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Agate Momentum Trust Complaints Procedure

Managing school complaints

1. Overview

This procedure is based upon the DfE document “School Complaints toolkit 2014” and the ensuing updates.

The advice in this procedure has been provided to ensure that staff, governors and parents understand their obligations and duties in relation to Section 29, Part 1 of the Education Act 2002) and how school complaints will be dealt with

This advice has been revised to take account of the latest guidance, which has been obtained from the DfE website in document “Best Practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2019”.

Resolving complaints locally

Young people have a right to be treated with dignity and respect and to be valued for who they are and what they bring to their school.

As parents/carers, you have a right to expect a high quality education service which seeks to increase the life chances of all pupils and students.

You have the right to complain if you are not happy with the education your child receives from Agate Momentum Trust and its schools.

Every parent/carer wants the best for their child. Agate Momentum Trust schools want all their pupils to achieve as much as they can, but we acknowledge that sometimes there are difficulties.

To encourage resolution of such situations the Governing Body has adopted a “Complaints Procedure”.

The procedure is devised with the intention that it will:

- Usually be possible to resolve problems by informal means
- Be simple to use and understand
- Be non-adversarial
- Provide confidentiality
- Allow problems to be handled swiftly
- Address all the points at issue

Inform future practice so that the problem is unlikely to recur

2. Who can raise concerns/make a complaint – an introduction to the process?

Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides, unless statutory procedures apply (such as exclusions or admissions). Schools in the Agate Momentum Trust must not limit complaints to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. However, anonymous complaints will be dealt with under a different procedure.

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. Agate Momentum Trust schools 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, Hannah Cleland, the head of finance and operations, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, Hannah Cleland 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.

A complaint form can be found in Appendix A and may be given to the complainant to complete and submit to the school in order to register their complaint/concern and to detail actions that may resolve the problem. Complaints will be registered in whatever form they are made; however the school recommends using the complaints form and keeping a copy which may be used to support complaints at a later stage if the problem continues unresolved.

a) Investigating complaints

At each stage the school will ensure that the person investigating the complaint:-

- Establishes what has happened so far
- Identifies who has been involved
- Understands the nature of the concern or complaint
- Knows what issues remain unresolved
- Have contacted the complainant to establish and clarify information
- Have spoken to or interviewed those involved as required
- Conducts meetings with an open mind and be prepared to persist with questioning and finding the answer
- Keeps accurate records of the complaint including notes of any meetings, discussions and if required arrange for a minute/note taker.

b) Resolving complaints

Schools in the Agate Momentum Trust will acknowledge and register complaints from complainants. The possible outcomes of a complaint will be one or more of the following (this list is not exhaustive):-

- An apology
- An explanation of what actually happened, clarification of the facts
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or more appropriately
- An assurance that the event complained of will not reoccur
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

c) Dealing with vexatious complaints

In relation to dealing with vexatious complaints guidance can be found in the procedure for managing serial & unreasonable complaints.

It is important to note however that, should a complainant raise a new, separate complaint, it must be responded to in accordance with the school complaints procedure.

d) Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the head teacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

e) 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.

f) Complaints received outside of term time

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

○

g) Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Agate Momentum Trust schools, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Admissions to schools ● Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs ● School reorganisation proposals 	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school reorganisation proposals should be raised with: Newham Local Authority – School Complaints, Newham Partnership Working School Support Francis House 760 Barking Road Plaistow London E13 9PJ</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p> <p>Local Authority Designated Officer (Child Protection) Children and Young People's Service London Borough of Newham Newham Dockside 1000 Dockside Road London E16 2QU</p> <p>020 3373 4600</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy which can be found in the policies section on school websites can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise</p>

	<p>matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain directly to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National Curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against an Agate Momentum Trust School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

3. The Stages of a Complaints Procedure

a) Stage 1 – Informal

A concern can be raised in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

The concern is dealt with by the class teacher/SLT/school business manager (who is not the subject of the complaint).

In the vast majority of cases, a concern can and should be resolved by contacting the member of staff identified above.

The initial communication from the complainant to the member of staff may be by letter, telephone conversation or in person by appointment. The complainant must allow the designated staff member at least 5 days to respond to the concern.

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 Stage 2 of the procedure.

b) Stage 2 – Formal (if unresolved at Stage 1)

The complaint is heard by the head teacher.

