice-chair.

- 6.3 The Investigating Officer will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- 6.4 In some cases, the Investigating Officer may decide to meet or speak with the parents/guardians/complainant concerned to discuss the matter. Wherever possible, our aim is to reach a resolution at this stage.
- 6.5 If required the Investigating Officer will use reasonable endeavours to speak to or meet parents/guardians/complainant within 10 school days of the formal complaint being received.
- 6.6 Once the Investigating Officer is satisfied that, so far is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made which will be communicated to parents/guardians/complainant in writing. The correspondence will provide the reasons for the decision reached. The written decision should be provided no later than 10 school days after speaking with or meeting with parents/guardians/complainant to discuss the matter. In some instances, this time scale may not be achieved and if this is the case, the Investigating Officer will write to you to provide a date at which they expect to reach a conclusion.
- 6.7 The Academy will hold a written record of all formal complaints, including records of meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. The Academy will also retain correspondence linked to the decision. The record will be retained for 1 year after the pupil leaves the Academy.
- 6.8 Only if Stage 2 proceedings fail to resolve the matter should a complaint progress to Stage 3. The correspondence issued at Stage 2 will outline the process to make an appeal against the decision.
- 7.0 **Stage 3 – Complaint Panel**
- 7.1 If parents/guardians/complainants seek to invoke Stage 3, following failure to reach an earlier resolution at Stage 2, in respect of their formal complaint. They may request their complaint be considered by the Complaints Panel. Such a request must be made in writing, addressed to the Business Relationships and Governance Manager, care of the Academy.
- 7.2 This request for further assessment of the complaint will, for the purposes of this procedure, be known as an ‘appeal’.
- 7.3 Parents/guardians/complainants must lodge their appeal in writing within 10 school days of the date of the Academy’s decision made in accordance with the Stage 2 procedure. The parents/guardians/complainant should provide, in writing a list of the complaints made against the Academy and which they

believe to have been resolved unsatisfactorily by the Stage 2 procedure, along with the remedies sought in respect of each.

- 7.4 The Complaints Panel is only obliged to consider the complaint lodged in this 'initial submission' although they may use their discretion to consider other relevant and related matters that may subsequently arise.
- 7.5 Where an appeal is received by the Academy, the Academy will, within 5 school days, refer the matter to the Clerk to the Local Governing Body who will act as Clerk for the Complaints Panel. Where the appeal is received by the Academy during Academy holidays, or within 2 school days of their commencement, the Academy has 5 school days upon commencement of the school term to refer the matter to the Clerk.
- 7.6 The Clerk provides an independent source of advice on procedure for all parties concerned.
- 7.7 On receipt of an appeal, the Clerk will then endeavour to convene an independent Complaints Panel hearing as soon as possible, usually no later than 20 school days after receipt of the notification from the parents/guardian that they wish to invoke Stage 3. The Panel date will be dependent upon the availability of the Panel members.
- 7.8 The Independent Complaints Panel will consist of two governors from the Local Governing Body who have not previously been involved in the complaint, and one person independent of the management and running of the school who will be selected from another Local Governing Body.
- 7.9 The following people are entitled to attend a hearing and/or, submit written representations and address the Panel:
  - The parent(s)/guardian(s)/complainant(s);
  - The Headteacher of the Academy
  - Any other interested person whom the Complaints Panel considers to have a reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the Panel in their decision-making.
- 7.10 Where required, the Complaints Panel may request any reports, documents, chronology or other useful information in advance of the hearing. Evidence will be sent to and collated by the Clerk who will distribute the information to the relevant parties in advance of the hearing.
- 7.11 After due consideration of the facts considered relevant, the Panel will reach a decision, and make recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 school days of the hearing. The decision reached by the Complaints Panel is final. Any decision reached that may have financial implications for the Academy will need the appropriate approval from the Academy Trust, although any such approval must be compatible with the decision of the Complaints Panel.
- 7.12 The decision will be communicated in writing to the parents/carers/complainant.
- 7.13 There is no further right of appeal to the Local Governing Body or the Academy Trust. All complainants have the right, as a last resort, to contact the Education Funding Agency if they are not satisfied with the way in which their complaint has been considered. You can contact the EFA via their complaints form on the following link [EFA Complaint Form](#)

**8.0 Monitoring, Evaluation and review**

- 8.1 The Trust Board will review this policy at least every three years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout each Academy in the Trust.
- 8.2 The Trustees monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly.
- 8.3 Trustees take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.



2. What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (who did you speak to and what was their response?). Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

3. How do you feel the problem could be resolved at this stage? Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

4. Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please provide details. Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.



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| Signed: |  |
| Date:   |  |

Thank you for completing the form and providing us with details of your complaint.

Please send in your completed form to the Headteacher, care of the school reception or via the following email address:

Farringdon Academy – [Farringdon@inspiremultiacademytrust.co.uk](mailto:Farringdon@inspiremultiacademytrust.co.uk)

New Penshaw Academy – [new.penshaw@inspiremultiacademytrust.co.uk](mailto:new.penshaw@inspiremultiacademytrust.co.uk)

Plains Farm Academy – [plains.farm@inspiremultiacademytrust.co.uk](mailto:plains.farm@inspiremultiacademytrust.co.uk)

Burnside Academy – [burnside.primary.school@schools.sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:burnside.primary.school@schools.sunderland.gov.uk)

Fatfield Academy – [Fatfield.primary.school@schools.sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:Fatfield.primary.school@schools.sunderland.gov.uk)

All paperwork will be held on file securely by the school.