PARENT CONCERNS, FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

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1. Introduction

The Harmony Trust believes that strong partnerships between schools and families are fundamental to ensuring that every child thrives. We recognise that **parents and carers and schools share the same goal: achieving the very best outcomes for children**. Effective communication, openness and mutual respect are therefore central to the way we work together.

We welcome feedback, concerns and complaints as valuable opportunities to listen, learn and improve. Most concerns can be resolved quickly and positively through open discussion and a **shared commitment to finding solutions**. When issues arise, we are committed to responding with empathy, fairness and transparency, ensuring that all parties feel heard, understood and respected throughout the process.

This policy sets out how parents and carers can raise feedback, concerns and complaints, and explains the procedures The Harmony Trust will follow to support timely and effective resolution. The policy is underpinned by a relationship-based approach and the Trust's commitment to the CLEAR model of complaint resolution, which promotes careful listening, understanding, collaboration and follow-through. Wherever possible, we seek to resolve concerns at the earliest opportunity, maintaining positive relationships and **keeping the focus on what matters most: the education, wellbeing and success of our children.**

The Executive Leadership Team, acting under delegated authority from the Board of Trustees, is responsible for overseeing Stage Two investigations and Stage Three complaint panel hearings. All staff are expected to understand and apply this policy and will receive appropriate guidance and support to ensure concerns and complaints are handled consistently and effectively. This policy is available on request and through both the Trust and academy websites and is reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains current, effective and reflective of best practice.

The Trust will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that this policy and its related procedures are accessible to all, including provision of alternative formats, interpretation support and assistance with completing documentation where required.

2. Policy Development

This policy has been written using the latest guidance and research in relation to working in partnership with parents and the handling of complaints. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- School Guide to Parent Complaints Parent Kind
- Setting up an academies complaints procedure - GOV.UK
- Parental engagement | EEF

3. Safeguarding

Whenever a complaint indicates a child's safety or wellbeing is at imminent risk, The Harmony Trust academies have a duty to report this immediately to the relevant Local Authority. Any action taken will follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, available from the Academy's website.

4. Scope

This policy does not cover certain types of complaints, such as those relating to admissions, safeguarding, or exclusions, which are managed under separate procedures (see Appendix B)

The final stage of this process normally applies only to parents or carers of current pupils. However, where the process was initiated whilst a child was on roll, all stages of the procedure will be followed. Where a pupil is not on roll the parent or carer will be asked to follow the procedure outlined in Appendix C.

Anonymous or campaign complaints will not routinely be investigated.

Employees must raise work-related concerns through the relevant staff procedures. Complaints involving the Central Trust, its staff, Trustees, or the Executive Leadership Team are managed in line with the arrangements set out in Appendix E.
The Trust reserves the right to exercise its discretion in determining the best pathway for dealing with complaints.

5. Our Partnership Commitment

At The Harmony Trust, we believe that children achieve best when schools and families work together in positive partnership.

Most concerns can be resolved quickly through respectful dialogue before they become formal complaints. We therefore encourage all parents and carers to raise concerns as early as possible and we commit to responding with openness, empathy and professionalism.

When concerns arise, we will:

- Put children first.
- Listen carefully and without judgement.
- Seek to understand before responding.
- Communicate openly and respectfully.
- Focus on solutions and positive outcomes.
- Learn from feedback and complaints.

Likewise, we ask parents and carers to:

- Raise concerns promptly.
- Work through the stages of the process.
- Communicate respectfully.
- Remain solution-focused.
- Support constructive relationships between home and school.

This policy is underpinned by the Harmony Trust CLEAR approach.

Feedback

The Harmony Trust values feedback from our Trust and academy community. All members of the community should feel able to suggest ways in which we can improve or make things even better.

