



PLYM ACADEMY TRUST

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

This policy will be used across each Academy within Plym Academy Trust for all complaints from parents/guardians or other parties. A copy of the complaints procedure will be available from each school office and on the school websites.

Introduction

We believe that our Trust provides high quality education for all our children, and that the Headteachers and other staff work hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the Trust must have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or other parties. If any parent or guardian is unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or has any concern relating to the Trust, we encourage that person to talk to the child's class teacher or other relevant staff immediately.

We deal with all complaints in compliance with guidance and regulations set out by the Department for Education and The Education Funding Agency (EFA) and the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014. We have adopted a three-stage process for dealing with complaints:

- Stage 1 – Complaint heard by member of staff
- Stage 2 – Complaint heard by Headteacher or Trust CEO.
- Stage 3 – Complaint heard by Complaint Panel

Aims and Objectives

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.

Complaints Procedure

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.

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.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

If a parent/guardian 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 or other relevant member of staff. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way. All teachers and non-teaching staff 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.

Our Academies operate an open door policy and as such, parents or guardians may wish to book in some time to talk to the Headteacher if this would be beneficial in resolving your concern informally. Should the complaint be about the Headteacher, the Chief Executive Officer will do all they can to resolve the issue informally through a dialogue with the persons concerned.

If initial attempts to resolve the issue informally are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied, if they wish to take the matter further, then the formal procedures set out below will need to be followed.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis the parent or guardian should put their complaint in writing (using Appendix 1 attached) and hand this in to the school office for the attention of the Headteacher. The Headteacher considers any such complaint very seriously. The complaint will be investigated thoroughly by the Headteacher or a person delegated to undertake the investigation. The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. In most cases, the Headteacher will meet or speak with the parents or guardian concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. The Headteacher will use reasonable endeavours to speak to or meet the parent or guardian within 10 working days of the formal complaint being received.

Once the Headteacher is satisfied that, so far as practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made which will be communicated to the parent or guardian in writing, giving the reasons for the decision. The written decision should be provided no later than 10 working days after speaking with or meeting with the parent or guardian to discuss the matter.

Each Academy in the Trust will hold a written record of all formal complaints, including records of meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint and the Academy's decision. The record will be retained for 1 year after the pupil leaves the Academy. Should the complaint be about the Headteacher, it will be considered by the Chief Executive Officer who will follow the above steps. Only if Stage 2 proceedings fail to resolve the matter should a complaint progress to Stage 3.

Stage 3 – Complaints Panel

A parent or guardian may seek to invoke Stage 3, following failure to reach an earlier resolution with the Headteacher or Chief Executive Officer in respect of their formal complaint. Such a request must be made in writing addressed to the Chair of the Local Advisory Board in the Academy. This will then be considered by the Complaints Panel. Parents/guardians must lodge their complaint in writing within 10 working days of the date of the Academy's decision made in accordance with the Stage 2 procedure. The parent or guardian 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.

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. Where an appeal is received by the Academy, the Academy will, within 5 working 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 working days of their commencement, the Academy has 5 working days upon commencement of the school term to refer the matter to the Clerk.

The Clerk provides an independent source of advice on procedure for all parties. 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.

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 local management and running of the individual academy who will be selected by the Trust Board. The following are entitled to attend a hearing and/or, submit written representations and address the Panel:

- The parent(s)/guardian(s); (you may be accompanied by a friend or associate)
- 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.

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.

After due consideration of the facts considered relevant, the Panel will reach a decision, and make recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 working 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 Trust Board, although any such approval must be compatible with the decision of the Complaints Panel.

The Education Funding Agency (EFA)

There is no further right of appeal to the Local Governing Body or 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 at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure.

Monitoring, Evaluation and review

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. The Local Governing Body monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints in the Academy are handled properly. Governors should take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

Persistent or Vexatious Complaints

You may remain dissatisfied despite all the procedures having been followed and reasonable responses being provided. It may be the case that it is not possible to resolve all your concerns and meet all your wishes. Sometimes it is preferable to 'agree to disagree' and move on. If you continue to make representations to the Academy or continue correspondence into the same issues, the Plym Academy Trust Board reserves the right to inform you, in writing, that the appropriate procedures have all been followed, that all reasonable actions have been taken to try to resolve the issue and that the matter is now closed.

Date of policy and review

July 2019

Appendix 1

Please complete this form and return it to the school office for the attention of the Clerk to Governors . The clerk will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Plym Academy Trust Complaints Form	
Your Name	
Child's School	
Child's Name	
Your relationship to the Child	
Your address	
Your postcode	
Daytime telephone number (daytime)	
Evening telephone number	
Please give details of your complaint:	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (who did you speak to and what was the response?)	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details:	
Signed	Dated

Data Protection Act – Personal information provided by complainants will be treated as confidential. It will be kept secure and not provided to anyone unless they are allowed to see it by law. Analysis will be restricted to types of complaints and individual complainants will not be identified. The analysis will be reported to the Board of Governors on an annual basis. The reporting will include identifying particular trends of complaints, which may require some change in the school's procedures.