

“Together in Achievement”



Complaints Policy

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Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

The Aspire Multi Academy Trust ('the MAT') endeavours to provide the best possible education through its academies for all of its pupils in an open and transparent environment. We welcome any feedback that we receive from parents, pupils and third parties, and we accept that not all of this will be positive. Where concerns are raised we intend that our academies will deal with these fairly, openly and promptly.

To do so, the Board of the Aspire MAT has approved the following procedure which explains what you should do if you wish to raise a concern or make a complaint about an academy or The MAT. All members of staff will be familiar with the procedure and will be able to assist you.

This policy is based upon the government's best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures (16 July 2020), and aligns with Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

In general:

- We aim to give careful consideration to concerns or complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We try and solve any concern through dialogue and mutual understanding, and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child / young person above all other issues. We try to provide sufficient opportunity for any concern to be fully discussed, and then resolved.
- All references to working days refer to days on which the school is open to pupils, excluding weekends and holidays.
- To enable proper investigations, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the academy as soon as possible.
- In the event that a complainant believes that the academy has failed to comply with its own complaints procedure or that the academy's complaints procedure does not comply with statutory requirements the complainant may inform the MAT.
- If anyone faces communication challenges e.g., hearing difficulties, disability, language barrier or other cross-cultural issues we will always look at ways to overcome these challenges. Likewise, if you do not understand any part of this policy please do not hesitate to raise your questions at the time of registering your concern or complaint.

2. Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to our academies about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

3. The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as '*an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought*'.

A complaint may be defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*'.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Our academies take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the academy headteacher, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, they will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the academy will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

4. Complaints that fall outside of this procedure

Complaints relating to the following issues are covered by a separate or specific policy:

- Pupil admissions - see the individual academy's Admissions Policy
- Pupil exclusions: see the individual academy's local procedure (which will normally be covered within academy's behaviour policy).
- Staff grievance, capability or disciplinary: see the Aspire MAT Grievance, Disciplinary Procedure and Capability Procedures.
- Where the complaint concerns a third party used by the academy; please complain directly to the third party themselves.
- Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests: see the Aspire MAT Data Protection policy These policies are available through the Aspire MAT and each individual academy's website, or on request from the academy.
- Whistleblowing: see the Aspire MAT Whistleblowing Policy for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.

Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the academy will notify complainants that the matter is being addressed and allow the parent to progress through the complaint procedure.

5. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so. Please mark all written communications as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure (*Appendix 2*) and is available in Word format at <http://www.aspire-mat.co.uk/policies/>. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask a third-party organisation, for example like the Citizens Advice, to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

6. Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, if the nature of the complaint raises a safeguarding or legal concern, it may still be reviewed.

7. Time scales

You 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 consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

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

8. Complaints' outcome

At each stage in the procedure, our academies want to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

9. Maintaining records

A confidential written record of all complaints that are made in accordance with this policy will be kept by the academy/the MAT from Stage 1 and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken by the academy/MAT, regardless of the decision.

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 2008 Act requests access to them.

10. Maintaining confidentiality

Informal concerns and complaints will be dealt with confidentially at all stages and at the conclusion of the procedure. Confidentiality should be maintained all times by everyone involved. The MAT and the local governing body of each academy requests that complaints are not discussed publically, including via social media.

Actions taken in relation to academy staff that arise as a result of the complaint will remain confidential to the academy and the member of staff concerned.

Written records taken and used throughout the complaints process, including correspondence, notes of meetings, telephone calls etc., will kept securely and in accordance with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018, as outlined in the MAT Data Protection Policy.

11. Safeguarding

Wherever a concern indicates that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, the academy is duty bound to report this immediately to the MAT and the local authority. Any action taken will be in accordance with the MAT Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy.