Examples of ways in which Parents/Carers have the ability to feedback are:

- Conversations with school leaders or the CEO on the gate
- Parents Evenings
- Annual Parents Survey
- Discussions with the Academy Parent Champion

6. The CLEAR Approach

C – Categorise

Understanding what the parent needs is the first step toward resolution. Staff should determine whether the issue is:

- Feedback
- A concern
- A complaint

L – Listen

Staff will:

- Listen fully before responding.
- Ask open questions.
- Clarify understanding.
- Reflect back key concerns.

E – Empathise

Staff will:

- Acknowledge emotions.
- Recognise parental perspectives.
- Demonstrate understanding.
- Maintain a calm and professional approach.

A – Ask

Staff will:

- Explore possible solutions.
- Agree next steps.
- Check that proposed actions are understood.
- Seek shared ownership of outcomes.

R – Respond

Staff will:

- Confirm agreed actions.
- Follow through on commitments.
- Review impact.
- Close the loop with parents.

7. Understanding Parent Issues

Not every issue raised by a parent is a complaint. The Harmony Trust recognises three types of issues:

Type	Parent Need	School Response
Feedback	To be heard	Listen and consider
Concern	An answer	Clarify and reassure
Complaint	Action	Investigate and respond

The categorisation of concerns helps ensure the most effective and proportionate response is provided.[1]

8. Our Partnership Resolution Pathway

Parents should normally raise concerns in the following order.

As per our communications policy please contact the academy office to arrange a time to speak to the staff member or send an email to the info@ account. Your email will be responded to within 2 school days.

- Level 1 -Class teacher
- Level 2 - Phase Leader or SENDCO
- Level 3 –Assistant or Deputy Principal
- Level 4 - Principal
- Level 5 - Begin the Formal Complaints Process

We hope that most concerns should be resolved before Level 5 is reached as **our academies will seek an early resolution wherever possible**. At each stage a summary of actions agreed will be recorded and followed up by an email.

Our Partnership Resolution Commitments

The Harmony Trust aims to:

- Acknowledge concerns within 2 school days.
- Treat all parents/carers with courtesy and respect.
- Keep parents/carers informed where processes take longer than anticipated.
- Meet published timescales wherever possible.
- Ensure complaints are reviewed by individuals with appropriate independence.
- Use feedback and complaints to improve future practice.

Our Parent Partnership Expectations

The Trust asks all parents and carers to:

Raise concerns promptly - Address issues as soon as possible, rather than allowing concerns to grow.

Follow the agreed stages - Allow opportunities for concerns to be resolved before escalating.

Remain respectful - Communicate with staff courteously, even during disagreement.

Focus on outcomes - Seek constructive solutions that support children.

Use social media responsibly - Concerns should be addressed directly with the school rather than through public campaigns.

[1] The Department For Education defines a complaint as “an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”.

Where a complaint relates to a pupil, we may speak with them and others involved to establish the facts. This will normally be with parental knowledge and appropriate adult support.

All concerns and complaints will be treated seriously, fairly and respectfully. We ask that concerns are raised in a constructive manner and not expressed inappropriately, including in front of pupils or through public social media channels.

A complaint may be withdrawn at any time by notifying the Academy or Trust in writing. If no response is received from the complainant within 15 school days, the complaint will normally be considered closed. References to the "Principal" include the Executive Principal or Head of Academy, as appropriate.

Audio or video recordings will not ordinarily be accepted as evidence. Recordings will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking account of relevance, legality, data protection, consent considerations and fairness to all parties. Covert recordings will not normally be used.

9. Timescales

Parents and carers are encouraged to raise concerns as early as possible with the relevant member of staff. Where a concern remains unresolved, the formal complaints process should be followed.

The Harmony Trust aims to meet the timescales set out in this policy. Where additional time is required due to the complexity of a complaint or the need to convene a panel, revised timescales will be communicated promptly. Further details are provided in Appendix F.

Complaints should normally be raised within three months of the incident, or within three months of the most recent incident where there is a series of related concerns. Complaints received outside this timeframe will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Unless otherwise stated, timescales refer to open school days and exclude school holidays, INSET days and bank holidays. Complaints received during holiday periods will be treated as received on the first school day of the following term.

