



Marches Academy Trust

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Complaints Policy

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1. Summary of Complaints Process

Stage One (Informal):

Complaint heard by staff member and initial response made

Action

- Acknowledge receipt of complaint.
- Informal written response at conclusion, normally within 10 days.
- Complaint/outcome recorded.

Issue resolved

Issue not resolved

Stage Two (Formal):

Complaint heard by Headteacher (or line manager if a staff member of the Trust)

Action

- Acknowledge receipt of complaint.
- Issue Complaint Form (as at Appendix B).
- Meet with complainant (if appropriate).
- Formally write to complainant with outcome of investigation.

Issue resolved

Issue not resolved

Stage Three (Formal):

Complaint heard by Chief Executive Officer and / or Chair of the Local Governing Body

Action

- Acknowledge receipt of complaint and send Complaint Form at Appendix B if not completed.
- Meet with complainant (if appropriate).
- Formally write to complainant with outcome of investigation.
- Complaint/outcome recorded.

Issue resolved

Issue not resolved

Stage Four (Formal):

Complaint heard by Trustees Complaints Appeal Panel
(the complaint will omit Stage Three if it concerns the Chief Executive Officer or a Governor, Local Governing Body, Trustee, or Board of Trustees)

Action

- Clerk to the Trustees to acknowledge receipt of complaint.
- Clerk to the Trustees to send complainant Stage 4 Complaint Form (Appendix B).
- Clerk to the Trustees to forward the complaint to the Trustees who will appoint a panel.
- The Chair of the panel needs to ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's findings and recommendations in writing.
- The decision of the panel is final; it may however be possible to refer the matter to the Education Funding Agency if the complainant is dissatisfied with how the complaint has been handled.
- Complaint/outcome recorded.

2. Introduction

The Marches Academy Trust has clear Vision and Values, which build upon collaborations and aim to ensure that every school within the Trust works in a productive and positive partnership with all parents and carers to realise 'Achievement through caring'.

In respect of complaints relating to the school, or Trust, all complainants should use this complaints procedure, and refrain from airing any grievance or concerns on social media sites, as this could be potentially damaging to the school and our students.

2.1. Who can make a complaint

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children who are registered at one of the schools within the Trust. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to an individual school within the Trust, or the Marches Academy Trust itself, about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions) see Appendix A, we will use this complaints procedure.

2.2. The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important, for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally (Stage One), without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Marches Academy Trust take concerns seriously, and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

We understand, however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Marches Academy Trust, and the schools within the Trust, will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

2.3. Scope of this complaints procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of education, community facilities or services by Marches Academy Trust, and the schools within the Trust, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed at Appendix A.

2.4. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person or by telephone (for Stage One only), or in writing (Stages Two, Three and Four). They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or Headteacher (Stage One). If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint using the complaints form in Appendix B.

Formal complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher and the school's Clerk as a Stage One complaint.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of The Marches Academy Trust via The Marches School, Morda Road, Oswestry SY11 2AR.

Complaints about Trust staff should be addressed to the Clerk to The Marches Academy Trust's Boards via The Marches School, Morda Road, Oswestry SY11 2AR. If the complaint is about the Clerk to The Marches Academy Trust's Boards, this should be sent to the Chief Financial Operating Officer (CFOO) at The Marches School, Morda Road, Oswestry SY11 2AR.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to The Marches Academy Trust's Boards via The Marches School, Morda Road, Oswestry SY11 2AR.

Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or a Trustee of the Trust, should be addressed to the Clerk to The Marches Academy Trust's Boards via The Marches School, Morda Road, Oswestry SY11 2AR.

You should be aware that where your complaint relates to an employee a copy of the complaint may be shared with them in order to investigate the issues raised.

All complaints should be marked as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at Appendix B and this should be returned to the Trust as outlined above. If the complainant requires help in completing the form, they should contact the school office. They can also ask a third-party organisation for example Citizens Advice to assist.

In accordance with equality law, the Trust will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

2.5. Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to their complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full, as early as possible;
- co-operate with the school or Trust in seeking a solution to the complaint;
- respond promptly to requests for information, or meetings, or in agreeing the details of the complaint;
- ask for assistance, as needed;
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect;
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media, and respect confidentiality.

2.6. Anonymous concerns or complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous concerns or complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

2.7. Dealing with persistent complaints

The Trust defines unreasonably persistent and vexatious complainants as those complainants who, because of the frequency or nature of their contact with the Trust, hinder the Trust's consideration of their complaint. There is a difference between unreasonably persistent and vexatious complainants.

