

All Saints' Academies Trust



Complaints Policy

Policy Reviewed and Adopted by Local Academy Council: Summer 2016
Approved: Summer 2017, Summer 2018,
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Introduction

All Saints' Academies Trust (ASAT) is committed to ensuring that all children and young people are provided with a first class educational experience and that each Academy works in a productive and positive partnership with all parents / carers and members of the public.

However, if a parent/carer or member of the public feels that a situation has arisen that they are unhappy about then they have a right to make a complaint. Any and every complaint made will be taken seriously and dealt with swiftly and professionally. All parents / carers and members of the public will be made aware of this policy and the procedures to follow if they wish to make a complaint.

This policy applies to all employees of the Trust. The relevant academy will try to resolve problems informally wherever possible. An effective response and appropriate redress will be provided to all complaints as quickly as possible dependent upon the complexity of the issues raised.

This policy relates to complaints about the Academy and typically applies to complaints made by parents and carers of children and young people. However, it also applies to other members of the public. It does not relate to matters which are governed by employment legislation or those where the principles of civil contract law would normally apply e.g. service/supply contracts entered into with an academy; or where separate statutory procedures apply, e.g. admissions. (see Appendix 1)

Statutory Obligations

The complaints procedure must consist of at least three stages, informal (usually a meeting with the complainant); formal (the complaint is put in writing) and a panel hearing. Complainants must be aware that there is a complaints procedure. Copies of this policy are on the academy website and will also be available on request. If the complaint progresses to a hearing with the Academy Council, the complainant must be allowed to attend and be accompanied if they wish. In addition, at least one member of the panel must be independent of the management and running of the academy.

Roles and Responsibilities

The officer with responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented in ASAT academies is the Executive Principal. Complainants should be aware that Principals may refer complaints received to the Executive Principal at ASAT because they consider the matter is one of such a nature that it should be investigated independently of the academy. Likewise, complaints may be retrieved and dealt with by ASAT for the same reason. Where a complaint is made direct to ASAT it will be logged by the Executive Principal and forwarded to the academy unless it is retrieved as stated above.

The person in charge of coordinating the complaints procedure at the Academy is the Principal. Overall responsibility is retained by ASAT through the Executive Principal. The role of Local Academy Council arises only in respect of appeals where the complainant remains dissatisfied with attempts to resolve the issue of complaint and as set out above.

See Appendix 5 for all Roles and Responsibilities

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 generally defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*'.
- A concern becomes a complaint only when the complainant asserts the school has acted wrongly in some significant decision, action or failure to take action.
- There are occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. In those cases, the school's formal procedure will be invoked through the stages outlined within our procedure.
- When a complaint has been made it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

Who can make a complaint?

- Any person, including members of the general public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply (such as exclusions or admissions). The school does not limit complaints to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school.

Aims

In line with the Education Act 2002, All Saints' Academies Trust will ensure the complaints procedure;

- Is easily accessible and publicised.
- Is simple to understand and use.
- Is impartial.
- Is non-adversarial.
- Encourages the resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible.
- Allows swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of any progress.
- Ensures a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary.
- Respects people's desire for confidentiality.
- Addresses all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary.
- Provides information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

Making Complaints

- A complaint can be made in person, by telephone, or in writing; (in compliance with the obligations of the Equality Act 2010)
- There is also a Complaints Form which is readily available. (See appendix 2)

Monitoring and recording complaints

- In order to prevent any later challenge, or disagreement, over what was said, brief notes of meetings and telephone calls will be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record.
- Where there are communication difficulties, school may use recording devices to ensure the complainant is able to access and review the discussions at a later point.

- School will keep records of the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. The Principal will be responsible for these records and hold them centrally.
- Complainants have a right to copies of these records under the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts.

At all stages of the complaints procedure the following information will be recorded:

- Name of the complainant.
- Date and time at which complaint was made.
- Details of the nature of the complaint.
- Desired outcome of the complainant.
- How the complaint is being investigated (including written records of any interviews held).
- Results and conclusions of investigations.
- Any action taken.
- The complainant's response.
- Record of any subsequent action if required.

