Approved by ELA Trust/Committee:	Date & min ref
Publication Date:	December 2025
Owner/Reviewer	SL
To be reviewed:	December 2028
Location:	Websites / Staff Drives
Impact assessed:	Y/N

Complaints Policy and Procedure: Academies

2025 - 2028

Mission Statement

To inspire our family of schools to provide opportunities for our pupils, staff and leaders to be the best they can be; to create a passion for lifelong learning; to enable our pupils to become kind, confident and impactful world citizens.

Empower Learning Academy Trust
Complaints Policy & Procedure –
Academies

Contents

1 Scope

2 Policy

3 Stage 1 – Informal Procedure

4 Stage 2 – Formal Complaint Investigated by a Member of Staff

5 Stage 3 – Formal Complaint Investigated by the Principal/Headteacher

6 Stage 4 – Complaint Heard before a Complaint Panel

7 Referral to the Department for Education

8 Administrative Matters

Annex 1 – Glossary
Annex 2 – Complaint Panel Hearing
Principles Annex 3 – Complaint Form
Annex 4 – Local Variations

NB: Local Governing Bodies (as defined in the Articles of Association) are known within the Trust as Local Governance Committees (LGC)

1. Scope

1.1. This Complaints Policy is based on the principle that concerns expressed by a pupil, parent or any other individual or organisation should be resolved as quickly as possible without the need to escalate to the formal stages of the procedure. However, where resolution has not been achieved and the person raising the concern is unhappy and wishes to take the matter further, the formal procedure for dealing with complaints will be followed. The four stages are:

- Stage 1 - Informal investigation of a concern.
- Stage 2 - Formal complaint investigated by a member of staff.
- Stage 3 - Formal complaint investigated by the Principal/Headteacher.
- Stage 4 - Complaint heard before a Complaint Panel.

1.2. Complaints made by members of staff should be dealt with under separate grievance procedures applicable to employees. Complaints made by employees will not be dealt with under this Complaints Policy.

1.3. 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.

1.4. Complaints made by members of the Local Governance Committee should be referred to the Chair of Local Governance Committee to be dealt with informally as an item for consideration initially and, if necessary, through the formal Trust Complaints Procedure. Complaints made by members of the Local Governance Committee will not be dealt with under this Complaints Policy.

1.5. Complaints made by contractors should be dealt with informally, but may be escalated where dispute resolution or a formal complaints process is included in the contractual agreement. Complaints made by contractors will not be dealt with under this Complaints Policy.

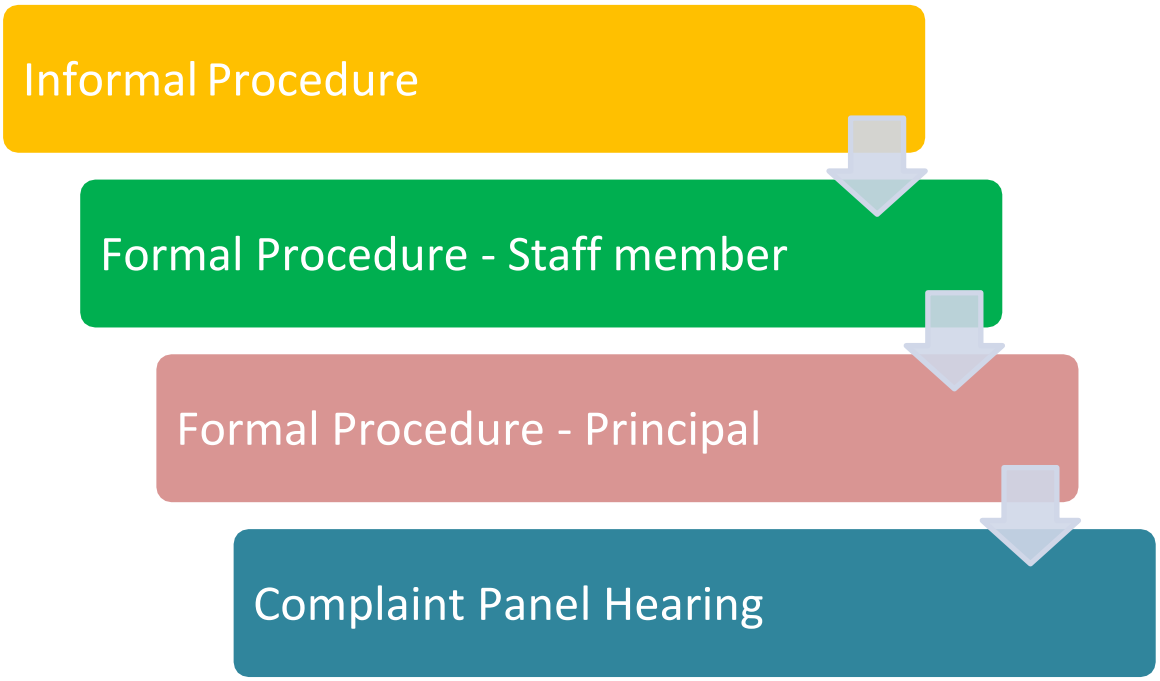
1.6. Complaints about or relating to a pupil should be directed to the relevant member of the Academy's staff. If the Complainant is not happy with the manner in which the complaint was handled, then they may put their complaint in writing and ask for it to be dealt with formally.

