EMPOWER
LEARNING ACADEMY TRUST

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Complaints Policy and Procedure: Trust

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 and Procedure: Trust

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1. Scope

1.1. Any complaint of any nature that relates to one of the Trust's academies must follow the Empower Learning Academy Trust Complaints Policy and Procedure: Academies. This policy and procedure only applies to complaints about any aspect of the Trust that does not relate to a specific academy. Where there is any doubt as to whether the 'Schools' or the 'Trust' version of the complaints policy should apply the Empower Learning Academy Trust Academy Trust Business and Policy Director will make a final determination.

1.2. 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 a senior manager.

Stage 4 - Complaint heard before a Complaint Panel.

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 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.

1.5. 1.4. Complaints made by a Trustee or member of the Local Governance Committee should be referred to the Chair of the Trust Board or Local Governance Committee, as appropriate to be dealt with informally as an item for consideration initially and, if necessary, through the formal procedure. Complaints made by a Trustee or member of a Local Governance Committee will not be dealt with under this Complaints Policy.

1.6. 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.

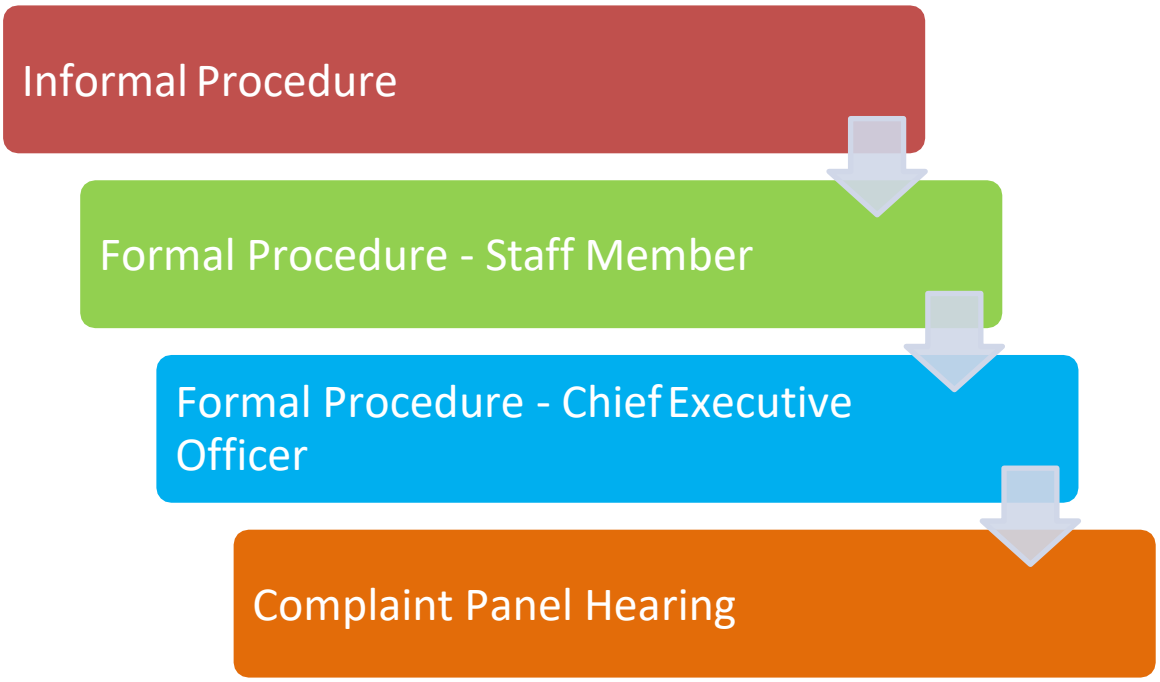
1.7. Complaints about or relating to a pupil should be directed to the relevant Academy.

1.8. 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 Trust 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.

<u>Principles of Investigating a Concern or Complaint</u>

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 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 Executive 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 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 Trust. 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 Trust 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 Trust 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 Trust decides that a concern or complaint which was raised late will not be investigated, the Trust will write to the Complainant notifying them of the decision within **5 working 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 Chief Executive Officer at the Trust asking for the decision to be reviewed. The Chief Executive Officer, will be provided with all documentation relating to the concern or complaint, together with the letter from the Trust to the Complainant, and will review the decision made. The Chief Executive Officer will write to the Complainant with the outcome of the review within **10 working 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 Chief Executive Officer quashes the decision not to investigate the concern or complaint, it will be referred to a senior manager of the Trust to be dealt with under the procedure in this Complaints Policy in the usual way.

2.14 If the Chief Executive Officer 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, the Chief Executive Officer can delegate the responsibility for the review to another member of the Executive Team that has no link to the subject of the complaint or if appropriate refer the matter to the Trust Chair.

<u>Vexatious and/or Repeated Complaints</u>

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 Trust. 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 Trust's resources to deal with it under the formal stages of the procedure. In all of these cases, the Trust 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 Trust decides that a complaint is vexatious and/or repeated and will not be investigated, the Academy will write to the Complainant within **5 working 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 Trust Board to ask for the decision to be reviewed. The Chair of the Trust Board 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 Trust Board will write to the Complainant with the outcome of the review within **10 working days** of the date that the letter from the Complainant seeking the review was received.

