

Leading Learners Multi Academy Trust



Complaints Policy

Approved by:	Trust Board	Date: 13 th March 2026
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Last reviewed on:

Next review due by:	March 2027
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Introduction

1. This policy statement and procedure sets out the approach of Leading Learners Multi Academy Trust (the Trust), and all of its academies, to dealing with concerns and complaints. The procedure is intended to allow a concern or complaint relating to the Trust or one of its academies to be raised by a parent, carer, or anyone else.
2. We value good relationships with parents and carers and our wider communities, and will do everything we can to establish and maintain these. This includes seeking to resolve any concerns or complaints promptly, and with the aim of reaching resolution wherever possible.
3. Each school's Local Governing Body (LGB) is responsible for promoting positive stakeholder relationships. Local Governors may be involved in resolution of complaints at Stage One, the local level.
4. The policy is available on each academy website and by request to parents. These procedures will be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary.

Scope

1. Some complaints might be dealt with in other policies, for example, complaints involving pupil admissions, child protection or pupil exclusions. Where necessary, an academy will exercise its discretion. If at any stage in the procedure it becomes apparent that the complaint falls outside of this general complaints procedure, parents will be informed.
2. This procedure deals with specified day-to-day complaints against the management and/or operation of the academy which fall outside the scope of the following procedures:
 - Complaints which have an alternative statutory avenue of appeal or complaint, i.e. admissions, exclusions, SEN assessments, Section 409 Curriculum Complaints and those covered by the Education (School Records) Regulations 1989.
 - Serious complaints which must be dealt with by specific employment procedures e.g. allegations of professional abuse, criminal offences or those that are potentially staff disciplinary issues.
 - Complaints about safeguarding referrals which the academy is statutorily required to make

3. The third stage of this policy does not apply to those who are not parents/carers of pupils on roll at an academy within the Trust. Complaints that fall into this category will be handled via a separate procedure outlined in Appendix B, although the general principles of this policy will be applied.
4. Anonymous complaints or complaints sent as part of a complaints campaign will not usually be investigated. However, the Trust will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.
5. Employees of the Trust should raise any concerns relating to their employment through the appropriate staffing procedure, not through this process.
6. Where a complaint is against the Central Trust, a member of the Central team, a trustee, a local governor, or the Trust Board as a whole, please refer to Appendix E.

General Principles

1. We will treat all concerns and complaints seriously and courteously and will advise complainants of the procedures for dealing with their concerns. In return, we expect complainants to behave respectfully towards all members of the Trust's community. In particular, any disagreement with an academy should not be expressed inappropriately or in front of pupils.
2. We aim to ensure that any complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently, at the appropriate level, and is resolved as soon as possible. We will try to resolve every complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong. Where necessary, we will review our systems and procedures in light of the circumstances of the complaint.
3. If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, they will be asked to confirm this in writing, including by email. If they do not respond to this request within 15 school days the matter will be judged to be closed.
4. All references to 'headteacher' in this procedure include 'executive headteacher' depending on the leadership arrangements in place in the academy at the time of the complaint.
5. We do not normally accept electronic audio or video recordings as evidence when we are asked to consider a complaint. If we do accept a recording, we may also ask for the written consent of all recorded parties before it is viewed. We may accept independently notarised transcriptions of recordings. We do not accept, as evidence,

recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

4. Timescales

1. Complaints must be raised within three months of the incident complained about occurring or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. Complaints made outside of this time frame will only be considered if, having taken advice, the Headteacher or the CEO is of the view that exceptional circumstances apply.
2. Unless otherwise stated, time-scales in this procedure refer to school working days for the relevant academy, excluding school holidays, In Service Training (Inset) days and bank holidays. Any complaints made outside of term time will be considered to have been received on the first school working day after the holiday period.
3. There may be times when the investigation takes longer than the timescales outlined in this policy. Where this is the case we will keep the complainant informed of the revised timescales and the reasons for this.