12. Complaints against a Headteacher, Governor, Trustee, the CEO or MAT

- i) Where a formal complaint is about the headteacher or a governor, the complainant should notify the Chair of Governors. The stage two process (see the formal stages below) will then commence, but with the Chair of Governors as the individual responsible for the investigation, rather than the headteacher.
- ii) Where a complaint concerns the Chair of the Governing Body or the whole/majority of the Governing Body, the complainant should contact the MAT which will then determine the most appropriate course of action, seeking advice as appropriate. This will depend upon the nature of the complaint.
- iii) Where a complaint concerns a trustee/director of the MAT, the complainant should contact the MAT Chief Executive Officer who will then determine the most appropriate course of action, seeking advice as appropriate. This will depend upon the nature of the complaint.
- iv) Where a complaint concerns the Chief Executive Officer or the Aspire MAT, the complainant should notify the Chair of the Board for the MAT.

Contact details for all contacts are detailed in Appendix 1.

13. Resolving concerns informally

It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or headteacher. Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stages 1 and 2 of the formal procedure.

If a complaint is received which seeks to move directly to stage 1 of the complaints processes, a member of staff will seek to meet with the complainant in order to explore an informal resolution and to better understand the issues being raised.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response within 20 working days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a **formal complaint**.

*NOTE: **Working days** are defined as those times when the academy is open for teaching or staff training INSET (normally term time Mondays to Fridays) but not school or statutory holidays.*

14. Formal stages of the complaints procedure

There are two formal stages of the complaints procedure.

NOTE: Section 12 defines the situations when the 'alternative investigator' referred to in this section may be the academy chair of governors or a representative of the MAT.

14.1 Stage 1 – Initial request for formal investigation

Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (or alternative investigator) via the academy office. This may be done in person or in writing (preferably on the complaint form – *Appendix 2*).

The headteacher (or alternative investigator) will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 10 working days.

Within this response, the headteacher (or alternative investigator) will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. Consideration will be given to whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the headteacher (or alternative investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher (or alternative investigator) will provide a formal written response within 20 working days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the headteacher (or alternative investigator) is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the academy will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher (or alternative investigator) will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

At Stage 1 complaints about the headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the chair of governors via the academy office. Stage 1 complaints will be escalated to the MAT if the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or the entire or majority of the governing body.

14.2 Stage 2 – Panel Hearing

The complainant is entitled to request a review of the decision taken at Stage 1 and the actions taken. The review is carried out by a panel at a meeting convened by the complaints co-ordinator. The panel will be made up of three members, one of which must be independent of the management and running of the academy (or MAT for complaints against the MAT or its officers).

Requests for a review of the decision taken at stage 1 should be made in writing to the complaints co-ordinator (see contact details in *Appendix 3*, preferably on the Stage 2 form – *Appendix 6*). no later than 10 days after written notification of the decision taken has been received. The request should include a brief summary of the complaint, why the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 1 and the outcome they are seeking. Please see the Aspire Stage 2 request form. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The complaints co-ordinator will fulfil the role of organising the time and date of the review meeting, inviting all the attendees, collating all the relevant documentation and distributing this five days in

advance of the meeting. Minutes of the review meeting will be taken by the complaints co-ordinator and provided to all relevant parties with the written notification of the decision taken at stage 2.

Steps are taken at stage 2 are:

- a. The complaints co-ordinator will acknowledge the written request for the complaint to be reviewed no later than ten working days (not including the school holidays) after receiving it.
- b. The complaints co-ordinator will convene a panel of three members to review the complaint. All three panel members will have no prior knowledge of the content of the complaint.
- c. The review meeting will take place within 20 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) of receipt of the written acknowledgement from the complaints co-ordinator (see 1 above).
- d. The complainant will be invited to attend the review meeting and the panel may also decide to invite the following:
 - the headteacher (or alternative investigator) who investigated the complaint and made the decision at stage 1
 - relevant persons involved in the complaint
 - persons whom, in the view of the panel, can provide relevant advice and information relating to the subject of the complaint and the review process at stage 2

Where the complainant, headteacher and/or relevant person involved in the complaint have been invited to attend the review meeting, they are entitled to be accompanied by a family member/friend/representative as appropriate. However, legal representatives are not permitted to attend the review meeting.