Special Circumstances

- If the complaint suggests that a child has been at risk of significant harm through violence, emotional abuse, sexual interference or neglect, it may be referred without further notice to Children's Social Care and/or to the social services authority for the area in which the child lives.
- If a social services authority decides to investigate a situation, this may postpone or supersede investigation by the Principal or Local Academy Council.
- Arrangements for handling complaints from parents of children with SEN about the school's support are within the scope of the school's complaints procedure. Where parents have specific complaints about the Education Health and Care (EHC) plan procedures, or about the content of their child's EHC plan, they should be referred to the LA. This is in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice. (see also Appendix 1)

Complaints Procedure

- Informal stage - complaint heard by member of staff
- Stage one - formal complaint heard by Principal (or Chair of Local Academy Council/ Chair of the Trust where the complaint is about the Principal/ Executive Principal).
- Stage two - formal complaint to the Chair of Local Academy Council
- Stage three –formal complaint heard by the Local Academy Council's Complaints Appeal Panel (CAP).
- At all stages, complaints will be monitored according to the guidance outlined above.

Informal Stage: Complaint Heard by Staff Member

- It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to invoke formal procedures.
- School will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.
- Once a concern has been raised you will be invited to attend an informal meeting with a member of staff to discuss your concerns.
- You are welcome to bring a friend, partner or, in the case of a pupil who has raised a concern, a parent to this meeting. It may be appropriate for a pupil to attend the meeting if their parent has raised a concern, depending on the nature of the issue.
- Staff have a responsibility to ensure that you understand any future points of action that have been agreed upon in this meeting and should make a record of what has been discussed, as well as any outcomes and a plan of action, if one has been agreed.
- All staff will do their best to ensure that your concerns are dealt with appropriately and efficiently but if you cannot come to an agreement, or are dissatisfied with the outcome of your meeting, you can make a formal complaint in writing to the head-teacher

Please note

- *If the first approach is made to a Local Academy Councillor, the next step will be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure.*
- *Local Academy Councillors will 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 panel at a later stage of the procedure.*

Formal Complaint Stage 1– Complaint Heard by Principal

- The parent/carer will request an appointment to see the Principal. This will be as soon as reasonably practical to avoid any possible worsening of the issue.
- The Principal may delegate the task of collating the information to a member of the SMT (Senior Management Team) but not the decision on the action to be taken.
- If the complaint is against a member of staff, the Principal will talk to the staff member against whom the complaint has been made.
- If necessary, the Principal will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved.
- The Principal will keep reasonable written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.
- The Principal will investigate fully and communicate findings and/or resolutions to the complainant(s) verbally or in writing depending on the nature of the issue.
- This stage will be completed in 15 school days. However, it is recognised that where the case is complex, it may prove difficult to meet this timetable. In such cases, the Principal will write to the complainant giving a revised target date.
- If the parent/carer is not satisfied with the outcome at this stage, then the complaint can be moved to the next level.

Formal Complaint Stage 2 – Complaint Heard by Chair of Local Academy Council

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the Principal or the complaint is about the Principal, the complainant will write to the Chair of Local Academy Council to request that their complaint is considered further.
- If the complaint is against a member of staff, that employee will be given the opportunity to write a response, which will be sent to the Chair of Local Academy Council within 7 days of the complaint being lodged with them.
- The Chair of Local Academy Council will respond to you in writing within 14 days outlining their response to your concern, and any action that has or will be taken. If they have decided not to take any further action on the issue, they will explain what they have decided, how they have reached this decision, and will outline your right of appeal and how you can start your appeal.
- *Please note: A complaint can be made in person, by telephone, or in writing; (in compliance with the obligations of the Equality Act 2010)*

Formal Complaint Stage 3 - Complaint Heard by Local Academy Council's Complaints Appeal Panel (CAP)