The Complaints Procedure

Stage One - Resolution at a Local Level

1. This stage of the policy will apply to all concerns and complaints raised directly with the School. Concerns must be raised initially with the relevant School, before they are escalated to formal stages, other than in exceptional circumstances. This might be where the substance of the complaint directly concerns the conduct or actions of the Headteacher; in such a case the Chair of the LGB will take overall responsibility for Stage One of the process, involving a member of the Trust's central team as appropriate.
2. The Headteacher is responsible for overseeing Stage One of the process, but this may be initially or fully delegated to an appropriate member of school staff. The member of staff dealing with the concern should ensure they have a clear understanding of the issue(s), what it is that the complainant considers should have been done, or where they feel the school has not met reasonable expectations, as well as the resolution being sought.
3. Stage One gives all parties the opportunity to explore the issues causing concern and to seek to resolve them without recourse to formal stages. The Headteacher, or relevant member of academy staff, may attempt resolution directly through meetings

or other conversations with the complainant, or in other ways which may include involving other members of staff, the Chair of the LGB or CEO in discussions.

4. The Headteacher or relevant staff member should make a judgement on whether a written outcome is required at Stage One, in conjunction with the complainant. This is unlikely to be required if the complainant is satisfied with the response and outcome, and the situation has been resolved verbally.
5. In normal circumstances this stage will last no longer than twenty school working days from the date the concern was first raised, either verbally or in writing, with the Academy. During this period every effort should be made to resolve the situation on an informal basis and all parties will be expected to fully engage with efforts to achieve this resolution.
6. Despite the best efforts of all parties there may be occasions where informal resolution is not possible, in which case the complainant may elevate the issue to Stage Two, as set out below.

Stage Two- Investigation by a Nominated Individual

1. If the complainant wishes to elevate their complaint to Stage Two, they should notify the Governance Manager (see Appendix A) in a timely way following their engagement with the school at Stage One, and in any case no more than 3 months after the relevant incident(s) took place. This request must be set out in writing, stating where the complainant remains dissatisfied and what remedies are being sought. A complaint form is attached to this policy to assist you. (Appendix G) It is important that you include a clear statement of the actions you would like the academy to take to resolve your concern. Without this it is much more difficult to proceed. This form should be sent to the relevant person within ten working days of our stage one decision. The Governance Manager will also ask the Academy to provide a summary of the response arising from Stage One.
2. An investigation will then be carried out by a nominated individual identified by the Governance Manager in consultation with a member of the Central Senior Leadership Team as appropriate. This may be a Trust employee either from a different academy or from the Trust's central team. In exceptional circumstances a trustee may investigate or an external investigation may be commissioned. The investigator may seek to meet with the complainant and will speak to others involved as they deem necessary.

3. Once all the relevant facts have been established, the investigator will put their findings in writing. This will give an explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. If follow-up action is needed, they will indicate what they are proposing to do. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 10 school working days of any meeting with the complainant. If no meeting is arranged, it should be within 20 school working days of the written complaint being received. If a meeting is arranged at Stage Two, the complainant may ask someone to accompany them to help them explain the reasons for their complaint and to support them. The investigating officer may also be accompanied by a suitable person if they wish.
4. The investigating officer will keep records of all meetings and telephone conversations, and other related documentation. They may be supported in note-taking by a member of the Trust's Governance Team or Central Team.
5. Where the matter is not resolved at this stage, the complainant may elevate it to Stage Three, as set out below.

Stage Three - Resolution via Complaints Panel Meeting

1. If the complainant wishes to elevate their complaint to Stage Three, they should notify the Governance Manager within 10 school working days of receiving the Stage Two findings. Any such request must be set out in writing, stating where the complainant remains dissatisfied and what remedies are being sought. This request will generate a meeting in front of a complaints panel.
2. On receipt of the request to have a complaint heard by a panel, we will confirm that we have received the correspondence and will make arrangements for a panel to be convened.
3. As soon as possible following this we will inform the complainant of a date for the panel meeting. This date will take into account their availability to attend. The meeting will be held as quickly as practicable given the need to find a date that is reasonably convenient for the complainant, the academy and panel members. The aim will be for the panel to be convened within 20 school working days of receiving the request for a hearing. The complainant will be notified by letter and this letter will inform them of the date, time and location of the meeting, and provide an explanation of what will happen at the hearing. This meeting may take place via an electronic meeting platform such as Microsoft Teams.
4. The panel will comprise three members who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint so will be able to consider it without prejudice. These members may be governors, trustees or members of the Trust's central team.