1. Stages of a Complaint

The Harmony Trust seeks to resolve concerns at the earliest opportunity through discussion and partnership. Where this is not possible, formal complaints will normally progress through Stages 1 to 3. In exceptional circumstances, a complaint may begin at Stage 2.

Complaints should be submitted via the Academy's published contact details or through the Trust at **info@theharmonytrust.org**. At each stage, complainants should clearly explain their concerns and the outcome they are seeking. New or unrelated matters will be treated as separate complaints.

10. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The Harmony Trust recognises that complainants may use AI and other digital tools to support communication, improve accessibility or assist with drafting correspondence. The Trust may seek clarification where it is unclear which aspects reflect the complainant's individual circumstances or desired outcomes.

Where AI is used, complaints should remain clear, accurate and based on the complainant's personal circumstances.

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11. Complaint Procedures

Stage 1 – Partnership Resolution at Academy Level

The Harmony Trust is committed to resolving concerns at the earliest opportunity through open communication, mutual understanding and constructive partnership working. The Partnership Resolution Pathway provides a structured opportunity for concerns to be explored, understood and resolved collaboratively before progressing to a formal complaint review.

Stage 1 applies where:

- a concern has been raised and remains unresolved following initial discussion;
- the nature of the concern requires a more structured review;
- a concern is received directly by the Trust and has not previously been considered by the Academy.

The aim of Stage 1 is not to apportion blame, but to develop a shared understanding of the concern, rebuild confidence where relationships have become strained and identify an appropriate way forward. Discussions will be guided by the Trust's **CLEAR Model**, ensuring that all parties are listened to respectfully, concerns are understood, expectations are clarified and agreed actions are proportionate and focused on achieving a positive resolution.

In most circumstances, parents and carers are expected to raise concerns within 3 months and initially with the Academy so that they can be addressed by those closest to the situation. Only in exceptional circumstances, such as where the concern involves the conduct of the Principal, will the matter be managed directly by the Trust. In such cases, a member of the Executive Leadership Team will appoint an appropriate Trust representative to lead the Stage 1 Partnership Resolution process.

The Principal retains overall responsibility for Stage 1 but may delegate responsibility to an appropriate member of staff who has not been directly involved in the matter. The person leading the review will seek to:

- understand the concerns being raised;
- clarify the complainant's expectations and desired outcomes;
- gather relevant information from those involved;
- facilitate constructive dialogue where appropriate;
- identify actions that may help resolve the concern and restore positive working relationships.

Stage 1 may include meetings, conversations, correspondence, mediation-style discussions or other restorative approaches, depending on the nature of the concern and the preferences of those involved.

A written record of the Partnership Resolution process will normally be maintained, including:

- the key concerns raised;
- actions agreed by those involved;

- any support or follow-up arrangements;
- whether the concern was resolved to the satisfaction of those involved.

The Academy will normally seek to conclude Stage 1 within **20 school days** of the concern being received. If additional time is required, all parties will be informed of the reasons and the revised timescale.

Where a mutually acceptable resolution is achieved, the matter will be closed. If the concern cannot be resolved through Stage 1, or the parent/carer remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may request that the matter progresses to **Stage 2.**

Stage 2 –Review by a Nominated Individual

Where a concern remains unresolved following Stage 1, the parent/carer may request a Stage 2 review. Requests should be submitted in writing to the Executive Leadership Team (see Appendix A) within a reasonable timeframe (normally within 10 school days of the Stage 1 outcome.) The request should clearly identify the aspects of the concern that remain unresolved and the outcome being sought.

On receipt of a Stage 2 request, the Executive Leadership Team will obtain a summary of the Stage 1 Partnership Resolution process, including the concerns raised, actions taken and any outcomes reached.