Where the relevant persons involved in the complaint include pupils at the school, and their attendance at the review meeting has been requested by the panel, parental permission must be sought. Extra care will be taken to consider the vulnerability of children where they are present at a complaints hearing.

Where the complaint is about the CEO or the MAT, the complainant may request that the review meeting is held by an independent panel. This is at the discretion of the Chair of the Board of the MAT who will notify the complaints co-ordinator of their decision. Where an entirely independent panel is required, timescales may be affected while appropriate individuals are sourced for the review.

The panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are permitted where required as a reasonable adjustment (e.g. for disability or special needs), or where agreed in advance in line with the Trust's AI and Emerging Technologies Policy. Where AI tools are used for recording or transcription, this must be clearly stated, with all parties informed and consent obtained in accordance with data protection requirement. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

After considering the complaint afresh and reviewing the available evidence, the panel reviewing the complaint can decide to:

- uphold the complaint in part (in other words find an aspect or aspects of the complaint to be valid, but not the whole complaint) and direct for certain action to be taken, or
- dismiss the complaint entirely.

- Recommend steps that the complainant and the academy should take to move forward from the presenting issues, in the best interests of all concerned.
- Recommend steps to be taken that reduce the likelihood of a similar complaint being made in future.

Irrespective of the decision taken, the panel must provide a copy of the findings and recommendations:

- to the complainant and where relevant, the person complained about
- available for inspection on the school premises by the headteacher.

The complaints co-ordinator will inform the complainant, the headteacher (or alternative investigator as appropriate) who investigated the complaint and made the decision at stage 1, and, where relevant, the person complained about, in writing of the outcome of the review meeting no later than 10 working days after the review meeting has taken place.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the academy or MAT.

This is the final stage at which the academy or the MAT will consider the complaint.

15 Next Steps

If the complainant believes the academy or MAT did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) after they have completed Stage 2.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy/complain-about-an-academy>

The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the academy/MAT. They will consider whether the academy/MAT has 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](#).

The complainant can refer their complaint to the ESFA online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
5 Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

Note that 'unreasonable' is used in a legal sense and means acting in a way in which no reasonable academy or authority would act in the same circumstances.

The ESFA will only consider the complaint if the complainant can provide evidence that the academy or MAT:

- Does not have a complaints procedure
- Did not provide a copy of its complaints procedure when requested
- Does not have a procedure that complies with statutory regulations
- Has not followed its published complaints procedure

- Has not allowed its complaints procedure to be completed

The ESFA will inform the complainant that they are not able to:

- Overturn the governing body's decision
- Reinvestigate the original complaint
- Review the accuracy of minutes taken or documents provided
- Order that compensation is paid
- Direct the school to discipline/exclude pupils
- Force the school to discipline/dismiss staff
- Instruct the school to apologise

The ESFA will intervene when an academy or MAT has:

- Breached a clause in its funding agreement
- Failed to act in accordance with its duties under education law
- Acted (or is proposing to act) unreasonably when exercising related education functions.

16 Managing serial and persistent complaints

There may be occasions when a complainant remains dissatisfied, despite all stages of the complaint procedure having been followed. If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, they will be informed in writing that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant makes contact again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the academy or MAT may choose not to respond. However, the complaint will not be marked as 'serial' before the complainant has completed the procedure.

Under no circumstances should a complainant be marked as 'serial' for exercising their right to refer their complaint to their MP, regardless of which stage the complaint has reached.

17 Exceptional Circumstances

The MAT and its academies are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. The majority of people pursue their complaints in a way that is reasonable. This means that they treat others with courtesy and respect and recognise the time constraints under which members of staff work.

We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the trust or any of its academies. However, there are occasions when complainants behave in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing concerns and complaints. The consequences are that the actions of the complainants begin to impact negatively on the day-to-day running of the trust or academy and directly or indirectly the overall well-being of the children or staff in our organisation.