At least one of the members of the panel will be a person who is independent of the management and running of the Academy. In line with the DfE's guidance, a local governor serving on the LGB of a different academy within the trust may occupy this role, as they will be sufficiently separate from the academy being complained about.

5. The meeting is not a court case; it will be held in private, and will be as informal as circumstances allow. The Chair of the panel will bear in mind that the formal nature of the meeting can be intimidating, and will do their best to put all parties at ease.
6. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not permitted unless a complainant's own disability or medical needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before the recording of the meeting takes place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.
7. The complainant will have the opportunity to put their reasons for dissatisfaction and to expand upon them but may not introduce reasons that were not previously put in writing. The Academy will have the opportunity to put its side of things and each side, as well as the panel members, will be able to ask questions.
8. The panel can request additional information from other sources if necessary. All parties will receive copies of these papers at least five school working days before the meeting.
9. The complainant will be entitled to bring a companion along to provide support. They are there to provide support, rather than to speak on the complainant's behalf, and will not usually be permitted to speak during the meeting except with the permission of the Chair. Legal representation representing the complainant will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and with prior agreement from the Trust. It may sometimes be appropriate for the panel to take advice from a legal adviser, but this adviser will not attend the panel meeting.
10. If the complainant fails to attend on the day without compelling reasons, their complaint will be judged to be withdrawn (and the matter closed), from the Trust's perspective.
11. Should the person representing the Academy and/or the complainant wish to invite relevant witnesses to present their evidence directly to the panel and to be questioned, they should inform the clerk to the panel of this at least 5 days before the hearing. Whether the panel allows such witnesses to be invited to the hearing will be decided by the Chair. Witnesses should attend the meeting only while they give their statement and take questions.
12. As a general rule, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants. If either party wishes to do so

the hearing will be adjourned so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence.

13. Other than in exceptional circumstances pupils or other children/young people will not be permitted to attend panel meetings.
14. The person who investigated the matter at Stage Two may be accompanied by someone from the Trust central team.
15. The meeting will be minuted, usually by a member of the Trust's Governance Team. The panel may make findings and recommendations and a copy of those findings and recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about.
16. The following people will be entitled to attend the panel meeting:
 - panel members
 - an adviser to the panel who may also take notes of the meeting, or may be accompanied by a minute taker
 - the complainant(s) and their companion if they choose to bring one
 - the investigator and their companion if they choose to bring one
 - any witnesses (for the duration of their evidence)
19. In addition, if the investigator is external to the Academy, they may be accompanied by a senior member of academy staff or a member of the Trust's central team.\
20. All parties will withdraw, other than the panel members, the advisor to the panel and the note-taker (if this is a different person), while the panel reaches a conclusion, which may be that the complaint is upheld or rejected in full, or upheld in part. If time constraints, or other factors, mean that a decision cannot be reached immediately then the panel will reconvene as soon as possible. This subsequent meeting will include panel members, the advisor to the panel and note-taker only and may take place via an on-line meeting platform. The outcome and the reasons for the panel's decision will be communicated in writing to all relevant parties within five working days of the hearing other than in exceptional circumstances. A copy of the written outcome, inclusive of findings and recommendations, will be kept in Academy and central Trust records, and will be available on the Academy's premises for inspection by both the Trust and the Headteacher.

Data Protection Complaints

1. In accordance with the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 and UK data protection legislation, individuals have the right to make a complaint to the Trust if they believe their personal data has been handled incorrectly or unlawfully. Complaints may be made in writing, by email, through existing complaints procedures, or verbally (including in person or by telephone). Individuals are not required to use a specific form in order to make a complaint.