1.7. This Complaints Policy is intended to be compliant with Part 7 of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014 ("the Regulations").
In the event of any variance between this Complaints Policy and the Regulations, the Regulations will apply.

2. Policy

2.1 Concerns or complaints should be raised within three months of the incident or event to which the complaint relates (or, where the complaint relates to a series of incidents or events, within three months of the latest incident or event).

2.2 The Academy has four stages to its complaints procedure. The aim is to try to deal with the complaint, to the satisfaction of the Complainant, at the earliest possible stage.



2.3 Only if the complaint cannot be resolved at the informal stage would it be escalated to the formal stages. Only if the complaint cannot be subsequently resolved at the formal stages would it be escalated to a Complaint Panel Hearing.

Principles of Investigating a Concern or Complaint

2.4 The principles that will form the basis for all investigations of concerns and complaints will be that the person investigating the complaint:

- Has read this Complaints Policy to familiarise his or her self with the procedure;
- Is aware of the time limits that apply to the relevant stage and ensures that he or she complies with them;
- Establishes the nature of the complaint and what issues remain unresolved;
- Establishes what the Complainant says has happened, who has been involved, and what the Complainant feels would put things right;
- If necessary, interviews those involved in the matter, for example the Complainant, pupils and members of staff, including those complained about;
- Allows pupils and those complained about to be accompanied during interviews, if they wish;
- Keeps a written record of the interview, and asks the interviewee to sign and date it;
- Establishes relevant facts, on a balance of probabilities, based on evidence not speculation, and keeps a written record of these;
- Provides an effective response to the complaint, addressing all issues raised (including, where relevant, complaints about the way in which the complaint has been dealt with in the earlier stages);

- Ensures that the response to the complaint includes the appropriate redress, where necessary;
- Reports the complaint and the outcome of the complaint to the Senior Management Team so that services can be improved;
- Deals with investigation in an impartial, objective, fair and timely manner, keeping in mind the privacy of the parties involved.

Principles of Resolving a Concern or Complaint

2.5 It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The way in which the concern or complaint is dealt with after the Complainant first raises the matter can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To that end, members of staff will be periodically made aware of the procedure in this Complaints Policy, so that they will know what to do when a concern is raised with them.

2.6 At each stage of the complaints procedure, the investigator will consider how the complaint may be resolved. In considering how a complaint may be resolved, the investigator will give due regard to the seriousness of the complaint. It may be appropriate in order to bring the complaint to a resolution for the investigator to offer:

- An explanation;
- An apology;
- Reassurance that steps have been taken to prevent a recurrence of events which led to the complaint;
- Reassurance that the Academy and/or the Trust will undertake a review of its policies and procedures in light of the complaint.