We also do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening or malicious either once investigations have been concluded and fully exhausted, or whilst they are ongoing.

In these exceptional circumstances a complainant may be viewed as unreasonable or vexatious and the MAT/academy may take action in accordance with this Policy and apply it via the MAT procedure for implementing the complaints policy.

18 Unreasonable complaints

For the purpose of this procedure a complaint may be viewed as unreasonable if it contains threatening, abusive or offensive language and conveys unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason. Unreasonable complainants also include those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the MAT or an academy, hinder our consideration of their or other peoples' complaints and which distract the workforce in an unreasonable way. In such cases the headteacher/chair of governors (as appropriate) will consult with the MAT, who will review the communications and correspondence of the complainant in line with the MAT Complaints Policy and the MAT Code of Conduct for Parents, Carers & Visitors. The complainant will be notified in writing that this is the case and that the academy/MAT will provide no further response.

19 Vexatious complaints

For the purpose of this procedure a complaint may be viewed as vexatious. The characteristics of a vexatious complaint are:

- Complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
- Insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
- Insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- Complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- Demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value

20. Monitoring and review

Staff confidence in handling complaints depends on their having clear information about procedures and in them being encouraged to use good interpersonal skills when dealing with people who are upset or angry. We will try to ensure staff have clear information about which staff have which responsibilities so that complainants do not get passed from one person to another.

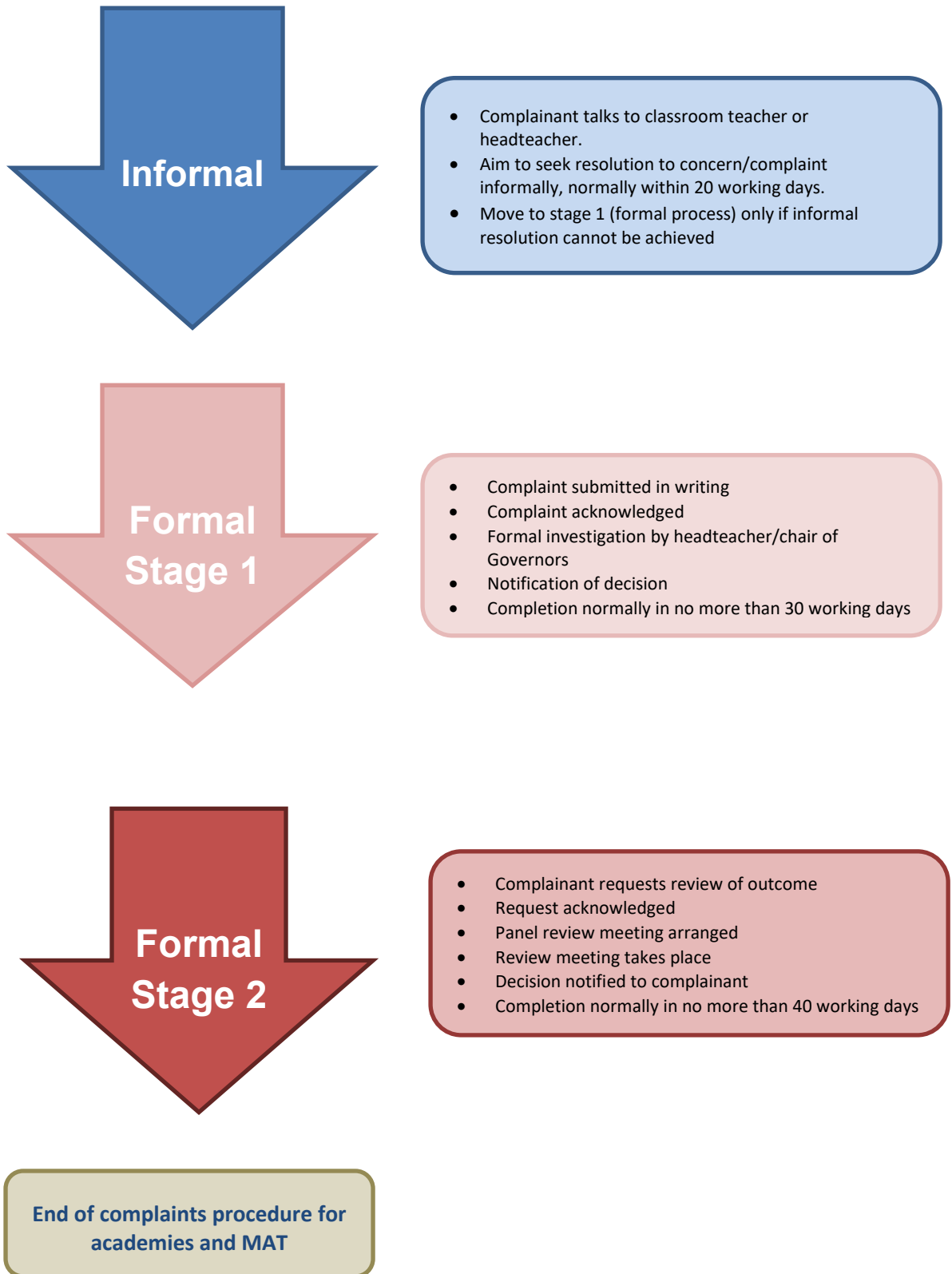
The academy local governing body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. Formal complaints received by the school will be logged and the log will be examined by governors. The resolution of the complaint will be recorded. The headteacher will report any formal complaints in the Headteacher's Report to Governors and to the MAT Board.