A vexatious person in this context is someone who is not seeking to resolve a dispute themselves and the Trust but is seeking to cause unnecessary aggravation or annoyance to the Trust.

Unreasonably persistent complainants or vexatious complainants may have justified complaints but are pursuing them in inappropriate ways. Alternatively, they may be intent on pursuing complaints which appear to have no substance, or which have already been investigated and settled.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the Trust, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Where complaints received have already been addressed through this or other policies, the Chair of Trustees will write to the complainant advising that the procedure has been exhausted, and that the matter is now closed.

2.8. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Marches Academy Trust and the individual schools within the Trust want to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- An explanation.
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
- An assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur.
- An explanation of the steps that have been, or will be, taken to help ensure that it will not happen again, and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made.
- An undertaking to review Trust/school policies, in light of the complaint.
- An apology.

This complaints procedure aims to be explicit and transparent to all.

If a complainant commences legal action against The Marches Academy Trust in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

2.9. Time scales for submitting a complaint

A complaint must be raised by the complainant within three months of the incident or, where a

series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

2.10. Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

2.11. Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

3. The Complaints Procedure

3.1. Stage One Complaint (Informal)

Complaint heard by staff member

The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school/Trust can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis. The staff member will try to resolve problems informally wherever possible. An effective response and appropriate redress will be provided to all complaints as quickly as possible.

The complaint will be acknowledged by email or letter by the staff member. Within this response, they will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The staff member can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The staff member must inform the Headteacher of the complaint. The final decision taken must be made by the Headteacher.

A written response will be provided at conclusion, normally within 10 days, depending upon the complexity of the issues raised. The complaint/outcome will be recorded by the school.

It is essential that the school/Trust respects the views of a complainant who indicates that they would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In this case, the Headteacher will refer the complainant to another designated member of staff.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the Headteacher may consider referring the complainant to another member of staff. The member of staff may be more senior, but this is not essential.

Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher the complainant should be referred to the Chief Executive Officer. Where the complaint concerns the Chief Executive Officer the complainant should be referred to the Clerk to Trust's Board for complaints. Where the complaint concerns Trust staff the complaint should be referred to that person's line manager. Where the complaint concerns the Clerk to the Trust's Boards this should be referred to the Chief Financial Operating Officer (CFOO).

The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial. Complainants should not approach individual governors or Trustees to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 or 4 of the procedure.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint under Stage Two.

3.2. Stage Two Formal Complaint

3.2.1. Complaint heard by Headteacher if teaching staff or Line Manager if Trust staff

The complaint must be made in writing to the Headteacher or Line Manager if Trust staff. A copy of the complaint form (see Appendix B) can be issued for completion and return.

The Headteacher (or their representative) or line manager will acknowledge receipt of the complaint. They will then conduct an investigation and if appropriate, will invite the complainant to a meeting.

The Headteacher or Line Manager's influence will already have shaped the way complaints are handled in the school. At this point, the complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at Stage One, as well as pursuing their initial complaint. During the investigation, the headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

The Headteacher/Line Manager will formally write to the complainant with an outcome of the investigation. The complaint/outcome will be recorded by the school.

If the issue remains unresolved the next step is Stage Three of the complaints process.

3.3. Stage Three Formal Complaint

3.3.1. Complaint against the Headteacher

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and/or Chair of the Local Governing Body, will consider the complaint as a Stage Three complaint.

In this instance, complaints must be made in writing, to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO and/or Chair of Local Governing Body will acknowledge receipt of the complaint. They will then conduct an investigation and if appropriate, will invite the complainant to a meeting.

During the investigation, the CEO and/or Chair of Local Governing Body will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

The CEO will formally write to the complainant with an outcome of the investigation. The complaint/outcome will be recorded by the school.

If the issue remains unresolved the next step is Stage Four of the complaints process.

3.3.2. Complaint heard by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and/or Chair of the Local Governing Body

At this point, the complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at Stage Two. The complainant **must** complete the complaint form at Appendix B. The complainant should send the completed form to the CEO of the Trust, giving details of the complaint, and the reason why they are being requested to reconsider the decision of the school headteacher.

