

LION EDUCATION TRUST COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 We believe that our schools provide an excellent education for all our children, and that the Executive Team, Head of School and other staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents and the local community. This policy sets out guidance to support and address any complaints or concerns identified by parents and the local community and sets out the procedures that the individual and school follow should the need occur. If any parent is unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or has any concern relating to the school, we encourage that person to talk to the child's class teacher immediately in the first instance.

2 Aims and objectives

- 2.1 Our schools aim to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. Schools give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and we put the interests of the child above all other issues. Through our communications strategy, we provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved.
- 2.2 Every attempt will be made to resolve the complaint by the school; if the complaint is not resolved the complainant may escalate the matter to the trust.
- 2.3 The organisational chart is in appendix 3.

3. Principles

- 3.1 We believe that most complaints can be resolved satisfactorily by informal discussion whether over the telephone or through a meeting involving the key people involved.
- 3.2 Informal queries and complaints should be taken up directly with the relevant member of staff either verbally or in writing.

Formal complaints concerning an individual school should be addressed to the appropriate Head of School in writing; complaints concerning the Trust should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer or the Chair of the Trust.

- 3.3 All complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt and dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible. The length of the period will vary with the gravity and complexity of the complaint and the urgency with which it needs to be settled. However, the intention is that all complaints are dealt with within a reasonable period.
- 3.4 All formal complaints will be investigated fully, fairly and carefully and complainants will be kept informed of progress
- 3.5 The aim is always to ensure the resolution of the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant if possible.

4 Representation

- 4.1 The complainant may be accompanied by a friend, colleague or other representative. In this case, the complainant should make their own arrangements for such representation. The representative may ask questions, confer with the complainant and make summary statements but may not answer questions on behalf of the complainant.

5. Recording

- 5.1 The recipient will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within three working days.
- 5.2 Accurate and contemporaneous records will be maintained throughout the process, including details of any initial informal process.
- 5.3 All complaints will be recorded by the Trust PA together with the outcome and reasons for the decision. The complainant will be informed of the outcome in writing together with their entitlement to appeal the outcome. Records will be held in a secure and confidential manner by the Trust PA.
- 5.4 Where the complaint is upheld any action to be taken by the Trust or School in response will also be recorded.

6. Complaints process

6.1 Informal

- 6.1.1 If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. The teacher can resolve most issues swiftly. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy and making good progress at school; they always want to be informed if there is a problem, so that they can take action before the problem seriously affects the child's progress.

In certain circumstances, the Head of School or Executive Head may choose to deal with the complaint informally in person.

- 6.1.2 If the complaint has been made in writing the Head of School may choose to treat it as a formal complaint and invoke the formal process.
- 6.1.3 If the informal complaint has been made to the Chair of the Trust he/she will refer the complaint to the Head of School.
- 6.1.4 If persons, who are not parents of attending pupils, wish to make a complaint this will be dealt with by the Head of School.
- 6.1.5 Every effort will be made to resolve the problem to the satisfaction of the complainant at this informal stage. Possible outcomes include:
 - Complaint resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;
 - Complaint dealt with under another procedure;
 - Complaint not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant and escalated to Formal Stage

6.2 Formal

Stage One

- 6.2.1 The Head of School will ensure that the complaint is investigated fully. The Head of School may delegate responsibility for conducting the investigation to another member of the School Leadership Team.
- 6.2.2 Where the complaint concerns the Head of School, the Head of School will inform the complainant in writing that they should send a completed Complaint Form to the Executive Head teacher, who will then take the place of the Head of School throughout the formal procedure.



- 6.2.3 Once the investigation has been completed, the Head of School will review all of the information and discuss the finding with the complainant with the aim of resolving the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction.
- 6.2.4 The Head of School will decide on the outcome and inform the complainant in writing of the decision. A meeting may also be arrange to convey the reasons for the decision.
- 6.2.5 Possible outcomes include:
- Complaint resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant;
 - Complaint dealt with under another procedure
 - Complaint not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant and escalated to Formal Stage Two

Stage Two

- 6.3.1 The Executive Head teacher will initiate an appropriate review of the process and consider all written complaints within three weeks of receipt.
- 6.3.2 The Executive Head Teacher will look to resolve the complaint, to the satisfaction of the complainant, as quickly as possible.
- 6.3.3 A meeting will be arranged to discuss the complaint with the complainant; the complainant may be accompanied and will have the opportunity to explain the complaint in more detail. The Executive Head teacher will give at least three days' notice for the meeting.
- 6.3.3 Once the investigation has been completed, the Executive Head teacher will review all of the information and discuss the finding with the complainant with the aim of resolving the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction.
- 6.3.4 The Executive Head teacher will decide on the final outcome to the formal complaint and inform the complainant in writing of the decision. A meeting may also be arrange to convey the reasons for the decision.