The MAT Board will take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process and make any modifications necessary to this policy.

As well as addressing an individual's complaint, the process of listening to and resolving complaints will contribute to academy improvement. When individual complaints are heard, the local governing body may identify underlying issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the academy and the local governing body will be a useful tool in evaluating the academy's performance.

Appendix 1: Complaints by parents/carers - flowchart and timescales

If, due to investigations taking place the timescales noted below are unable to be met, the complainant will be informed.



Appendix 2: Stage 1 Complaint Request Form

Academy name:

Your name			
Pupil's name, and Year group			
Your relationship to the pupil			
Contact address			
Telephone - daytime			
Telephone - mobile			
Email address			
Details of your complaint			
What action, if any, taken so far (including staff member who has dealt with it so far) or solution offered			
Reason (s) why this was not a satisfactory resolution to you			
What action(s) do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?			
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.			
Do you give written consent to disclose information to a third party, if required, as part of the MAT complaints process?	YES / NO <i>(delete as appropriate)</i>		
Signed			
For academy use only			
Date acknowledgement sent:		By whom:	
Complaint referred to:		Date:	

A Word version of this file is available online – [click here](#)

Return completed form to the Complaints Co-ordinator through your academy office.

Appendix 3: Contacts for formal complaints

To be completed by each academy and posted on academy website.

Academy:

Stage 1

Headteacher:

Chair of Governors:

Stage 2

Complaints Co-ordinator:

Complaints Co-ordinator is the person who will organise the panel, send out letter of notification to complainant, takes meeting notes, and informs all of final decision.

Contact address

Aspire MAT

Complaints regarding the CEO or the MAT, should be addressed to the Chair of the Board

Aspire MAT office,
c/o East Bridgford St. Peter's C of E Academy,
Kneeton Road,
East Bridgford,
Nottingham
NG13 9PG

Email office@aspire-mat.co.uk

Appendix 4: Complaint Panel Flowchart

1. Complaint escalated to Stage 2

- Complainant submits written request for Stage 2 review to the Complaints Co-ordinator.
- Must be within **10 working days** of Stage 1 outcome (unless exceptional circumstances).



2. Complaints Co-ordinator acknowledges request

- Acknowledgement sent **within 10 working days**.
- Co-ordinator begins arranging the review meeting.