None of the above will constitute an admission of negligence or an acceptance of liability on behalf of the Academy or the Trust.

Principles of Notifying the Outcome of a Concern or Complaint

2.7 Once all of the facts have been established, the investigator will write to the Complainant setting out all of the issues in dispute, the results of the investigation, the decision made, the reasons for the decision, and details of any action to be taken to resolve matters or prevent a reoccurrence. Alternatively, the investigator may wish to meet with the Complainant to discuss the outcome of the investigation, the decision made, the reasons for the decision and any action to be taken directly, in which case a full written record will be made of the meeting, which the Complainant will be asked to sign and date. Strictly confidential procedures such as staff disciplinary investigations or sanctions must not be referred to.

2.8 The outcome of all concerns and complaints, whether dealt with formally or informally, will be recorded centrally by the Academy. Examples of outcomes include:

- There was insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld;
- The evidence did not substantiate the concern, so the complaint cannot be upheld;

- The complaint was substantiated in part or full. A brief description should be given of the remedial action being taken by the Academy as a consequence of the complaint. Details of the investigation of or any disciplinary sanctions to be taken against a member of staff cannot be disclosed.
- The matter has been fully investigated and, as a consequence, further confidential procedures are being pursued. Strictly confidential procedures such as staff disciplinary investigations and sanctions must not be referred to.

Time Limits

2.9 This Complaints Policy sets out the time limits for each stage of the complaints procedure. Those dealing with complaints will keep to these time limits. However, where a complaint is of a particularly complex nature, or further investigations are required to ascertain the facts, new time limits can be set. The Complainant will, within the time limit specified in this Complaints Policy, be sent the details of any changes to the time limits with an explanation for the delay and confirmation of the revised date.

Late Complaints

2.10 Where a concern or complaint is raised more than three months after the incident or event (or where the complaint relates to a series of incidents or events, more than three months from the date of the latest incident or event), the Academy reserves the right to refuse to investigate the concern or complaint under the procedure in this Complaints Policy if it appears reasonable and fair to do so, having regard to the circumstances surrounding the complaint.

2.11 Where the Academy decides that a concern or complaint which was raised late will not be investigated, the Academy will write to the Complainant notifying them of the decision within 5 school days of the concern or complaint being raised.

2.12 If the Complainant is unhappy with the decision not to investigate a concern or complaint that was raised late, the Complainant may write to the Chair of Local Governance Committee at the Academy asking for the decision to be reviewed. The Chair of Local Governance Committee will be provided with all documentation relating to the concern or complaint, together with the letter from the Academy to the Complainant, and will review the decision made. The Chair of Local Governance Committee will write to the Complainant with the outcome of the review within 10 school days of the date that the letter from the Complainant seeking the review was received, and provide the Academy with a copy of the letter.

2.13 If the Chair of Local Governance Committee quashes the decision not to investigate the concern or complaint, it will be referred to the Academy to be dealt with under the procedure in this Complaints Policy in the usual way.

2.14 If the Chair of Local Governance Committee upholds the decision not to investigate the concern or complaint, the Complainant may refer the concern or complaint to the Education and Skills Funding Agency using the procedure stated towards the end of this Complaints Policy.

2.15 In exceptional circumstances, or where there is a conflict of interest, the Chair of Local Governance Committee can delegate the responsibility for the review to the Vice-Chair of Local Governance Committee.

Vexatious and/or Repeated Complaints

2.16 There may be occasions when, despite exhausting the procedure in this Complaints Policy, the Complainant persists in making the same complaint to the Academy. There may also be occasions when a Complainant raises unreasonable persistent complaints or raises complaints about matters which do not affect them. In addition, there may be occasions when a complaint is made about a matter which is clearly so trivial that it would be a waste of the Academy's resources to deal with it under the formal stages of the procedure. In all of these cases, the Academy reserves the right to regard the complaint as vexatious and/or repeated and to refuse to investigate it under the procedure in this Complaints Policy if it appears reasonable and fair to do so, having regard to the circumstances surrounding the complaint.