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

2.20 If the Chair of the Trust Board 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, the Chair of the Trust Board can delegate the responsibility for the review to the Vice-Chair.

Anonymous Complaints

2.22 The Trust will not investigate anonymous complaints under the procedure in this Complaints Policy. Anonymous complaints will be referred to the Chief Executive Officer who will decide what, if any, action should be taken.

3. Stage 1 - Informal Procedure

3.1 Members of staff can deal with many concerns to the satisfaction of the Complainant, without needing to deal with it formally. The Trust 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 working days**. Should the nature or complexity of the concern mean that more time is required, the Trust will write to the Complainant within **10 working days 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 Trust.

4.2 Upon receipt of a completed formal complaint form, the Chief Executive Officer 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 Chief Executive Officer may, at their discretion, escalate the complaint directly to Stage 3.

4.3 The Trust 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 Chief Executive Officer who may, if they feel it necessary, refer the complaint to another staff member for investigation.

4.4 Where the complaint concerns the **CEO** or a **Trustee**, the complaint will be referred to the Chair of the Trust Board. The Chair will investigate the complaint under **Stage 3** of this Complaints Policy. Where the complaint concerns the **Chair**, the Vice Chair of the Trust Board will investigate the complaint under **Stage 3** of this Complaints Policy.

4.5 Where the first approach is made to a Trustee or Regional Ambassador, the Trustee must refer the complaint to the CEO, who will allocate it to an appropriate member of staff for investigation under Stage 2 of this Complaints Policy. Trustees/Regional Ambassadors 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 working 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 working 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 working 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 CEO within **10 working 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 working days, the complaint will be deemed to have been resolved.

5. Stage 3 – Formal Complaint Investigated by the Chief Executive Officer

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

5.2 The CEO will write to the Complainant acknowledging the complaint within **5 working 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 CEO will write to the Complainant confirming the outcome within **10 working days** of the date that the letter was received from the Complainant. If this time limit cannot be met, the CEO will write to the Complainant within **10 working 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 Trust Board within **10 working 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 working days, the complaint will be deemed to have been resolved.

5.4 The CEO may delegate responsibility for investigating the complaint under Stage 3 of this Complaints Policy to a member of the Senior Executive Team. In those circumstances, the CEO will monitor the progress of the investigation, and it will be the CEO 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 **CEO** or a **Trustee**, 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. If a formal complaint form is received making a complaint about the **Chair**, the complaint will be referred to the Vice Chair 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 Trust Board asking for the complaint to be heard before a Complaint Panel.

6.2 The Clerk to the Trust Board will write to the Complainant acknowledging the request for the complaint to be heard before a Complaint Panel within **5 working 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 Board, who will be the Complainant's point of contact.

Appointment of the Complaint Panel

6.3 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 Trustee or an employee of the Trust.

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

6.5 One or both of the other two Complaint Panel members can be a Trustee or a Regional Ambassador, as long as they fulfil the requirements of paragraph 7.3 above and are not an employee of the Academy.

The Trust's Representative

6.6 The Trust 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 CEO or a member of the Executive team, however it may on occasions be the Chair of the Trust, or the Vice-Chair. 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 Trust will not be represented by that person at the Complaint Panel Hearing, and the Trust will nominate another person to represent the Trust.

Convening the Complaint Panel Hearing

6.7 The Clerk to the Board will convene the Complaint Panel Hearing on a date and at a time which is convenient to the Complainant, the Trust's representative and the three Complaint Panel members. The Clerk will write to the Complainant, the Trust's representative and the Complaint Panel members **at least 5 working 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 working days** before the Complaint Panel Hearing is due to take place.

6.9 The Trust 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 **at least three working 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 Trust, 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 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 Trust's representative and each Complaint Panel member **at least two working 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 Trust 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 Board, however another suitable person may be appointed to this role if the Clerk to the Board 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 will greet the Complainant, the Complainant's supporter and the Trust'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 Trust'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 Trust'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 Trust's representative questions, if any;

- The Complaint Panel will ask the Trust's representative questions, if any;

- The Trust'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 Trust's witness questions, if any;

- The Complaint Panel will ask the Trust's witness questions, if any;
- The Trust's witness will be asked to leave the room;

- If the Trust 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 Trust's representative will be invited by the Complaint Panel to summarise their response to the complaint and the Trust's stance;

- The Complaint Panel Hearing will conclude and the Complainant and the Trust'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 working days** of the Complaint Panel Hearing to the:

- **Complainant;**

- **the Trust'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 Trust 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 Trust's premises for inspection by the Trust, the Trustees and the CEO.

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

Confidentiality

8.2 The Trust 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 three years and published on the Trust'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 Board	The person responsible for making the arrangements to appoint the Complaint Panel and convene the Complaint Panel Hearing. The Clerk to the Board will also usually act as the Clerk to the Complaint Panel at the Complaint Panel Hearing.
Chair of Trust Board	The person elected by the Trust Board to be their chairperson.
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	The Chief Executive Officer of the Academy Trust.
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.
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.
Working Day	Weekdays excluding weekends and bank holidays.

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

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

Hall Mead School

None

Bower Park

None

Brittons

None

Hacton

None

Please complete and return to the Empower Learning Academy Trust Academy Trust 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 and resolve your complaint (for example, who have you spoken to and what was the response)?