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the Chair of Local Academy Council, the complaint will be heard by the Local Academy Council's Complaints Appeal Panel (CAP).
- Once the formal complaints form has been submitted, the Chair of Local Academy Council will acknowledge the complaint within ten school days and convene a CAP panel hearing within 28 days.
- Members of the Local Academy Council's CAP and the complainant will be given 5 days' notice regarding the arrangements for the CAP. The Clerk/Chair of the CAP will write to the complainant to explain how the review will be conducted. The letter will be copied to the Principal.
- The CAP will invite a parent to attend and be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish.
- The CAP will ensure at least one member of the panel is independent of the management and running of the academy. (EFSA Guidance Creating an Academy Complaints Procedure January 2015)
- Complaints will not be shared with the whole Local Academy Council, except in very general terms, in case an appeal panel needs to be organised.
- If the whole Local Academy Council is aware of the substance of a complaint before the final stage has been completed, the school will arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint. They may approach a different school to ask for help or the local Governor Services team at the LA, or the Diocese.
- At the meeting everyone's case will be put across and discussed. The CAP will reconsider the issues raised in the original complaint and not confine themselves to consideration of procedural issues.
- The meeting will allow for:
 - The complainant to explain his or her complaint and the Principal to explain the reasons for her decision.
 - The Principal to question the complainant about the complaint and the complainant to question the Principal.
 - The CAP to have an opportunity to question both the complainant and the Principal.

- Any party to have the right to bring witnesses (subject to the approval of the Chair of CAP) and all parties having the right to question all the witnesses; and a final statement by the Principal and complainant.

The appeals panel may:

- dismiss all or part of the complaint
- uphold all or part of the complaint
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- evaluate all the evidence available and recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures as a preventative step against similar problems arising in the future.
- A written response to the complainant will be made within 15 school days. The letter will explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed.

Please see:

- *Appendix 4 Checklist for a Panel Meeting,*
- *Appendix 5 Roles and Responsibilities*
- *Appendix 6 Interviewing Best Practice Tips.*

The panel's decision is final. If the complainant remains unsatisfied, they may then take their complaint to the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) by using the on-line complaints form at https://form.education.gov.uk/en/AchieveForms/?form_uri=sandbox-publish://AF-Process-f1453496-7d8a-463f-9f33-1da2ac47ed76/AF-Stage-1e64d4cc-25fb-499a-a8d7-74e98203ac00/definition.json&redirectlink=%2Fen&cancelRedirectLink=%2Fen or by writing to them directly at Ministerial and Public Communications Division, Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD.

Role of the EFSA

- Complainants who are not satisfied with the handling of their complaint will be signposted to the EFSA complaints form.
- The EFSA can support academies to achieve a compliant procedure but it is the responsibility of academy trusts to make sure that their complaints procedure is fully compliant. The responsibility of the EFSA is to ensure academies comply with their funding agreements.
- If a complaint goes to the EFSA they will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the academy. They will consider complaints about academies that fall into any of the following three areas:
 - Where there is undue delay or the academy did not comply with its own complaints procedure when considering a complaint.
 - Where the academy is in breach of its funding agreement with the Secretary of State
 - Where an academy has failed to comply with any other legal obligation
- The EFSA will not overturn an academy's decision about a complaint. However, if they find an academy did not deal with a complaint properly they will request the

complaint is looked at again and procedures meet the requirements set out in the Regulations.

Serial and unreasonable complaints

- Whilst it is hoped that this policy will reduce any dissatisfaction with the school, it is acknowledged that there may be rare occasions where a complainant continues to be dissatisfied with the school and the outcomes achieved under the complaints policy.
- Where a complainant attempts to re-open an issue which has already been dealt with under the complaints policy, the Chair of Local Academy Council will contact them to inform them that the matter has already been dealt with and that either that stage of the policy has been exhausted or that the complaints policy has been exhausted and the matter is considered closed. Where further correspondence is received on the same matter, this may be considered unreasonable and the school will be under no obligation to respond to that correspondence.

(Please see Appendix 7 for the school policy on Serial and Unreasonable Complainants)

Staff complaints

- Staff who have a concern about a colleague or a volunteer member of staff should refer to our whistleblowing policy.
- The procedure for dealing with any other staff complaints or employment grievances is set out in the school's staff discipline, conduct and grievance policy.