Stage 2 provides an opportunity for an independent review of the concern and the actions taken to resolve it. The review will be undertaken by an individual appointed by the Executive Leadership Team who has had no prior involvement in the matter. This may be a senior leader from the Trust, a leader from another Academy, a member of the central team, or, where appropriate, an external reviewer.

The reviewer will consider the information available, seek clarification where required and determine whether the concern has been addressed fairly, reasonably and in accordance with Trust policies and procedures. This may include discussions with the parent/carer, Academy staff and any other individuals whose involvement is necessary to establish a clear understanding of the issues raised.

The parent/carer may be accompanied at any meeting by a friend, relative or advocate. The reviewer may also be supported by an appropriate colleague to assist with note-taking or administration.

Following completion of the review, the parent/carer will receive a written outcome setting out:

- the findings of the review;
- any conclusions reached;
- the reasons for those conclusions;
- any recommendations or actions arising from the review; and
- the next steps available should the complainant remain dissatisfied.

The Trust will normally provide a written outcome within 20 school days of receiving the Stage 2 request, or within 10 school days of any meeting held as part of the review. Where additional time is required due to the complexity of the matter, revised timescales will be communicated to all parties.

A record will be maintained of all meetings, correspondence, evidence considered and actions arising from the review.

Where concerns are resolved through the Stage 2 process, the matter will be closed. If the parent/carer remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may request that the matter progresses to **Stage 3.**

Stage 3 – Complaints Review Panel

Where a parent/carer remains dissatisfied following the Stage 2 Independent Review, they may request that the matter is considered by a Complaint Review Panel. Requests should be submitted in writing to The Harmony Trust within **10 school days** of the Stage 2 outcome and should explain the aspects of the review outcome that remain unresolved and the outcome being sought.

On receipt of a request, the Trust will acknowledge the submission and make arrangements for a Complaint Review Panel to be convened.

The Panel provides an opportunity for an independent and impartial review of the complaint, the actions taken to address it and the outcomes reached at the earlier stages of the Partnership Resolution Pathway. Its purpose is to ensure that the complaint has been considered fairly, thoroughly and in accordance with Trust policies and procedures.

The parent/carer will be notified of the date, format and arrangements for the hearing as soon as practicable. The Panel will normally meet within **20 school days** of the request being received. Meetings may take place in person or, where appropriate and agreed by all parties, remotely.

Any additional documentation that a party wishes the Panel to consider should normally be submitted at least **10 school days** before the hearing. This allows sufficient time for all parties to review the information. Where significant new information is received at a later stage, the Panel may decide to adjourn the hearing to ensure fairness to all involved.

The Complaints Review Panel will consist of **three impartial members** who have had no prior involvement in the matter, including at least one member who is independent of the management and running of the Academy. Panel members may include trustees, senior leaders from the Trust, or other suitable individuals selected for their independence, expertise (eg SEND, Safeguarding) and objectivity.

The hearing is intended to be a supportive, respectful and non-adversarial process. The Chair will ensure that all parties have an opportunity to present their views, ask questions and contribute to discussions in a manner that promotes understanding and fairness.

Audio or video recording of the hearing will not normally be permitted unless agreed in advance for accessibility or other exceptional reasons and with the agreement of all parties. Any approved recording will be for personal reference only and must not be shared publicly.

The parent/carer will have the opportunity to explain why they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the earlier stages. The Panel's role is not normally to consider new or unrelated complaints, but to review the matters previously raised and determine whether they have been handled appropriately and whether any further action is required.

Further details regarding the conduct of the hearing are provided in **Appendix D**.

Where necessary, the Panel may request additional information to assist its deliberations. Any additional documentation considered by the Panel will normally be shared with all parties at least **five school days** before the hearing.

The parent/carer may be accompanied by a friend, relative, advocate or other supporter. The supporter will not normally address the Panel directly unless this has been agreed in advance by the Chair. Legal representation will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and by prior agreement. The Panel may obtain independent legal advice where necessary.