3. Panel convened

- 3 members with **no prior involvement**.
- At least **1 independent member** from outside academy/MAT.



4 Meeting scheduled and papers sent

- Held within **20 working days** of acknowledgement.
- All documents shared **at least 5 days in advance** with attendees.



5. Panel Review Meeting

- Attendees may include:
 - Complainant (may bring a representative)
 - Headteacher/Stage 1 investigator
 - Relevant staff or witnesses (at panel's discretion)
 - Pupil (if involved and with parental permission)
- Legal representatives **not permitted**.



6. Panel considers evidence

- Reviews complaint afresh.
- No new complaints/evidence permitted.



7. Panel decision

- Panel may:
 - Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
 - Dismiss the complaint
 - Recommend steps for improvement or prevention



8. Outcome notification

- Written outcome shared with complainant, headteacher, and relevant parties.
- Issued **within 10 working days** of the panel meeting.



9. End of internal complaints procedure

- Complainant advised of right to contact the **Department for Education (DfE)** if dissatisfied with process handling.

Appendix 5: Dealing with Unreasonable or Vexatious Complainants

15 Strategy for dealing with unreasonable or vexatious complainants

In the first instance the academy will verbally inform the complainant that his / her behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable or vexatious and, if it is not modified, their behaviour may be becoming at risk of engaging this aspect of the procedure. If the behaviour persists then he/she may actually be classified as a serial, persistent, unreasonable or a vexatious complainant and at that point a decision will then be made as to which of the actions in section 2 of this procedure will be applied. The Headteacher/Chair of Governors/the MAT (as applicable), will determine and implement such action and will notify complainants, in writing, of the reasons why they have been classified as unreasonable or vexatious and what action will be taken. They will also be notified of the review procedure.

If the behaviour of the complainant is not modified the academy will take some or all of the following actions as necessary, having regard to the nature of the complainant's behaviour and the effect of this on the academy community:

- Withdraw contact with the complainant either in person, by telephone, by email, by letter or any combination of these, provided that at least one form of contact is maintained. If staff are to withdraw from a telephone conversation with a complainant there will be an agreed statement available for them to use at such times.
- Restrict contact to liaison through a designated member of staff and a single point of contact via an email address.
- Notify the complainant in writing that the academy/the MAT has responded fully to the points raised and has tried to resolve the complaint but there is nothing more to add and continuing contact on the matter will serve no useful purpose.
- The complainant will be notified that any form of contact, either orally or in writing, in relation to their complaint, or any further complaints relative to the same period of time, or the same or similar issues as an earlier complaint, is at an end, and that further contact received will be acknowledged within 5 days but not answered.
- Temporarily suspend, for a period to be specified to the complainant, all contact with the complainant, provided that the academy/the MAT shall not withdraw or not provide any services to which the complainant or his/her family are entitled to receive.

This notification may be copied for the information of others already involved in the complaint or matters closely related to it. A record will be kept, for future reference, of the reasons why a complainant has been classified as unreasonable or vexatious. Correspondence received from the complainant subsequent to closure will be kept on file, indefinitely, as will notes of telephone calls and any further conversations referring to the matter.

The complainant concerned will also be given an opportunity to modify their behaviour before closing correspondence. For example, a person who writes regularly to the academy but refuses to meet with staff could be invited to a meeting with the Governors to discuss their concerns. If the complainant does not comply with the request to change their conduct then a letter should be sent making clear that future correspondence will not be responded to, but that the academy will note any new concerns being raised and will appropriately investigate any that are considered to be of merit.

16 Review decisions and withdrawing 'unreasonable or vexatious' status

Once a complainant has been determined, as unreasonable or vexatious, such status needs to be regularly reviewed, and, where appropriate, withdrawn at a later date. Such action may be appropriate where a complainant subsequently demonstrates a more reasonable approach or submits a further complaint for which the normal complaints procedures would appear appropriate.