The CEO (or their representative) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint. The Chief Executive Officer and/or the Chair of the Local Governing Body will conduct an investigation. During the investigation, they will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

The Chief Executive Officer and/or the Chair of the Local Governing Body may delegate the task of collating the information to another member of staff but not the decision on the action to be taken.

If appropriate, the Chief Executive Officer may invite the complainant to a meeting which may include the Chair of the Local Governing Body.

The CEO will formally write to the complainant with an outcome of the investigation. The complaint/outcome will be recorded by the school.

If the issue remains unresolved the next step is Stage Four of the complaints process.

3.3.3. Complaint against a Governor, Local Governing Body, Trustee, or Board of Trustees

If the complaint is about an individual Governor or Trustee, a suitably skilled Governor or Trustee will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage Three.

3.4. Stage Four Formal Complaint

3.4.1. Complaint heard by the Trustees Complaints Appeal Panel

Complaints to be considered by the Trustees Complaints Appeal Panel will be as a result of there being a referral from Stage Three. The complainant **must** complete the complaint form at Appendix B. We appreciate that complainants will have completed a form similar to this previously but in order to gather comments on how the matter has been dealt with to date, and to fully understand how best to resolve the matter, the form must be completed and returned to the Clerk to The Marches Academy Trust's Boards via The Marches School, Morda Road, Oswestry SY11 2AR.

The panel will be convened by the Clerk, and the membership will be: a) three members of the Board of Trustees (who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint), and b) an individual who is independent of the management and running of the Trust. The panel will elect a chair when they meet. The complainant will be invited to attend the panel meeting, and may be accompanied if they wish. ***The general proceedings of the panel will be as agreed in the Board of Trustees Terms of Reference.***

The Trustees Complaints Appeal Panel hearing is the last Trust-based stage of the complaints process and its decision will be final. If the complainant is not satisfied that their complaint has been handled properly they may contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency via the school's complaints form: <https://www.education.gov.uk/form/school-complaints-form>.

3.4.2. Complaint against the Chief Executive Officer

If the complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer, the Chair of the Board of Trustees will appoint a panel to consider the complaint.

In this instance, complaints must be made in writing, to the Clerk to The Marches Academy Trust's Boards via The Marches School, Morda Road, Oswestry SY11 2AR.

The Clerk to The Marches Academy Trust's Boards will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and send the complainant the complaints form at Appendix B. We appreciate that complainants will have completed a form similar to this previously but in order to gather comments on how the matter has been dealt with to date, and to fully understand how best to resolve the matter. The form must be completed and returned to the Clerk to The Marches Academy Trust's Boards via The Marches School, Morda Road, Oswestry SY11 2AR.

The panel will conduct an investigation and if appropriate, will invite the complainant to a meeting.

During the investigation, the panel will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

The Chair of the panel will formally write to the complainant with an outcome of the investigation. The complaint/outcome will be recorded by the school.

The decision of the Panel is final; it may however be possible to refer the matter to the Education Funding Agency if the complainant is dissatisfied with how the complaint has been handled. Further information can be found below under section 7.

3.4.3. Complaint against a Governor, Local Governing Body, Trustee, or Board of Trustees

If the complaint is about:

- the Chair and/or Vice Chair (Local Governing Body/Board of Trustees);
- the entire Local Governing Body or Board of Trustees;
- the majority of the Local Governing Body or Board of Trustees,

it will be considered at Stage Four by an independent investigator appointed by the Board of Trustees or Lichfield Diocese (in the case of our Church schools).

The complaint must be made in writing, to the Clerk to The Marches Academy Trust's Boards via The Marches School, Morda Road, Oswestry SY11 2AR.

The Clerk to The Marches Academy Trust's Boards will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and send the complainant the complaints form at Appendix B. We appreciate that complainants will have completed a form similar to this previously but in order to gather

comments on how the matter has been dealt with to date, and to fully understand how best to resolve the matter. The form must be completed and returned to the Clerk to The Marches Academy Trust's Boards via The Marches School, Morda Road, Oswestry SY11 2AR.

The Trust will then appoint an independent investigator who if appropriate, will invite the complainant to a meeting.

During the investigation, the independent investigator will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response. The complaint/outcome will be recorded by the school.

4. Timescales

The timescales in school days for the procedure are:

- 10 school days at Stage One (with a further 10 school days for more complex complaints or additional time if an advocate is required).
- 25 school days at Stage Two (with maximum extension to 65 school days).
- 25 school days at Stage Three (with maximum extension of 65 school days).
- 30 school days to convene and hold the Trustees Complaints Panel at Stage Four.
- 10 school days for the Panel to issue its findings.
- 15 school days for the school to respond to the findings.

