



Complaints Policy

Adopted: January 2017
Next review date: January 2020

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Procedures for Dealing with Complaints:

At Elm Academy, Oak Academy and LeAF Studio we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which pupils will be helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially. We recognise, however, that sometimes things can go wrong and parents/carers may need to raise a concern or make a complaint they have with an Academy. This policy tells you what to do if this happens.

Introduction:

The majority of issues raised are concerns rather than complaints. We are committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, you may wish or be asked to follow the Academy's formal complaints procedure. For the Academy to be able to investigate a complaint, it needs to be made as soon as possible following the incident. If a complaint is older than six months it will not be investigated.

The prime aim of LeAF's policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. Malicious complaints may incur appropriate action by the Academy. Any complaints concerning the conduct of Academy staff will be handled in accordance with the Academy's internal disciplinary procedures. Such an investigation will remain confidential and therefore the outcome of this will not be shared with parents/carers.

The following details outline the stages that can be used to resolve complaints.

The Policy has three main stages:

Stage 1 – A concern is raised informally and dealt with by a staff member.

Stage 2 – Formal complaint is heard by the Principal. The formal procedures are only invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

Stage 3 – Complaint is heard by Local Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel.

Stage 1 – Raising a concern:

Concerns can be raised with the Academy at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. The Academy requests that parents/carers make their first contact with the pupil's Head of Year.

It is important for parents/carers to recognise that the Academy is a busy organisation and that whilst we will do our best, it may not be possible to offer an appointment immediately.

On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within five Academy working days. The vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at Stage 1, please write to the Academy within ten Academy working days of receipt of the response and state what you would like the Academy to do. The Academy will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

Stage 2 – Complaint heard by the Principal:

Formal complaints should be put in writing and addressed to the Principal. The complaint will be logged, including the date it was received. The Academy will normally acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days of receiving it. In many cases this response will also report on the action the Academy has taken to resolve the issue, however, if the issue requires complex investigation (e.g. interviewing a number of people) it may take up to five Academy working days. Alternatively, a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further.

This meeting will normally take place within ten Academy working days from receipt of the formal complaint. The aim will be to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at Stage 2 please write to the Academy within ten Academy working days of receiving its response. You will need to tell the Academy why you are still not satisfied and what you would like the Academy to do. You can request a complaint form for this.

Stage 3 – Complaint heard by the Local Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel:

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 2, the Principal will arrange for the complaint to be forwarded to the Chair of the Local Governing Body. The Local Governing Body will form a Complaints Appeal Panel. Members of the Panel will be independent and will therefore have had no involvement in previous investigations. At least one member of the Panel will also be independent of the management and running of the Academy.

A hearing will normally take place within ten Academy working days on receipt of the written request for stage 3 of the complaint. You will be invited to attend this hearing and may be accompanied by a companion.

The aim of the Complaints Appeal Panel hearing is to independently consider the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the Academy and the Complainant. All parties will be notified of the Complaints Appeal Panel's decision in writing within three Academy working days after the date of the hearing. The letter will also contain what you need to do if you

wish to take the matter further although it should be noted that the decision of the Local Governing Body's Complaint Panel is final.

NOTE:

Allegations of abuse involving a member of the Academy staff must be reported to the Principal immediately. Allegations of abuse involving the Principal must be reported to the Executive Principal/Chair of the Local Governing Body immediately.

In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of the Principal, the Executive Principal and Chair of the Local Governing Body will be informed of the complaint. The Chair of the Local Governing Body, supported and advised by the Executive Principal, will arrange for the matter to be investigated. In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of a member of the Local Governing Body the member will be informed of the complaint.

Review:

The Local Governing Body of the Academy will review this policy at least every three years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the Trust.