2.17 Where the Academy decides that a complaint is vexatious and/or repeated and will not be investigated, the Academy will write to the Complainant within 5 school days of the complaint being raised to notify them of the decision.

2.18 If the Complainant is unhappy with the decision not to investigate a vexatious and/or repeated complaint, they may write to the Chair of the Local Governance Committee to ask for the decision to be reviewed. The Chair of the Local Governance Committee will be provided with all documentation relating to the current complaint and any previous complaints which were relevant to the decision, together with the letter from the Academy to the Complainant, and will review the decision made. The Chair of Local Governance Committee will write to the Complainant with the outcome of the review within 10 school days of the date that the letter from the Complainant seeking the review was received.

2.19 If the Chair of Local Governance Committee quashes the decision not to investigate the concern or complaint, it will be referred to the Academy to be dealt with under the procedure in this Complaints Policy in the usual way.

2.20 If the Chair of Local Governance Committee upholds the decision not to investigate the concern or complaint, the Complainant may refer the concern or complaint to the Education and Skills Funding Agency using the procedure stated towards the end of this Complaints Policy.

2.21 In exceptional circumstances, or where there is a conflict of interest, the Chair of Local Governance Committee can delegate the responsibility for the review to the Vice-Chair of Local Governance Committee.

Anonymous Complaints

2.22 The Academy will not investigate anonymous complaints under the procedure in this Complaints Policy. Anonymous complaints will be referred to the Principal/Headteacher who will decide what, if any, action should be taken.

3. Stage 1 - Informal Procedure

3.1 The class teacher and other members of staff can deal with many concerns to the satisfaction of the Complainant, without needing to deal with it formally. The Academy values informal meetings and telephone discussions as a way of improving its procedures and relations with parents.

3.2 There is no rigid time-scale for resolving concerns and complaints at this stage, given the importance of dialogue through informal discussions; however it is expected that most concerns will be resolved within 10 school days. Should the nature or complexity of the concern mean that more time is required, the Academy will write to the Complainant within 10 school days informing them of the reason for the delay and confirming a revised date for resolution.

3.3 Should informal meetings and telephone discussions appear unlikely to resolve the concern, either party may initiate a move to the Stage 2 for the complaint to be investigated formally. A copy of the formal complaint form in Annex 3 will be forwarded to the Complainant for completion and return, together with a copy of this Complaints Policy.

4. Stage 2 – Formal Complaint Investigated by a Member of Staff

4.1 If the Complainant is unhappy with the way in which the concern was dealt with informally, the Complainant should complete the formal complaint form found in Annex 3 and return it to the Academy.

4.2 Upon receipt of a completed formal complaint form, the Principal/Headteacher will identify the appropriate member of staff to investigate the complaint under Stage 2. If the complaint is about a member of staff, a manager senior to that member of staff will normally investigate the complaint. If the complaint is very serious, the Principal/Headteacher may, at their discretion, escalate the complaint directly to Stage 3.

4.3 The Academy will try to respect the views of a Complainant who indicates that he or she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the matter will be referred back to the Principal/Headteacher who may, if they feel it necessary, refer the complaint to another staff member for investigation.

4.4 Where the complaint concerns the Principal/Headteacher or a member of the Local Governance Committee, the complaint will be referred to the Chair of Local Governance Committee. The Chair of Local Governance Committee will investigate the complaint under Stage 3 of this Complaints Policy. Where the complaint concerns the Chair of Local Governance Committee, the Vice Chair of Local Governance Committee will investigate the complaint under Stage 3 of this Complaints Policy.

4.5 Where the first approach is made to a member of the Local Governance Committee, the member of the Local Governance Committee must refer the complaint to the Principal/Headteacher, who will allocate it to an appropriate member of staff for investigation under Stage 2 of this Complaints Policy. Members of the Local Governance Committee should not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the early stages in case they are needed to sit on a Complaint Panel at a later stage of the procedure.