Possible outcomes include:

- Complaint withdrawn;
- Complaint dealt with another procedure
- Complaint dismissed
- Complaint upheld

6.4 Appeals

- 6.4.1 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome they should send a completed Complaint Appeal Form (see Appendix B) to the Trust PA who will forward it to the Executive Principal
- 6.4.2 The Executive Principal may be able to resolve the complaint informally with the result that the complainant withdraws their appeal.
- 6.4.3 If this is not possible, the Executive Principal will convene an appeal hearing.

6.5 Appeal Hearing

6.5.1 The appeal will be heard by a Complaints Appeal Committee comprising of:

- Chief Executive Officer
- 1 x Director
- 1 x Independent member

6.5.2 The committee may not include any persons who have had prior involvement in the complainant or in the incident to which the complaint refers.

6.5.3 The Complaints Appeal Committee will decide whether or not the outcome of the formal procedure was correct. Accordingly, the respondent will be the person who made that decision: that is either the Executive Head teacher or the Chair of the Board.

The Appeal Committee Chair will decide the procedure to be followed, ensuring that:

- i. The remit of the Committee is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- ii. Members of the Committee are objective and open minded, and act independently;
- iii. The complainant and any others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
- iv. The hearing is conducted in an informal though clearly structured manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- v. Each side is given the opportunity to state their case and to ask questions;
- vi. Any written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises all parties should be given the opportunity to consider and comment on it;
- vii. Any witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence;
- viii. The issues are addressed;
- ix. Key findings of fact are made.

The hearing should generally proceed as follows:

- x. introductions and introductory comments from the Committee Chair;
- xi. the complainant explains the complaint, followed by questions;
- xii. any witnesses to support the complaint give evidence and are questioned;
- xiii. the respondent explains the outcome of the formal procedure, and briefly describes the preceding informal procedure if applicable, followed by questions;
- xiv. any witnesses to support the respondent give evidence and are questioned;
- xv. the complainant sums up;
- xvi. the respondent sums up;
- xvii. with the exception of the Committee members and any independent adviser they may have, all persons withdraw while the Committee reviews the evidence and decides the outcome;
- xviii. The complainant and the respondent are informed of the decision.

The Appeals Committee may:

- xix. Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- xx. Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- xxi. Decide on any further action to be taken;
- xxii. If appropriate, recommend changes to the Academy's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

6.5.4 The complainant will be informed in writing within five days of the outcome of the hearing and the reasons for it, and that the decision is final.