If the parent/carer is unable to attend, every effort will be made to identify an alternative arrangement. Where a parent/carer does not engage with the process or attend without explanation, the Panel may proceed in their absence or determine that the complaint has been withdrawn.

Requests for witnesses should normally be made no later than **five school days** before the hearing. The Chair will determine whether witness evidence is necessary and proportionate. Witnesses will attend only for the part of the hearing relevant to their evidence.

Pupils will not normally attend a Complaint Review Panel hearing. However, the Panel may consider alternative ways of obtaining a pupil's views where these are relevant to the complaint.

The Stage 2 reviewer may attend the hearing and may be accompanied by an appropriate representative of the Academy or Trust.

The hearing will be formally recorded through notes or minutes. Attendance will normally be limited to:

- Panel members;
- the Chair's adviser and/or minute taker;
- the complainant and their supporter;
- the Stage 2 reviewer and their supporter;
- any witnesses, for the duration of their contribution; and
- any other individuals whose attendance is considered necessary by the Chair.

Following the hearing, the Panel will consider all evidence in private before reaching its conclusions. The Panel may:

- uphold the complaint in full;
- uphold elements of the complaint;
- conclude that the complaint has been handled appropriately and does not require further action; or
- make recommendations to support resolution and future improvement.

The Panel's findings, together with the reasons for its conclusions and any recommendations arising from the review, will normally be provided in writing within **five school days** of the hearing. A record of the outcome will be retained by both the Academy and the Trust.

12. Learning from Concerns and Complaints

The Harmony Trust views concerns and complaints as an important source of feedback and learning. Through the Partnership Resolution Pathway, we seek not only to resolve individual concerns but also to strengthen relationships with families and continually improve our practice.

Academies and Trust leaders will use information arising from concerns and complaints to:

- identify themes, patterns and emerging issues;
- recognise areas of strength and effective practice;
- inform staff training and professional development;
- improve systems, processes and communication;
- support quality assurance and self-evaluation; and
- report themes and learning through appropriate governance arrangements.

By listening carefully to the experiences of children, families and stakeholders, the Trust aims to foster a culture of openness, continuous improvement and positive partnership working across all of its academies.

13. Reporting and Recording Complaints

A secure written record will be maintained for all formal complaints and retained in accordance with the Trust's Data Retention Policy and the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018. For complaints not related to a specific pupil, these will be held for 12 months from the resolution of the complaint.

These records will indicate whether the complaint was upheld, partially upheld, not upheld, withdrawn or otherwise resolved and will include the stage at which the complaint was reviewed. It will also note any actions taken by the Academy or The Harmony Trust.

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 Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

14. Further Avenues for Complaint

Department for Education (DfE): Once the complaints process is concluded (or a complaint has been terminated due to undue delay or failure to lodge a request for a Stage 3 Panel Meeting within the time stated in the policy) the matter is closed. If the complainant is still not satisfied then they may contact the DfE. There is an online procedure for doing so at:
https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact_the_Department_for_Education

Ofsted: Ofsted advises that "you should complete all steps in the school's complaints procedure before you contact Ofsted". Their advice can be accessed directly here: https://complain.ofsted.gov.uk. Ofsted cannot resolve disagreements between a complainant and a school or affect the results of a school's complaints process.

15. Unreasonable Behaviours during the Complaints Process

The Harmony Trust recognises that when parents or carers raise concerns about their child, they may understandably feel worried, frustrated, disappointed or upset. We are committed to listening carefully, treating all concerns seriously and working collaboratively with families to achieve a fair and constructive resolution.

Occasionally, however, the way in which a concern is pursued may make it difficult for the Academy or Trust to progress the matter effectively. This may occur where the frequency, nature or manner of communication significantly affects the ability of staff to respond appropriately, manage the complaint fairly, or carry out their duties to pupils and the wider school community. In such circumstances, the Trust Executive Leadership Team may consider whether reasonable adjustments to communication arrangements are required to support the continued management of the concern. This may include agreeing a single point of contact, setting appropriate communication boundaries or determining the most effective way for information to be shared.