4.6 The member of staff considering the complaint will write to the Complainant acknowledging

the complaint within 5 school days of receiving the formal complaint form. The acknowledgement will confirm which stage of the Complaints Policy the complaint is being investigated under, and will confirm the date for providing a response to the complaint. Following investigation of the complaint, the member of staff will write to the Complainant confirming the outcome within 10 school days of the formal complaint form being received. If this time limit cannot be met, the member of staff will write to the Complainant within 10 school days of the formal complaint form being received, explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised date.

4.7 The letter to the Complainant should notify them that if he or she is unhappy with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation of the complaint, they should write to the Principal/Headteacher within 10 school days of receiving the letter asking for the complaint to be investigated under Stage 3 of this Complaints Policy. If no further communication is received from the Complainant within 10 school days, the complaint will be deemed to have been resolved.

5. Stage 3 – Formal Complaint Investigated by the Principal/Headteacher

5.1 If the Complainant is unhappy with the outcome of the complaint under Stage 2, the Complainant should write to the Principal/Headteacher at the Academy asking for the complaint to be investigated under Stage 3 of this Complaints Policy.

5.2 The Principal/Headteacher will write to the Complainant acknowledging the complaint within 5 school days of the date that the letter was received from the Complainant. The acknowledgement will confirm that the complaint will now be investigated under Stage 3 of this Complaints Policy, and will confirm the date for providing a response to the complaint. Following investigation of the complaint, the Principal/Headteacher will write to the Complainant confirming the outcome within 10 school days of the date that the letter was received from the Complainant. If this time limit cannot be met, the Principal/Headteacher will write to the Complainant within 10 school days of the date that the letter was received from the Complainant, explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised date.

5.3 The letter to the Complainant should notify them that if he or she is unhappy the outcome of the Stage 3 investigation of the complaint, they should write to the Clerk to the Local Governance Committee within 10 school days of receiving the letter asking for the complaint to be heard before a Complaint Panel under Stage 4 of this Complaints Policy. If no further communication is received from the Complainant within 10 school days, the complaint will be deemed to have been resolved.

5.4 In exceptional circumstances, the Principal/Headteacher may delegate responsibility for investigating the complaint under Stage 3 of this Complaints Policy to a member of the Senior Management Team. In those circumstances, the Principal/Headteacher will monitor the progress of the investigation, and it will be the Principal/Headteacher who will write the letter of outcome to the Complainant.

5.5 As stated above, where a formal complaint form is received making a complaint about the Principal/Headteacher or a member of the Local Governance Committee, the complaint will be referred to the Chair of Local Governance Committee for investigation under Stage 3 of this Complaints Policy, rather than Stage 2. If a formal complaint form is received making a complaint about the Chair of Local Governance Committee, the complaint will be referred to the Chair of the Trust Board for investigation under Stage 3 of this Complaints Policy, rather than Stage 2.

6. Stage 4 – Complaint Heard at a Complaint Panel Hearing

6.1 If the Complainant is unhappy with the outcome of the complaint under Stage 3, the Complainant should write to the Clerk to the Local Governance Committee at the Academy asking for the complaint to be heard before a Complaint Panel.

6.2 The Clerk to the Local Governance Committee will write to the Complainant acknowledging the request for the complaint to be heard before a Complaint Panel within 5 school days. The letter will inform the Complainant that the Complaint Panel Hearing will take place within 25 working days of the date that the letter was received from the Complainant and that arrangements to appoint the Complaint Panel and convene the Complaint Panel Hearing will be made by the Clerk to the Local Governance Committee, who will be the Complainant's point of contact.

Appointment of the Complaint Panel

6.3 The Clerk to the Local Governance Committee will liaise with the Trust in making arrangements for the Complaint Panel to be appointed. The Complaint Panel will consist of three members. None of the three members of the Complaint Panel will have been involved in the incidents or events which led to the complaint, or have been involved in dealing with the complaint in the previous stages, of have any detailed prior knowledge of the complaint.