Monitoring and Review of Complaints

- The process of listening to and resolving complaints can contribute to school improvement. When individual complaints are heard, the Academy may also identify underlying issues that need to be addressed.
- The monitoring and review of complaints can be a useful tool in evaluating the Academy's performance.
- The handling of complaints will be regularly reviewed, by the Local Academy Council, to inform further improvements in the complaints procedure.
- The Complaints Policy and Procedures will be formally reviewed at least every 2 years, this will enable the Academy to take into account any new guidance issued by the DFE or legislative changes.
- All complaints will be reported to and logged by the Executive Principle of the Trust.

Appendix 1

Complaints not in scope of the procedure

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) • School re-organisation proposals • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>For academy admissions, the admission authority is the Local Academy Council. Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools and academies are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman.</p> <p>Contact the Local Authority's SEND Services sen@southtyneside.gov.uk, 0191 424 7410</p> <p>The Chair of the Trust</p> <p>The local authority's contact/LADO (Hilary Bagley - currently)</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>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	<p>Academies have an internal whistleblowing procedure for their employees and voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to: WBHL, Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD. The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures 	<p>These matters will invoke the school's internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities. 	<p>Providers have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. They will be contacted direct.</p>

Appendix 2 (Complaint Form for Stage 1 of Process)

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

Your name:

Pupil's name:

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.
(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:

Date:

Appendix 3

An example of a letter that the Chair of the Local Academy Council may wish to send to the complainant upon receipt of a complaint at Stage 2 for consideration by the Local Academy Council.

Dear

Thank you for your letter dated..... setting out the reasons why you are not satisfied with the Principal's response to your complaint about

I write to let you know that I will be arranging for a Complaints Appeal Panel (CAP) to consider your complaint in accordance with our school's complaints procedure.

As explained in the procedure, the Clerk/Chair of the CAP will let you know in writing how the CAP intends to consider your complaint.

(or in the case of complaints against the Principal)

I have received your complaint against the Principal ofSchool.

I write to let you know that I have forwarded a copy of your complaint to the Principal with a request that s/he respond within ten school days to the issues raised in the complaint.

A copy of the Principal's response will be sent to you as soon as possible.

If you are not satisfied with the Principal's response, I will arrange for a Complaints Appeal Panel to consider your complaint in accordance with the attached complaints procedure.

As explained in the procedure, the Clerk/Chair of the Complaints Appeal Panel will let you know in writing how the complaint will proceed.

Yours sincerely,

Chair of the Local Academy Council

Appendix 4

Checklist for a Panel Hearing

- The panel hearing is as informal as possible.
- 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 Principal may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The Principal is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the Principal and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Principal is then invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.

Appendix 5

Roles & Responsibilities

The Complainant

- Co-operates with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint.
- Expresses the complaint in full as early as possible
- Responds promptly to requests for information or meetings
- Asks for assistance as needed
- Treats all those involved in the complaint with respect.

The Complaints Co-ordinator/ Principal

- Ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure.
- Ensure that all people involved in the complaints procedure are aware of the legislation around complaints (including Equality Act 2010, Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Act 2000)
- Liaise with all parties to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure.
- Keep records.
- Be aware of issues regarding sharing third party information
- Be able to access additional support, as needed (for example an interpreter)

The Investigator

- Providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved.
- Interviewing people relevant to the complaint
- Analysing information
- Effectively liaising with the complainant and complaints co-ordinator to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- Identifying solutions and recommending courses of actions
- Being mindful to timescales to respond
- Responding to the complainant in plain and clear language
- Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in questioning
- Keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of meetings

The Remit of the CAP

The panel can:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.
- Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

There are several points which any Local Academy Councillor 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. No Local Academy Councillor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make-up of the panel, Local Academy Councillors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of Local Academy Councillor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.
- The CAP will ensure at least one member of the panel is independent of the management and running of the academy. (EFSA Guidance Creating an Academy Complaints Procedure January 2015)
- If the whole Local Academy Council is aware of the substance of a complaint before the final stage has been completed, the school will arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint. They may approach a different school to ask for help or the local Governor Services team at the LA, or the Diocese.
- 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 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 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.
- Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child's parent is the complainant, it would be helpful to give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child needs to attend.
- The Local Academy Councillors sitting on the panel need to be aware of the complaints procedure.