Where a concern or complaint has been fully considered and responded to, or where behaviour associated with the complaint is having a disproportionate impact on the ability of staff to manage the process fairly and effectively, the Trust Executive Leadership Team may decide not to pursue further investigation or correspondence on the matter. Any such decision will be proportionate, evidence-based and made only after careful consideration of the individual circumstances.

The Board of Trustees will be informed of any decision to cease consideration of a complaint, together with the reasons for that decision. The Board retains oversight of the process and may direct that further consideration takes place if it considers this appropriate.

The Trust recognises that clear communication, restorative conversations and a commitment to partnership working are key to preventing misunderstandings, maintaining positive relationships and reducing the likelihood of concerns becoming protracted or unresolved.

16. The Harmony Trust Commitment

When you raise a concern, you can expect us to:

- Listen.
- Treat you with respect.
- Be honest and transparent.
- Explain decisions clearly.
- Agree next steps.
- Follow through on commitments.
- Learn from feedback.

By working together in partnership, we can ensure concerns are resolved constructively and our children receive the best possible educational experience.

17. Data Protection Statement

The procedures and practice created by this policy have been reviewed in the light of our Data Protection Policy.
All data will be handled in accordance with the Trust / Academy's Data Protection Policy.

Data Audit for This Policy

What?	Probable Content	Why?	Who?	Where?	When?
Complaints policy	Any personal information including personal sensitive information	Required to be retained as part of education, statutory process	Principal / SLT, Trust central team, staff or other representative as required as part of the relevant process	Kept on file at Academy (and Trust central where appropriate).	Held on file following relevant retention periods (dependent on nature of personal information)

As such, our assessment is that this policy:

Has Few / No Data Compliance Requirements	Has A Moderate Level of Data Compliance Requirements	Has a High Level of Data Compliance Requirements
	✓	

18. Equality Impact Statement

Under the Equality Act 2010 we have a duty not to discriminate against people based on their age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 and it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil / adult and it helps to promote and encourage equality in our Trust & academies.

19. Appendices

Appendix A - Contact Details

Please address all correspondence relating to Stage One complaints directly to the academy in question. Contact details are on all academy websites.

For the escalation of complaints to Stage Two and/or Three please notify us via the contact details below.

For complaints relating to the following individuals/groups:

- a Principal / member of Senior Leadership Team
- a member of staff
- academy processes and procedures

Address your complaint via email to info@theharmonytrust.org

For complaints relating to the following individuals/groups:

- a trustee
- the Board of Trustees
- the Chief Executive Officer

Address your complaint to the Trust's Governance professional via email to Governance@TheHarmonyTrust.org

Appendix B - Complaints subject to statutory procedures or out of the scope of this policy

Some areas of complaint are subject to statutory procedures and there is clear guidance on how such issues should be dealt with, which lie outside of this procedure. These include:

- admissions
- child protection
- data protection and freedom of information
- exclusions
- National curriculum
- religious education and collective worship
- sex education
- statutory assessments of special educational needs
- racist incidents
- staff capability
- staff discipline
- staff grievance
- whistleblowing
- complaints about services provided by external suppliers who may use school premises or facilities (these should be directed to the provider's own complaints procedure)
- matters likely to require a child protection investigation

The Trust will in most cases determine which, if any, statutory procedures apply.

If a statutory procedure needs to be invoked at some point during the investigation of a more general complaint, the complaints procedure may be suspended until the statutory procedure has been concluded.

Those policies that are publicly available can be sourced on The Harmony Trust website – The Harmony Trust: Policies

Although racist incidents are subject to a statutory procedure, the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, this does not necessitate the complaints procedure being suspended. However, there is a duty for local authorities to monitor racist incidents and so academies must follow local authority procedures for recording such incidents.