6.4 One of the Complaint Panel members will be independent of the management and running of the Academy. This means that the independent Complaint Panel member will not be a Director of the Trust, a member of the Local Governance Committee of the Academy, or an employee of either the Trust or the Academy. When appointing the independent Complaint Panel member, the Trust and the Academy will bear in mind the non-statutory advice of the Department for Education, which states:

> *"Whilst we do not wish to be prescriptive about who schools should appoint as an independent person our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the police force might be considered by schools. Schools will of course have their own views."*

For the avoidance of doubt, a Local Governor of another Empower Learning Academy Trust Academy within the group may be the independent Complaint Panel member, as long as they are not an employee of that academy or the Trust, and they are sufficiently removed from the management and running of the Academy to be considered truly independent.

6.5 One or both of the other two Complaint Panel members can be a Director of the Trust or a Local Governor of the Academy, as long as they fulfil the requirements of paragraph 6.3 above and are not an employee of the Academy.

The Academy's Representative

6.6 The Academy will be represented at the Complaint Panel Hearing by the person who

investigated the complaint under the most recent stage of the procedure. This will usually be the Principal/Headteacher, however it may on occasions be the Chair of Local Governance Committee, the Vice-Chair of Local Governance Committee or a member of the Senior Management Team. If the Complainant has complained about the way in which the complaint was investigated by that person (rather than simply disagreeing with the outcome of the complaint) then the Academy will not be represented by that person at the Complaint Panel Hearing, and the Academy will nominate another person to represent the Academy.

Convening the Complaint Panel Hearing

6.7 The Clerk to the Local Governance Committee will liaise with the Trust and convene the Complaint Panel Hearing on a date and at a time which is convenient to the Complainant, the Academy's representative and the three Complaint Panel members. The Clerk to the Local Governance Committee will write to the Complainant, the Academy's representative and the Complaint Panel members at least 5 school days before the Complaint Panel Hearing is due to take place confirming the date and time.

Witnesses

6.8 The Complainant may seek to rely on the accounts of witnesses, which are relevant to the complaint. The Complainant should ask each witness to write down their account in a signed and dated statement and send it to the Academy at least three school days before the Complaint Panel Hearing is due to take place.

6.9 The Academy may seek to rely on the accounts of witnesses, which are relevant to the complaint. Such witnesses may also include those persons who dealt with the complaint in the previous stages, if the Complainant has complained about the way in which the complaint was investigation (rather than simply disagreeing with the outcome of the complaint). Such witnesses should, if they have not already done so, provide a signed and dated statement of their account and provide it to the Clerk to the Local Governance Committee at least three school days before the Complaint Panel Hearing is due to take place.

6.10 The Complaint Panel will have the absolute discretion to decide whether a witness account is relevant to the complaint or whether a witness account is undisputed by the Complainant or the Academy respectively. Where a witness account is irrelevant or undisputed, their attendance at the Complaint Panel will not be required.

6.11 All witnesses, whether they are for the Complainant or the Academy, will not be allowed to sit in on any part of the Complaint Panel Hearing except when they are giving their own verbal account or answering questions, upon conclusion of which they will be required to leave the room.

Documents

6.12 The Clerk to the Local Governance Committee will provide a copy of all correspondence, statements (including witness statements) and records relating to the complaint (including records made by those persons who investigated the complaint in the previous stages) to the Complainant, the Academy's representative and each Complaint Panel member at least two school days before the Complaint Panel Hearing is due to take place.

Attendance at the Hearing

6.13 The Complainant may be accompanied by an interpreter or signer, as well as friend or relative, at the Complaint Panel Hearing. The friend or relative will attend for moral support only and will not play any part in the Complaint Panel Hearing, unless invited to do so by the Complaint Panel if it appears to them that it will improve the quality of the Complainant's representations. The Complaint Panel Hearing is not a legal hearing and it is therefore not appropriate for either the Complainant or the Academy to be legally represented.