LION EDUCATION TRUST

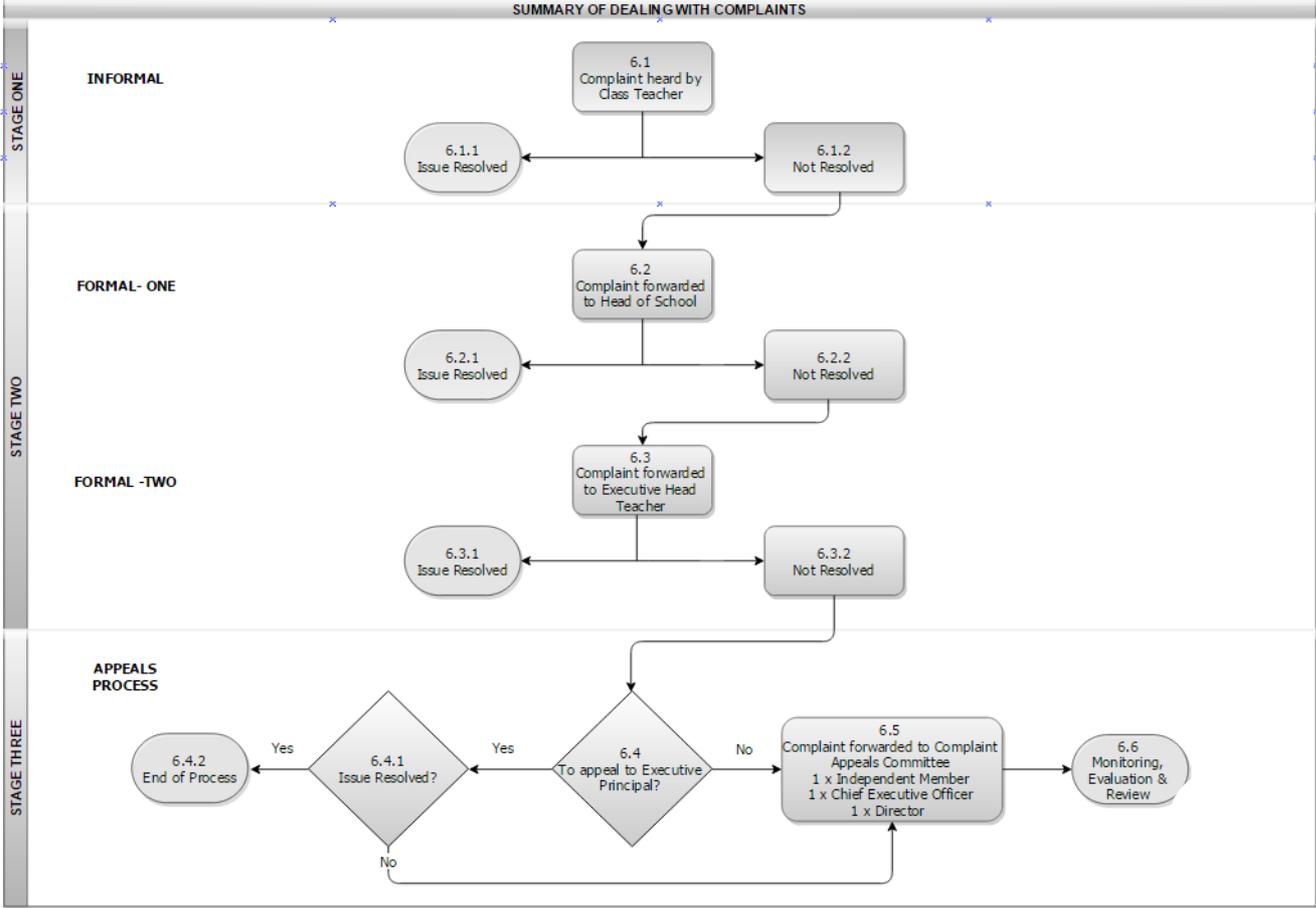
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- 6.5.5 All complainants have the right, as a last resort, to appeal to the Department for Education if they still feel that their complaint has not been properly addressed.

6 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

- 6.6.1 The Lion Academy Trust School Improvement Committee monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Head of School logs all complaints received by schools and records how they were resolved. The Lion Academy Trust Board examines this log on a termly basis.
- 6.6.2 The Lion Academy Trust School Improvement Committee take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make all modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, online and by request, to ensure parents are properly informed about the complaints process.
- 6.6.3 The Lion Academy Trust will review this procedure every three years and assess its implementation and effectiveness.

Process overview - escalation steps:



Appendix A

Complaint Form

Complainant

<p>Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Tel/Mobile: _____</p>
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Details of Complaint

<p><i>Please include full details, including dates, times and names of those involved.</i></p>
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Signed _____ Date _____

<p><i>Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary. Once completed, send this form to the Clerk who will arrange for your complaint to be investigated.</i></p>

For office use

Date Received by Clerk _____ Date of Response to Complainant _____

Appendix B

Complaint Appeal Form

Complainant

<p>Name:</p> <p>Address:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Tel/Mobile:</p>
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Date complaint was submitted in writing:

Date response received from Executive Principal in writing:

I am dissatisfied with the response to the above complaint and would like an Appeal Hearing for the following reasons:

Signed _____ Date _____

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary. Once completed, send this form to the Trust Clerk who will arrange for your appeal to be heard.

For office use

Date Received by Trust Clerk _____ Date of Response to Complainant _____

Appendix C