Appendix C - Complaints from those who are not parents/carers of a pupil on roll at an academy within the Harmony Trust

Only stages One and Two of this policy will apply.

Trust staff may seek to meet with the complainant to resolve the concerns but are not obliged to do so.

- **Stage One:**

Complainants should first address their complaint to the relevant academy or Trust (as appropriate) informally. If this fails to resolve the situation, the complaint may be submitted in writing to the info@theharmonytrust.org

- **Stage Two:**

The escalation request should be submitted in writing to the info@theharmonytrust.org . It will be acknowledged in writing within 3 school working days, with a final written response issued within 20 school working days.

There may be occasions where an individual raises a complaint while they have a child or children on roll at an academy and, during the course of the complaint process, their child is removed from roll. If this occurs prior to the Stage 3 hearing the complainant will remain ~~not be~~ eligible to have their complaint heard by a panel.

Appendix D - Order of Proceedings (Stage Three Panel)

- A round of introductions and an explanation of the purpose of the hearing.
- The complainant will explain their case and their reasoning for why they remain dissatisfied.
- The complainant may call witnesses, if agreed in advance with the Chair of the panel. Witnesses will present their evidence, take questions from all parties and then leave the meeting.
- The panel will hear from the person who investigated the complaint at Stage Two, in response.
- The person who investigated may call witnesses, if agreed in advance with the Chair of the panel. Witnesses will present their evidence, take questions from all parties and then leave the meeting.
- The complainant can pose questions, via the Chair.
- The investigating officer at Stage Two can pose questions to the complainant, via the Chair
- The panel members can pose questions to both parties.
- The panel will hear closing statements from both parties if necessary.
- In closing the meeting, the Chair will explain that the panel will formulate its response as quickly as reasonably possible, aiming to do so within five school working days. The Clerk will notify all concerned.
- All participants other than the panel members and the clerk will then leave.
- The letter will also explain next steps the complainant has open to them if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome.
- The written outcome, which will be inclusive of findings and any recommendations, will be shared with the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. It will also be available in the Academy's and central Trust's records and be available on Academy premises for inspection by the Trust and the Principal.

Appendix E - Raising a complaint against a Trustee, Board of Trustees or the Chief Executive

Where a complaint is about a matter relating specifically to the persons/groups below, whilst the general principles of this policy will be applied, the complaint will be considered immediately at Stage Two of the policy.

- Chief Executive
- a Trustee
- the Board of Trustees (as a whole)

The investigating officer may differ depending on the complaint. In exceptional circumstances an independent investigator may be commissioned, who will submit a report on completion of their investigation.

Where such a complaint is not made by a parent / carer of a pupil on roll at one of the Trust's academies appendix C will apply.

Appendix F - Timescales

NB There may be times when the investigation takes longer than the timescales outlined. In this scenario, the academy / Investigating Officer should keep the complainant informed of the revised timescales and the reasons for this.

Raising a complaint: Complaints must be raised within three months of the incident complained about occurring or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents.
Stage One Academy to respond within 20 school days of the complaint being raised, in usual circumstances.
Stage Two The complainant may escalate their complaint to Stage Two within 3 calendar months of the incident complained about occurring, if their concerns have not been satisfactorily addressed at Stage One. The investigating officer should respond either within 10 school days of any meeting they hold with the complainant, or within 20 school days if they do not hold a meeting.
Stage Three The complainant may escalate their complaint to Stage Three within 10 school days of receiving the outcome of Stage Two if they remain dissatisfied. A panel should be convened within 20 school days of the Stage Three request being raised. An outcome letter should be provided within 5 school days of the panel taking place.
Complaining beyond the Academy At the conclusion of the process, if the complainant remains dissatisfied, they have the option of raising concerns with the Department for Education and/or with Ofsted (see section 10).

Appendix G - Flowchart of Complaints process (after Partnership Resolution pathway)

See narrative in policy for detail at each point of the process)