A panel of three governors will review their decisions to categorise a complainant as unreasonable or vexatious, every six months.

The panel on review may either withdraw the categorisation of a person unreasonable or vexatious or amend the strategy being applied to that person.

If the panel considers it appropriate to withdraw the status of unreasonable or vexatious complainant, normal contact with the complainant and application of the Academy's complaints procedure will be resumed. The complainant will be given notice of this decision forthwith.

Copies of all decisions relating to the categorisation of a person as an unreasonable or vexatious complainant will be sent to the Complaints Co-ordinator/MAT (as applicable) who will hold and maintain a central register of such decisions.

This approach will also be adapted to manage unreasonable or persistent contact not directly associated with, or resulting from, formal complaints.

17 Communication strategy for persistent correspondents

If an individual's behaviour is causing a significant level of disruption, regardless of whether or not they have raised a complaint, the academy / MAT will consider the implementation of a tailored communication strategy. For example, they can:

- restrict the individual to a single point of contact via an email address
- limit the number of times they can make contact, such as a fixed number of contacts per term

However, regardless of the application of any communication strategy, the academy / MAT will continue provide parents and carers with the information they are entitled to under The Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2005, within the statutory time frame.

Academy leaders will ensure that they act reasonably and consider any new complaint. Anyone has the right to raise a new complaint at any time and failure to respond could result in the school failing to act reasonably.

We may also suggest that the complainant asks a third party to act on their behalf, such as the local Citizen's Advice Bureau.

If an individual persists to the point that may constitute harassment, we will seek legal advice.

Once a decision has been taken that it is appropriate to stop responding, the individual will be contacted and informed.

18 When to stop responding

The decision to stop responding to a complainant is never taken lightly. In order to take this step, the academy /MAT need to be able to say yes to all of the following:

- you have taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns.
 - the complainant has been given a clear statement of your position and their options.
-

- the complainant contacts you repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time.

The case to stop responding is stronger if we agree with one or more of these statements:

- the letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive.
- the complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff.
- we have reason to believe the individual is contacting us with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience.

We will not stop responding just because an individual is difficult to deal with or asks complex questions.

Appendix 6: Stage 2 Complaint Request Form

To be completed if you wish to request a review of the handling of your complaint at Stage 1.

1. Your details	
Your name	
Address	
Email address	
Telephone –(optional)	
Date of original complaint submission:	
Date of Stage 1 response received:	
2. Reason for requesting a Stage 2 review	
<p>Please explain why you are not satisfied with the outcome or handling of your complaint at Stage 1. You may wish to refer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific aspects of the process you believe were unfair or incomplete - Concerns about how evidence was considered or interpreted - Any parts of the response that did not address the points you raised <p>(Continue on a separate sheet or expand if needed)</p>	
3. What outcome are you seeking from the Stage 2 review?	
<p>Please set out clearly what you hope the Stage 2 process will achieve.</p>	
4. Supporting documents	
<p>Please list and attach any relevant documents you wish the panel to consider (e.g. previous correspondence, emails, supporting information).</p>	
5. Declaration	
<p>I confirm that I wish to request a Stage 2 review of my complaint in line with the Aspire Multi-Academy Trust Complaints Policy.</p> <p>Signature: _____ Date: _____</p>	
6. Privacy and Accessibility	
<p>Aspire Multi-Academy Trust will process any personal data submitted as part of this form in line with our Data Protection Policy and UK GDPR. Data will be used solely for the purpose of handling your complaint and shared only with those involved in the complaints process.</p>	

Please return your completed form by the date requested to the complaints coordinator through your academy office.

If you require this form in an alternative format or need any assistance completing it, please contact the Trust office via email: office@aspire-mat.co.uk

Once received, a complaints panel will be convened and you will be informed of the next steps, including the date of the panel meeting and how the review will be conducted.

Stage 2 complaints will normally be acknowledged within 10 school days and reviewed within 20 school days wherever possible.

A Word version of this file is available online – [click here](#)