The timescales place a duty on the school to act expeditiously through the procedure; this is to ensure that the complaint is dealt with as swiftly as possible.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

5. The remit of the Trustees Complaints Appeal Panel

5.1. Outcome of an Appeal

The panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The panel can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the panel will:

- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school/Trust's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

5.2. Conduct of the Panel

There are several points which any Trustee sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember:

- It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial, and that it is seen to be so. In deciding the make-up of the panel, Trustees need to try and ensure that they are sensitive to the issues of: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religious beliefs, gender, and sexual orientation.
- The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint, and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts, and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone, and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal, and not adversarial.
- If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend. However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.
- The school should be mindful of the specific needs of children and young people, either involved in, or affected by, complaints, and ensure that it safeguards and promotes the rights and welfare of the child concerned. The best interests of the child should be paramount at all times.
- The Trustees sitting on the panel need to be familiar with the complaints procedure.

6. Further information regarding the Complaints Appeal Panel

A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under (Human Resources) staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 5 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 5 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1. The role of the Clerk

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the Complaints Panel, and should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure;
- liaise with staff members, head teacher, CEO, Chair of Governors and Chair of Trust to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure;
- be mindful of the timescales to respond to complaints;
- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR);
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example: stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale;
- minute the meeting;
- circulate the minutes of the meeting;
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

7.2. The role of the Chief Executive Officer and/or Chair of Local Governing Body

During Stage Three the Chief Executive Officer's and/or Chair of the Local Governing Body's role will be:

- to ensure that the correct procedure has been followed;
- to ensure that an investigation is carried out, and a report compiled;
- to meet the complainant, if appropriate;
- if the complaint is being referred to Stage Four, notify the clerk to arrange the Panel.

7.3. The role of the Chair of the Trustees Complaints Panel

The Chair of the Panel has a key role, ensuring that:

- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy;
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child;
- the remit of the panel is explained to the complainant;

- written material is seen by everyone in attendance (provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR);
- key findings of fact are made, and that any issues not previously mentioned in writing should not be raised at the meeting and, if they are mentioned at the meeting, these should not be noted or considered by the panel;
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case, and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting, or verbally in the meeting itself;
- the issues are addressed;
- the panel is open-minded and acts independently;
- no member of the panel has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- the meeting is minuted;
- they liaise with the Clerk.

8. Notification of the Panel's Decision

The Chair of the panel needs to ensure that the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, is notified of the panel's findings and recommendations, in writing. The response needs to detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. The letter needs to explain that if the complainant is not satisfied that their complaint has been handled properly they may contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency via the schools complaints form: <https://www.education.gov.uk/form/school-complaints-form>. Further information can be found below under section 9.

9. Record of complaints

The findings and recommendations of the Complaints Panel are available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor (Chair of the Board of Trustees), the CEO and the Headteacher.

A record of all written complaints is kept together with:

- a record of whether they were resolved following Stages One, Two and Three, or whether they proceeded to Stage Four (Complaints Panel);
- a record of actions taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they were upheld).

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, requests access to them.

10. Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage Two.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the Trust. They will consider whether the Trust has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate, Store Street
Manchester, M1 2WD.

11. Appendix A - Complaints dealt with under other statutory procedures

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs School re-organisation proposals 	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Shropshire Council.</p> <p>Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the local authority.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the Behaviour for Learning Policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>

12. Appendix B - Complaint form example

Your name:
Student's name:
Your relationship to the student:
Address (including postcode):
Daytime telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Email address:
Please give details of your complaint:

**What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint?
(Who did you speak 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:

Action taken:

Date:

13. Appendix C Checklist for a Trustees Complaints Appeal Panel

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is kept on an informal basis.
- The meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so.
- No governor / trustee may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- No member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.
- The remit of the committee is explained to the complainant.
- Written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The Chief Executive Officer/Headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Chief Executive Officer/Headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the Chief Executive Officer/Headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The complainant must not make personal or derogatory comments about members of staff.
- The chair of the panel reserves the right to stop any participants if personal or abusive comments are made.
- Questions may be asked of either party; however, this is not the forum for personal comments about individuals.
- The complainant cannot raise any additional issues not previously submitted.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Chief Executive Officer/Headteacher is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.