Complaints against school staff (except the head teacher) should be made in the first instance, to the head teacher via the school office. Complaints against the head teacher should be made to the Chair of Governors. If the complaint is being dealt with by the Chair of Governors this will bypass Stage 2 and go to Stage 3 of the formal procedure and be heard by the Chair of Governors or other appropriate person. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Chief Executive Officer should be addressed to Ms Bola Denby (the Chair of the Trust Board), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations 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.

The complainant must ensure that they include details of why they are still dissatisfied and what action they would like to resolve the complaint. They can also attach any evidence to support their concerns.

The head teacher must acknowledge the complaint within 5 days by writing to the complainant. The acknowledgement should state that further communication will follow, within 20 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint, that will set out the actions taken to investigate the complaint and the findings.

The head teacher can delegate another senior member of staff to carry out the investigation and report their findings to them. The head teacher will then reach a conclusion based on the investigation. All notes relating to the investigation should be kept on file. The investigating officer may feel it necessary to meet with the complainant. If this happens, then notes should be produced of the meeting.

The investigating officer will then compile a report detailing their findings. Any recommendations or actions proposed must be considered by the head teacher.

Once satisfied that the investigation has been concluded and a decision has been reached, the head teacher must notify the complainant in writing of the conclusion and any actions that will be taken as a result. The decision can be communicated by the head teacher to the complainant in writing or, if they may feel it appropriate, meet with them first to communicate their findings and then confirm in writing afterwards.

If the head teacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

Model letters are attached in Appendices B and C.

The complainant must also be informed if they are still dissatisfied with the outcome they can write to the Chair of Governors or other appropriate person outlining why they are still unhappy.

The school will keep a written record of all complaints which progress to stage 2 comprising the complaint, notes relating to the investigation, the report of the investigating officer and the outcomes however they are communicated to the complainant, along with any updates.

At all stages all correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to 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.

c) Stage 3 – Formal (if not resolved at stage 2)

The complaint is heard by the Chair of Governors (this will be delegated to the vice-chair or other nominated governor/person if appropriate).

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response from the head teacher at Stage 2 they should be advised to put their complaint in writing to the Chair of Governors for consideration at Stage 3 of the procedure.

The complainant must ensure that they include details of why they are still dissatisfied with the decision, the recommendations and actions of the Stage 2 complaint and what they require to resolve the matter. They may also attach any evidence to support their concerns that can be additional to that submitted at Stages 1 and 2.

The Chair of Governors must write to the complainant within 5 days of receipt of the complaint to acknowledge this. The letter should state that another letter will follow within 20 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint setting out the actions taken to investigate the complaint and the findings.

The Chair of Governors will look at all the information pertaining to the complaint submitted by the complainant and the investigatory evidence by the school at Stages 1 and 2. The Chair may want to talk with the complainant or investigating staff members to establish facts and obtain further information.

Useful model letters are attached in Appendices B and C.

Once satisfied that the investigation has been concluded and a decision has been reached on the complaint, the Chair of Governors will notify the complainant in writing of the conclusion.

The conclusion could be:

- The evidence indicates that the complaint was substantiated and therefore upheld
- The complaint was substantiated in part and what action will be taken
- The complaint is not substantiated by the evidence and therefore not upheld

The complainant is also informed if they are still dissatisfied they can write to the Governing Body directly via the school or, Governor Services or School Management Support at Newham Partnership Working outlining why they feel the complaint is unresolved.

d) Stage 4 – Formal (if not resolved at stage 3)

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 3 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 4 – a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first two, impartial, governors available and a further governor from another school which is independent of the Trust. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 4 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 4 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors (at least one of whom is independent of the Trust) with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from the school available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another Agate Momentum Trust school or through the LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 4.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 15 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 10 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new concerns or complaints at this stage or consider

evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New concerns and/or 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 not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. 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.

A useful checklist for a panel hearing is attached in Appendix E.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and the school with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days. A model response letter is attached in Appendix D. A record of this will be kept on the school premises.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the school.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 4 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

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 school and the Agate Momentum Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

Copies of the findings of the panel and its decisions and recommendations will be available on the school premises for inspection by both the chief executive officer and the head teacher.

4. Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school 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 Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by schools in the Agate Momentum Trust. They will consider whether the school and the Agate Momentum Trust have adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

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

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester

M1 2WD.

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- cooperate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
 - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
 - consideration of records and other relevant information
 - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the head teacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The head teacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-ordinator (this could be the head teacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, head teacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
 - sharing third party information
 - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

▪ **Committee Chair**

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the

complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting

- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting

- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so

No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.

- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant

We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting

Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.

- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting

Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

Local Support for Parents

If your complaint concerns bullying, you can seek advice and support to help you pursue your complaint from the Anti-Bullying Network on telephone number 020 8470 9703, or you can visit them at SPINN, 743-747 Barking Road, Plaistow, London E13 9ER

Other organisations who offer advice and support are:

Parentline Plus

520 Highgate Studios
53-79 Highgate Road
Kentish Town
London
NW5 1TL

Website: www.parentline.co.uk

Telephone: 0808 8002222

Kidscape

2 Grosvenor Gardens
London
SW1W 0DH

E-mail: contact@kidscape.org.uk

Website: www.kidscape.org.uk

Telephone: 0020 7730 3300 / Fax: 20 7730 7081

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)

1c Aberdeen Studios
22 Highbury Grove
London
N5 2DQ

Website: www.ace-ed.org.uk

This Procedure adopted in March 2021 by the FRARC

It will next be reviewed annually unless superseded by National/local guidance

Appendix A
Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Hannah Cleland, School Business Manager who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address:
Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix B

Model letter - Complaint not heard

Dear ,

Following receipt of your communications and careful consideration of the same, I regret that I am unable to deal with this matter under the School Complaints Procedure as. The reason for this is that:

- You have not identified any specific actions of which you might complain
- Your concerns are presented as conclusions rather than specific actions of which to complain.
- The concerns that you identify relate to historical actions and any evidence which might have enabled an objective investigation of your complaint is no longer available.
- The substance of your complaint has been addressed under this procedure already.
- The concerns that you raise do not fall within the scope of this procedure.
- You have not identified any potential sources of evidence which might allow the matter to be investigated.
- The school offered to resolve the matter informally and in my judgement you refused unreasonably to take advantage of this.

If you wish my decision to be reviewed then you may take advantage of (Stage 3 / Stage 4) of the procedure by writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body, care of the school.

Yours sincerely,

Head teacher
or Chair of Governing Body

Appendix C

Model letter – Decision notification

Dear ,

Following receipt of your complaint and careful consideration of all the available relevant evidence, I have concluded that:

- There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld. If you are able to provide additional evidence forthwith I/we will reconsider this decision.

OR

- The concern is not substantiated by the evidence in that

OR

- The concern was substantiated in part/in full, as The school will review its practices/procedures..... with the intention of avoiding any reoccurrence. Parents will be informed in due course of any policy changes.

OR

- In order to fully address the matters investigated, the school has initiated appropriate internal procedures. Due to the nature of these procedures, their outcome must remain strictly confidential. We are confident, however, that the circumstances that gave rise to your complaint should not recur.

I hope that we may now put this matter behind us and work together for the benefit of your child's progress.

Yours sincerely,

Head teacher / Chair of Governors/Trust Board

c.c. Head teacher

Model letter – Review outcome

Dear ,

Having carefully considered your representations in the context of the relevant evidence, the School Complaints Committee has concluded that the Complaints Procedure was followed appropriately in respect of your complaint in that

Therefore, the matter is now closed as far as the school is concerned.

- Or

Having carefully considered your representations in the context of the relevant evidence, the School Complaints Committee has concluded that the head teacher followed the Complaints Procedure except

Therefore, the following action will be taken

Once this action has been completed the school will consider the matter to be closed.

- Or

Having carefully considered your representations in the context of the relevant evidence, the School Complaints Committee has concluded that the head teacher followed the General Complaints Procedure except that

We have determined that this procedural failure did not affect the outcome of the consideration of your complaint so, while we regret this error, we will now consider this matter to be closed as far as the school is concerned.

Yours sincerely,

Chair of Complaints Committee

c.c. Head teacher

Appendix E

Checklist for a panel hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint and be followed by their witnesses.
- The head teacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The head teacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the head teacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The head teacher is then invited to sum up the school's action and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.

The process set out above is based on the head teacher and complainant being present at the same time. There are occasions where this is not the appropriate arrangement in order to ensure a fair and full consideration of the case. In such cases it is likely that the complaint will be seen first and the head teacher at a later stage. At the separate meeting with the complainant, the principles set out above should be followed.

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