

## Complaints Policy

### 1 Introduction

**1.1** Schools within The Diamond Learning Partnership Trust strive to provide a good education for all our children. The Executive Headteacher, Heads of School, Deputy Headteacher and 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 guardians. The following policy sets out the procedures that the Trust follows in such cases.

**1.2** If any parents are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's class teacher immediately. We stress that there is a clear difference between a **concern** and a **complaint**. We take informal concerns seriously and as a result few develop into formal complaints.

**1.3** Parents should be assured that making a complaint will not adversely affect your child.

**1.4** This policy is available from the school office and will be published on our website as well as referred to in our prospectus.

### 2 Aims

**2.1** The Diamond Learning Partnership Trust aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints, and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding. Our complaints procedure is accessible and simple to use and understand. It aims to be non-adversarial. In all cases we put the interests of the child above all else. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved within established time limits.

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### 3 The complaints process

<p><b>Stage 1. Informal.</b> Expression of concern made to the school.</p>	<p>If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at any of our schools, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. In our experience most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress. Most issues can be resolved on the spot with apologies where necessary. Members of the school's senior leadership may be involved at this stage.</p>
<p><b>Stage 2. Formal complaint to Head of School/Deputy Headteacher</b> Concerns raised formally with designated complaints officer * Please note that properly collecting details always takes time. An appointment should be made at the school office.</p>	<p>The Heads of School consider any such complaint very seriously and investigate each case thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved by this stage. The outcome of the Head of Schools investigation will be communicated to you <b>within 15 school days</b></p>

<p><b>Stage 3. Executive Head Teacher.</b> Complaints rarely reach this formal level but should you need to you should make a formal complaint to the Executive Head Teacher.</p>	<p>Complaints at this stage should be written and received within <b>10 school days</b> of the Head of Schools decision. Your letter should be addressed to the Executive Head Teachers (marked "private and confidential") and should set out why you remain unhappy and what you wish to see happen. The Executive Head Teacher (who will not have previously been involved in your complaint) will consider the case and will let you know when your complaint is to be considered. If a meeting with you and others involved is considered necessary you should be given adequate notice to prepare. The Executive Head Teacher will make the decision in private and write to you within <b>7 school days</b></p>
<p><b>Stage 4. Directors of the Diamond Learning Partnership Trust</b></p>	<p>If the complaint is not resolved, and all previous stages have been explored, a parent may make representation to the Directors of the Academy Trust, through the Chief</p>

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<p>You may take your complaint to the Directors of The Diamond Learning Partnership Trust <b>within 6 months</b> of the Executive Headteacher's response</p>	<p>Operations Officer – Tracy Bryden. She can be contacted by a letter delivered to any of the Trust's schools, addressed to her and marked "private and confidential". If the Directors consider from your letter that the complaint warrants further investigation they may ask you to explain your case in person before a panel of 3 Directors. However, it is also possible that, following investigation, they may make a decision without needing you to appear. A decision will be provided <b>within 15 days</b> where possible.</p>
<p><b>Stage 5. Further representation</b>          If you still remain dissatisfied you may make further representations</p>	<p>Following the outcome of stage 4 of this procedure, complaints regarding Academies may be considered by the Education Funding agency only in specific circumstances shown next. :</p> <p>The EFA can only look at complaints about academies that fall into the following two areas.</p> <p>a. The academy did not comply with its own complaints procedure when considering a complaint or the academy's complaints procedure does not comply with statutory requirements</p> <p>The EFA cannot review or overturn an academy's decisions about complaints but will look at whether the academy considered the complaint appropriately. The EFA will generally only do this after a complaint has been through the academy's own procedure but may investigate sooner if there is evidence of undue delays by the academy. If the EFA finds that an academy did not deal with a complaint appropriately it will request that the complaint is reconsidered. Similarly, if the academy's complaints procedure does not meet statutory requirements then the EFA will ensure this is put right.</p> <p>b. The academy has failed to comply with a duty imposed on it under its funding agreement with the Secretary of State.</p> <p>One of the EFA's main responsibilities is to ensure that academies comply with their funding agreement with the Secretary of State. The EFA will seek to resolve any concerns regarding potential or actual breaches of the funding</p>

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**3.1** Should any parents have a complaint about Heads of School or the Executive Head Teacher, they should first make an informal approach to the Chair of the Directors (as at stage 4 above) who is obliged to investigate it. The Chair will do all s/he can to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school, but if parents are unhappy with the outcome, they can make a formal complaint, as outlined above.

**3.2** In the case of a vexatious complaint where despite all stages of this policy being followed the complainant remains dissatisfied they are not entitled to reopen the same issue. In such cases the Chair of Directors is able to inform them in writing that the process has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

**3.3** An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances. These would include serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school might consider it appropriate to contact outside agencies.

## **4 Investigating complaints**

**4.1** It is suggested that at each stage the person investigating the complaint makes sure that they:

- Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved.
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved.
- Meet with the complainant or contact them if further information is required
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- Conduct any interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Complete all necessary notes.

## **5. Resolving complaints**

**5.1** At each stage in the complaint schools and complainant will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology;
- An explanation;

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- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- An assurance that the event that was the basis of the complaint will not recur;
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it does not happen again. Details of any disciplinary procedures that have taken place as a result of the complaint are not released;
- An undertaking to review school policy or procedure in light of the complaint;
- An explanation that there is insufficient evidence and thus the complaint cannot be upheld;
- An explanation that, following investigation, the concern is not substantiated by the evidence.

**5.2** An admission that the school could have handled things better is not the same as an admission of negligence

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## **6. Monitoring and review**

**6.1** The Directors monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Heads of School log all stage 2 complaints received by the school, and record how they were resolved. These logs are presented to Local Governing Bodies as part of the Head of School report.

**6.2** Directors 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.

**6.3** This policy is reviewed as necessary at meetings of Directors of Diamond Learning Partnership Trust.