The Role of the Clerk

Schools are strongly advised that any panel or group of Local Academy Councillors considering complaints be clerked. The clerk would be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:

- Set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- Collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing.
- Meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing.
- Record the proceedings.
- Notify all parties of the panel's decision.

The Role of the Chair of the Local Academy Council or the Nominated Local Academy Councillor

The nominated Local Academy Councillor role:

- Check that the correct procedure has been followed.
- If a hearing is appropriate, notify the clerk to arrange the panel.

The Role of the Chair of the Panel

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

- The remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption.
- The issues are addressed.
- Key findings of fact are made.
- Parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease.
- The hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy.
- The panel is open minded and acting independently.
- No member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure; each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions.
- Written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give all parties, the opportunity to consider and comment on it.

Appendix 6

Interviewing Best Practice Tips Children/young people

- Children/young people should be interviewed in the presence of another member of staff, or in the case of serious complaints (e.g. where the possibility of criminal investigation exists) in the presence of their parents/carers. However, it might not always be possible to conduct an interview in case it prejudices a LADO or police investigation.
- Care should be taken in these circumstances not to create an intimidating atmosphere.
- Children/young people should be told what the interview is about and that they can have someone with them.

Staff/Witnesses

- Explain the complaint and your role clearly to the interviewee and confirm that they understand the complaints procedure and their role in it.
- Staff are allowed a colleague to support them at their interview. The colleague must not be anyone likely to be interviewed themselves, including their line manager.
- Use open, not leading questions.
- Do not express opinions in words or attitude.
- Ask single not multiple questions, i.e. one question at a time.
- Try to separate 'hearsay' evidence from fact by asking interviewees how they know a particular fact.
- Persist with questions if necessary. Do not be afraid to ask the same question twice. Make notes of each answer given.
- Deal with conflicting evidence by seeking corroborative evidence. If this is not available, discuss with the complaints co-ordinator/ Principal/ Chair of Local Academy Council the option of a meeting between the conflicting witnesses.
- Make a formal record of the interview from the written notes as soon as possible while the memory is fresh. Show the interviewee the formal record, ask if s/he has anything to add, and to sign the record as accurate.

Appendix 7

Cleaddon Church of England Academy

Policy for Serial and Unreasonable Complainants

Cleaddon Church of England Academy is 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.

Cleaddon Church of England Academy 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'.

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 co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- 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;
- 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 numbers 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 principal or Chair of Local Academy Council will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues the principal will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Cleadon Church of England Academy 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.

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 banning an individual from Cleadon Church of England Academy.

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 a parent's behaviour is a cause for concern, a school can ask him/her to leave school premises. In serious cases, the principal can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the parent may wish to make. Schools should always give the parent the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing.

The decision to bar should then be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the parent, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the parent should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place.

Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the principal or Chair of Local Academy Council. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department for Education. Once the school's own complaints procedure has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

Role of the EFSA

- Complainants who are not satisfied with the handling of their complaint will be signposted to the EFSA complaints form.
- The EFSA can support academies to achieve a compliant procedure but it is the responsibility of academy trusts to make sure that their complaints procedure is fully compliant. The responsibility of the EFSA is to ensure academies comply with their funding agreements.
- If a complaint goes to the EFSA they will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the academy. They will consider complaints about academies that fall into any of the following three areas:
- Where there is undue delay or the academy did not comply with its own complaints procedure when considering a complaint.
- Where the academy is in breach of its funding agreement with the Secretary of State
- Where an academy has failed to comply with any other legal obligation
- The EFSA will not overturn an academy's decision about a complaint. However, if they find an academy did not deal with a complaint properly they will request the complaint is looked at again and procedures meet the requirements set out in the Regulations.