2. Where a data protection complaint is received, the Trust will:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 30 calendar days of receiving it;
- make appropriate enquiries into the issues raised;
- take reasonable steps to investigate and address the complaint without undue delay;
- keep the complainant informed of progress where appropriate; and
- inform the complainant of the outcome of the investigation.

3. Where a complaint is received electronically, an automated acknowledgement may be used to confirm receipt. Where complaints are made verbally, acknowledgement may be given verbally.

4. If a complaint relates to the handling of personal data by a third party acting on behalf of the Trust (for example, a data processor), the Trust will liaise with the relevant organisation in order to investigate the issue and provide a response.

5. Individuals who remain dissatisfied after the Trust has responded to their complaint have the right to raise their concerns with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the UK's independent authority for data protection.

Contact details for the ICO can be found at: <https://ico.org.uk>.

Record Keeping

A digital record will be kept of all complaints that were resolved at Stages Two or Three of the complaints procedure for a period of 12 months. Records will contain details of the stage at which the complaint was resolved, closed, or withdrawn. The action taken by the academy or the Trust as a result of a complaint (regardless of whether it is upheld) will also be recorded.

Confidentiality

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 Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

Further Avenues for Complaining

1. Department for Education (DfE): Once the complaints process is concluded (or a complaint has been terminated due to undue delay or failure to lodge a request for a Stage 3 Panel Meeting within the time stated in the policy) the matter is closed. If the complainant is still not satisfied then they may contact the DfE. There is an online procedure for doing so at: [Contact the Department for Education - GOV.UK](#) or the complainant may write to the DfE at: The School Complaints Unit (SCU), Department for Education, 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Manchester M1 2WD.
2. Ofsted: Ofsted advises that “you should complete all steps in the school's complaints procedure before you contact Ofsted”. Their advice can be accessed directly here: [Ofsted - Complain About a School](#). Ofsted cannot resolve disagreements between a complainant and a school, or affect the results of a school's complaints process.

Serial or persistent complainants

If at any level a complainant attempts to reopen an issue or a closely related issue that has already been dealt with under this complaints procedure, the Trust may write to the complainant to inform them that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter closed. Continued correspondence on the same matter would be judged as unreasonable and the Trust would not respond to communication(s) on that issue, or a closely related issue.

Complaints Relating to Fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Requirements

1. In order to comply with the statutory framework, written concerns or complaints relating to the fulfilment of the EYFS Requirements will be dealt with in accordance with the following process:
 - The written concern/complaint will be acknowledged within 5 school working days;
 - The Headteacher will investigate the concern or complaint which may include meeting with the complainant and the Head of Early Years. A written response notifying the complainant of the outcome of the investigation will be sent within 28 school working days of the complaint being received.
 - Where the complainant remains dissatisfied, the governance team will ensure that a formal Complaints Meeting will be convened in accordance with Stage 3 of this policy.

- A record of the written complaints and their outcome will be maintained and made available to Ofsted on request.
2. The EYFS statutory framework can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>
 3. Parents are further advised that where they have concerns regarding the Academy meeting EYFS requirements they may contact Ofsted on 0300 123 4666.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Staff and Trustees, on an annual basis, will review this policy unless circumstances demand an earlier review.

Appendix A - Contact Details

Please address all correspondence relating to Stage One complaints directly to the academy in question. For the escalation of complaints to Stage Two and/or Three please notify us via enquiries@leadinglearnersmat.co.uk and address your complaint to the Governance Manager.

Appendix B - Complaints from those who are not parents/carers of a pupil on roll at an academy within the Trust

Only stages One and Two of this policy will apply.

Trust staff may seek to meet with the complainant in order to resolve the concerns, but are not obliged to do so.

- Stage One:

Complainants should first address their complaint to the relevant academy or Trust (as appropriate) informally. If this fails to resolve the situation, the complaint may be submitted in writing to the regional office.

- Stage Two:

The escalation request should be submitted in writing to the Governance Manager. It will be acknowledged in writing within 3 school working days, with a final written response issued within 20 school working days.

Contact details for the Governance Manager are in Appendix A.

