



Complaints Procedure

Farringdon Community Academy ("the Academy") has prepared this procedure which is to be followed for all complaints. The procedure has three stages: the informal stage, the formal stage and the appeal stage. Complainants must raise their complaints at the informal stage in the first instance.

Timelines

The Academy commits to responding to all complaints seriously and responding to complaints on a timely basis. In return the Academy expects complaints to be made as soon as possible after an incident arises, and in general within three months of the incident. Where complaints are raised more than three months after the incident, the complainant must explain why the complaint was not raised earlier. Except in exceptional circumstances, the Academy will not consider complaints raised more than three months after the incident.

Concerns vs Complaints

A concern is an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought. A complaint may be generally defined as an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.

This procedure covers complaints. Anyone may raise a complaint, whether or not they are a parent or carer. Anyone may raise a concern. Concerns may be raised at any time with an appropriate person. In most cases this will be a member of the Academy's staff. The Academy takes all complaints seriously.

Informal stage

The Academy strives to maintain an open and honest two-way dialogue with students, parents and carers and other stakeholders. The Academy endeavours to solve all complaints at the informal stage because it is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible time. An informal complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing.

There are two separate routes for raising complaints at the informal stage.

Parents and Carers of attending students

Parents and carers should bring the complaint to the attention of the Academy via one of the following contacts: Usual contacts would be:

1. Head of House / House SLT Link
2. Deputy Headteacher (Mrs B. McCrudden)
3. Headteacher (Mr. N. Holder)

The Academy will respond to complaints within 5 working days. Some complaints may require further time to

investigate. In this instance the Academy will provide an update within 5 working days and provide a deadline for providing a full response. The timescale will be realistic and reasonable. If there is a delay in providing a full response, the complainant will be provided with details of the new deadline and explanation for the delay.

Should the matter have been initially raised with either Head of House/House SLT Link or the Deputy Headteacher it could be further raised at a second informal stage with the Headteacher.

Where the complaint is against the Headteacher, the complaint must be raised with the Chair of the Governors at the following address: -

Mrs G Hossack
Chair of Governors
C/o: Governor Support Officer
Education Services
Together for Children
Room 1.62
Civic Centre, Burdon Road
Sunderland SR2 7DN

Where the complaint is against the Chair of Governors or any individual governor, the complaint should be made by writing to the Clerk to the Governing Board at the following address:-

Mr. William Harrison
Governor Support Officer
Education Services
Together for Children
Room 1.62
Civic Centre, Burdon Road
Sunderland SR2 7DN

Complainants not parents of attending students

Complainants who are not parents or carers of attending students should contact the Academy directly on 0191 917 1500 or email enquiries@farringdonca.net to raise their complaint. The Academy guarantees to respond to complaints within 5 working days. Some complaints may require further time to investigate. In this instance the Academy will provide an update within 5 working days and provide a deadline for providing a full response. The timescale will be realistic and reasonable. If there is a delay in providing a full response, the complainant will be provided with details of the new deadline and explanation for the delay.

The responder is likely to be one of the 2 posts above a Head of House/House SLT, the Deputy Headteacher or the Headteacher. The procedure would follow therefore as above.

Where the complaint is against the Headteacher, the complaint must be raised with the Chair of the Governors at the following address: -

Mrs G Hossack
Chair of Governors
C/o: Governor Support Officer
Education Services
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Formal stage

Complaints may only be raised at the formal stage if the complaint has been raised at the informal stage, a full response has been provided and the complainant is not satisfied. If a complaint is raised at the formal stage before the informal stage has been completed, the complainant will be directed to complete the informal stage first.

Following the informal stage a complainant must assess whether the complaint has been handled satisfactorily. Should the complainant wish to take the complaint to the formal stage the following procedure should be followed:

1. Complete the Academy's Complaints Procedure Form, this can be obtained from Farringdon Community Academy, 0191 917 1500 ext. 206 or via the website: www.farringdonschool.co.uk If the complainant is unable to complete the Complaints Procedure Form due to disability or learning difficulties, they should contact the Academy at the address above and an appropriate alternative method of recording the complaint will be determined depending on the individual circumstances of the complainant.
2. Send the form to the Chair of Governors, Mrs G. Hossack, using the address on the form or email William.harrison@togetherforchildren.org.uk

The complaint will be heard by the Complaints Committee. The Headteacher or the Chair of Governors, depending on who carried out the initial investigation, will attend the hearing to present a report and answer any questions the Complaints Committee may have. The complainant will also be invited to the hearing to explain why the initial response is not satisfactory. The complainant may be accompanied by a friend for support.

The committee does not formally investigate the complaint but will decide if procedures have been followed and if the outcome made by the Headteacher or Chair of Governor is correct or not.

No new evidence can be presented by the complainant at the hearing.

This policy provides for the committee to make findings and recommendations and that a copy of the outcome letter is sent to the complainant and where relevant the person the complaint is about.

A written response will be provided within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint. If there is a delay in providing a full response, the complainant will be provided with details of the new deadline and explanation for the delay. An outcome response will outline whether the complaint has been dismissed or upheld and any findings or recommendations made as a result to help resolve the complaint.

A written record of all complaints will be kept confidentially and securely in line with the academy's data protection retention schedule and/or related legislation. All correspondence, statements and records will be held confidentially but shown to HMI, if requested, during inspection and made available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher.

Panel Hearing: Appeal stage

Complaints may only be raised at the appeal stage if the complaint has been raised at the informal stage and formal stages, full responses have been provided and the complainant is still not satisfied. If a complaint is raised at the appeal stage before the informal and formal stages have been completed, the complainant will be directed to complete the informal and formal stages first.

Should the formal stage fail to satisfy the complainant there is an appeal stage where the complaint will be reviewed by a panel consisting of the Board of Directors of the Multi-Academy Trust and an independent member (someone not connected to the Academy in any way but appointed by Directors). The independent member will be appointed by the Directors of the Multi-Academy Trust and may be from another local school, a representative from Sunderland City Council, or any other party with relevant skills and experience to listen to and resolve the complaint. A complainant will be notified as to the date of the hearing this will be at least 1 week notice. The complainant will also be invited to the hearing to explain why the initial response is not satisfactory. The complainant may be accompanied by a friend for support.

This policy provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and that a copy of the outcome letter is sent to the complainant and where relevant the person the complaint is about.

A written response will be provided within 10 working days of the Panel Hearing. If there is a delay in providing a full response, the complainant will be provided with an explanation for the delay. The outcome of the response will outline whether the complaint has been dismissed or upheld and any findings or recommendations made as a result to help resolve the complaint.

A written record of all appeals and outcomes to complaints will be kept confidentially and securely in line with the academy's data protection retention schedule and/or related legislation. All correspondence, statements and records will be held confidentially but shown to HMI, if requested, during inspection and made available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher.

To raise a complaint at the appeal stage, the complainant should contact the Clerk to the Board of Directors of the Multi-Academy Trust: -

Mr. William Harrison
Governor Support Officer
Education Services
Together for Children
Room 1.62
Civic Centre, Burdon Road
Sunderland SR2 7DN

Education and Skills Funding Agency

Should a complainant be unhappy about an outcome from the Board of Directors, the Local Authority is not in a position to offer an independent review. Should the complainant wish to take their complaint further they will need to write to the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

The decision of the Directors is final but under Section 496/497 of the Education Act 1996; complainants have the right of appeal to the Education and Skills Funding Agency on the grounds that:

- A Governing Board is acting or proposing to act unreasonably; or
- The Governing Board has failed to discharge its duties under the Act.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency would not take action until the academy procedures have been completed. For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/state-schools>

Complaints not Covered by this Procedure

For the avoidance of doubt certain types of complaint are not covered by this procedure. These include:

- Admissions to the Academy
- Statutory Assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- School re-organisation proposals
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation
- Exclusion of children from school
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures
- Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use the Academy's premises or facilities

Vexatious Complaints

If properly followed, a good complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Board will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Dealing with Unreasonable Complaints

The Academy is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the Academy. However, we 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.

Unreasonable complainants are defined by the Academy as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the Academy, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with the Academy while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, e-mail or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so:

- Maliciously;
- Aggressively;
- Using threats, intimidation or violence;
- Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- Knowing it to be false;
- Using falsified information;
- Publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media, websites and newspapers.