The Clerk to the Complaint Panel

6.14 A Clerk to the Complaint Panel will attend the Complaint Panel Hearing and keep a written record of the proceedings. The Clerk to the Complaint Panel will usually be the Clerk to the Local Governance Committee, however another suitable person may be appointed to this role if the Clerk to the Local Governors is not available.

Procedure at the Complaint Panel Hearing

6.15 The Complaint Panel Hearing will proceed as follows:

- The Complaint Panel will determine the appropriate format of the Hearing and may decide to speak with the Complainant and Academy representative separately or to have them in the Hearing together. In determining this, they will be mindful of the wellbeing of all attendees.
- The Clerk to the Complaint Panel will greet the Complainant, the Complainant's supporter and the Academy's representative and welcome them into the room where the Complaint Panel has convened (witnesses will remain outside of the room until they are called in to give their account);
- The Complainant will be invited by the Complaint Panel to give an account of their complaint;
- The Academy's representative will be invited to ask the Complainant questions, if any;
- The Complaint Panel will ask the Complainant questions, if any;
- The Complainant's relevant first witness will be invited into the room to give an account of what they saw or know;
- The Academy's representative will be invited to ask the Complainant's witness questions, if any;
- The Complaint Panel will ask the Complainant's witness questions, if any;
- The Complainant's witness will be asked to leave the room;
- If the Complainant has any further relevant witnesses, they will be invited into the room individually to provide their accounts and be questioned as outlined above;
- The Academy's representative will be invited by the Complaint Panel to respond to the complaint and make representations on behalf of the Academy;
- The Complainant will be invited to ask the Academy's representative questions, if any;
- The Complaint Panel will ask the Academy's representative questions, if any;
- The Academy's relevant first witness will be invited into the room to give an account or what they saw or know;
- The Complainant will be invited to ask the Academy's witness questions, if any;

- The Complaint Panel will ask the Academy's witness questions, if any;
- The Academy's witness will be asked to leave the room;
- If the Academy has any further relevant witnesses, they will be invited into the room individually to provide their accounts and be questioned, as outlined above;
- The Complainant will be invited by the Complaint Panel to summarise their complaint;
- The Academy's representative will be invited by the Complaint Panel to summarise their response to the complaint and the Academy's stance;
- The Complaint Panel Hearing will conclude and the Complainant and the Academy's representative will be asked to leave.

The Complaint Panel's Decision

6.16 The Complaint Panel will meet in private, either immediately after the Complaint Panel Hearing or on a subsequent date, and will consider all of the documentation and everything that they have heard at the Complainant Panel Hearing and make:

- **Findings of Fact**

The Complaint Panel will decide which facts are established to be true, on a balance of probabilities (i.e. more likely than not). If a fact is not deemed relevant, the Complaint Panel will not consider it further. The Complaint Panel will make a written record of the facts that have been established, those which have not been established and those which are not relevant, with reasons.

- **Recommendations**

The Complaint Panel will consider the facts, which they have established and will make recommendations based upon them. These recommendations may be aimed at achieving reconciliation between the parties (for example, a written apology), improving procedures or preventing a recurrence in the future. The Complaint Panel will keep a written record of their recommendations, with reasons.

Notification of the Complaint Panel's Decision

6.17 The Clerk to the Complaint Panel will write within 10 school days of the Complaint Panel Hearing to the:

  - **Complainant;**
  - **the Academy's representative;**
  - **Any person complained about;**

The letter will identify the issues complained about, and will confirm the Complaint Panel's findings of fact and recommendations, if any, with reasons. The letter will also confirm that, if the Complainant believes that this Complaints Policy does not comply with the Regulations, or that the Academy has not followed the procedure outlined in this Complaints Policy, the Complainant may refer their complaint to the Education and Skills Funding Agency for consideration.

6.18 The Clerk to the Complaint Panel will also ensure that a copy of the Complaint Panel's findings and recommendations are made available on the Academy's premises for

inspection by the Trust, the Local Governance Committee and the Principal/Headteacher.

7. Complaint Referred to the Department for Education

7.1 Once a complaint has been through all the stages of this Complaints Policy, if the Complainant believes that this Complaints Policy does not comply with the Regulations, or if the Complainant believes that the Academy has not followed the procedure in this Complaints Policy, the Complainant can refer the complaint to the Department for Education for consideration.

7.2 The Complainant can find further information about referring a complaint to the Department for Education by pasting this page into an Internet browser:

Complain about a school to the Department for Education - GOV.UK

7.3 The Complainant should be aware that the Department for Education will not usually investigate the complaint itself, or interfere with the findings of the Complaint Panel, unless the decision made was manifestly unreasonable.

8. Administrative Matters

Records

8.1 The Academy will keep a central record of all concerns and complaints received, whether they were dealt with informally or formally.

Confidentiality

8.2 The Academy will keep all correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body authorised to conduct a school inspection requests access to them.

Publication

8.3 This Complaints Policy will be reviewed every 3 years in line with guidance, ad-hoc should legislation or guidance change, and published on the Academy's web site, as well as being made available to pupils, parents and other individuals or organisations on request.

Annex 1 – Glossary

The definitions used in this Complaints Policy are:

Academy	The school, which has academy status and is part of a multi academy trust group.
Clerk to the Complaint Panel	The person who will attend the Complaint Panel Hearing and keep a written record of the proceedings, and will write to the Complainant notifying them of the decision of the Complaint Panel.
Clerk to the Local Governors	The person responsible for making the arrangements to appoint the Complaint Panel and convene the Complaint Panel Hearing. The Clerk to the Governors will also usually act as the Clerk to the Complaint Panel at the Complaint Panel Hearing
Chair of Local Governors	The person elected by the Local Governing Body to be their chairperson.
Complainant	The person or organisation making the complaint.
Education and Skills Funding Agency	The government department (a sub-department of the Department for Education) responsible for funding and monitoring standards in academies.
Empower Learning Academy Trust Academy	An academy under the Empower Learning Academy Trust multi academy trust company.
Local Governing Body	A sub-committee of the Trust. The Trust delegates the day-to- day management and running of the Academy to the Local Governing Body.
Parent	The natural or adoptive mother or father of a pupil, prospective pupil or former pupil, irrespective of whether they are or ever have been married, together with persons with parental responsibility for the pupil, and persons with care of the pupil.
Principal/Headteacher	The head of the Academy, sometimes also known as the Headteacher.
School Day	Term-time weekdays excluding weekends, inset days, bank holidays and school holidays.
Trust	A multi academy trust company, which is a charitable company responsible for the management and running of all of the academies within the multi academy trust group.

Annex 2 – Complaint Panel Hearing Principles

Guiding Principles

- It is essential that the Complaint Panel Hearing is independent and impartial. No person may sit on the Complaint Panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the
  circumstances surrounding it, or any previous knowledge of the complaint's progress through the previous stages, or any previous knowledge of the Complainant.

- The aim of the Complaint Panel Hearing, which must be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the Academy and the Complainant. However, it has to be recognised the Complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the Complaint Panel does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations, which may satisfy the Complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.

An effective Complaint Panel will acknowledge that many Complainants and witnesses, especially children, will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The Complaint Panel will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming and informal as possible, while keeping in mind that the proceedings must be fair and follow the rules of natural justice.

Annex 3 – Formal Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Academy who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name (if applicable):

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:
Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint:

What action, if any have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint (for example, who have you spoken to and what was the response)?

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:

Annex 4 – Local Variations

This policy will apply to all academies within the Empower Learning Academy Trust with the following local variations:

Bower Park

No variations

Brittons

No variations

Hacton

No variations

Hall Mead

No variations

Ardleigh Green Infant School

No variations

Ardleigh Green Junior School

No variations