There may be occasions where an individual raises a complaint while they have a child or children on roll at an academy and, during the course of the complaint process, their child is removed from roll. If this occurs prior to the Stage 3 hearing taking place the complainant will not be eligible to have their complaint heard by a panel.

Appendix C - Policy for Unreasonable complainants

We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Our trust defines unreasonable complainants as

‘those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people’s complaints or are having an unreasonably high detrimental impact on key staff being able to fulfil their duties to students’.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
- refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- refuses to engage with an investigator via telephone, email or in writing;
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;

- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education;
- continues to raise the same issues without engaging in all stages of the Complaints policy;
- seeks an unrealistic outcome;
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the number of communications with a school while a 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.

Whenever possible, the Trust will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Trust will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact an academy or the Trust causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

If a complainant's behaviour is deemed to be vexatious and/or unreasonable under the terms of this policy, we may write to them to inform him/her that their complaint is closed and that the Trust will not respond to any further correspondence on the issue, or a closely

related issue. In these circumstances records of the unreasonable or vexatious communications would be made available to the DfE on request.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include barring an individual from the Trust's premises.

Appendix D- Barring from the School Premises

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Schools will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.

If an individual's behaviour is a cause for concern, a school can ask them to leave school premises. In serious cases, the Headteacher or the Trust can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the individual may wish to make.

This is a Headteacher decision but subject to review by the CEO. We will always give parent/s the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing.

The decision to bar should then be reviewed within 5 school days, taking into account any representations made by the parent. The decision will then either be confirmed or overturned. If the decision is confirmed the parent should be notified in writing without delay, explaining how long the bar will be in place.

Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by email, to the Headteacher or CEO via the contact details contained in Appendix A.

Appendix E - Raising a Complaint Against a local governor, a trustee or a Member of Central Team

Where a complaint is about a matter relating specifically to the persons/groups below, whilst the general principles of this policy will be applied, the complaint will be considered immediately at Stage Two of the policy.

- a central Trust employee (including the CEO)
- a local governor
- a trustee
- the Local Governing Board (as a whole)
- the Trust Board or Multi Academy Trust (as a whole)

The investigating officer/body may differ depending on the subject of the complaint. In exceptional circumstances an independent investigator may be commissioned, who will submit a report on completion of their investigation.

Where such a complaint is not made by a parent / carer of a pupil on roll at one of the Trust's academies Appendix B will apply.

Appendix F - Timescales

NB There may be times when the investigation takes longer than the timescales outlined. In this scenario, the academy should keep the complainant informed of the revised timescales and the reasons for this

Raising a complaint:

Complaints must be raised within three months of the incident complained about occurring or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents.

Stage One

Academy to respond within 20 school days of the complaint being raised, in usual circumstances.

Stage Two

The complainant may escalate their complaint to Stage Two within 3 calendar months of the incident complained about occurring, if their concerns have not been satisfactorily addressed at Stage One.

The investigating officer should respond either within 10 school days of any meeting they hold with the complainant, or within 20 school days if they do not hold a meeting.

Stage Three

The complainant may escalate their complaint to Stage Three within 10 school days of receiving the outcome of Stage Two if they remain dissatisfied.

A panel should be convened within 20 school days of the Stage Three request being raised.
An outcome letter should be provided within 5 school days of the panel taking place.

Complaining beyond the school

At the conclusion of the process, if the complainant remains dissatisfied they have the option of raising concerns with the Department for Education and/or with Ofsted (see Section 10).

Appendix G - Complaints Recording Form

COMPLAINTS RECORDING FORM

Name of School/Academy whom complaint is in regards to:
Details of person making complaint
Name:
Address:
Postcode:
Daytime Telephone Number:
Name of child(ren) and year group(s) at school (if applicable):
Your relationship to school e.g. parent/carers/member of the public:

Details of complaint (please continue on a separate sheet if required):
What action have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? Have you spoken to anyone? If so, what was the response? (please continue on a separate sheet if required):
What actions do you feel will resolve the issue at this stage? (please continue on a separate sheet if required):
Name (please print):
Signature:
Date: