



**Diocese of Worcester Multi Academy Trust  
(DoWMAT)**

**Complaints Policy**

MAT Board Approval:	July 2017
Review Date:	Summer 2019
Member of staff responsible:	Mrs Karen Surrall

## **DoWMAT Vision**

The Diocese of Worcester Multi Academy Trust (DoWMAT) will, through its mission statement 'to love, to learn, to serve', enable all its academies to flourish so that all stakeholders can 'live life in all its fullness'. (John 10:10)

## **DoWMAT Aims**

### To Love:

- For pupils to grow and learn in schools where, as children of God, their individual qualities are nurtured, to give them fulfilment, self-worth, the skills to contribute to society and confidence in the future
- For staff, accorded dignity and respect, to be enabled to become the very best practitioners that they can be, inspiring, sharing a joy for learning and aspiration
- For academies to be hospitable to diversity, to become the centre of their communities as places of nurture and beacons of educational excellence
- For all learning to be centred in relationships based upon compassion, generosity, truth-telling, forgiveness and reconciliation

### To Learn:

- For academies to be resourced and supported so that all pupils within the DoWMAT are enabled to flourish, reaching their potential whatever their starting points
- To ensure staff and governors access high quality professional development so that standards of teaching and learning are excellent
- For academic rigour to be set in the context of rich curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for learning
- For academies to be places where explicit Christian values, collective worship, religious education and opportunities for reflection nurture the spiritual and moral growth of pupils and staff

### To Serve:

- To fulfil the wider vision of the Church of England, serving our communities through the work of local academies
- To ensure academies are places of safety for pupils and staff where needs are met with dignity and respect
- To offer help and advice to those who lead our academies at all levels so that they are well equipped to face the challenges ahead
- To ensure that members, directors and trust staff understand the pressures and challenges of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century ensuring that those leading and teaching in our academies are resourced and supported

### **Who should use this policy?**

This policy should be used by parents, carers, pupils and members of the wider public to raise a concern or complaint with the academy. This policy should be used for non-curricular complaints. Staff wishing to raise a concern should use the Staff Grievance policy.

### **The Management of Complaints**

At the Diocese of Worcester Multi Academy Trust we encourage all parents, carers and pupils to approach any member of staff in the first instance if they have a concern or a complaint. People who are not parents of pupils attending the academy should raise their concern or complaint with the Headteacher. If a member of the public's concern or complaint is regarding the Headteacher the information should be sent in writing to the Chair of Governors, via the academy office, marked urgent and confidential.

In the event that these initial approaches fail to resolve a complaint this policy lays out the procedures that should be followed to allay any concerns about a particular issue.

There are three academy-based stages to the complaints procedure:

Stage 1 – informal investigation of complaint

Stage 2 – complaint heard by Head teacher

Stage 3 – complaint heard by the local governing body's complaints panel

Anonymous concerns or complaints will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances. To enable proper investigations, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the academy as soon as possible. Complaints brought more than 3 months after the alleged incident may not be considered by the academy.

In the event that the complainant believes that the academy has failed to comply with its own complaints procedure or that the academy's complaints procedures does not comply with statutory requirements the complainant may complain to the Multi Academy Trust.

If you do not understand any part of this policy please do not hesitate to contact the Head teacher or the member of the local governing body who is responsible for complaints. Your complaint will then be investigated fully, ensuring all the relevant facts are taken into consideration.

## **STAGE 1 - Dealing with Concerns and Complaints Informally**

A concern or complaint can be registered either verbally or in writing. Initially the complainant should speak to the relevant member of staff unless the complaint is being raised by a member of the public, in which case the concern should be raised with the Headteacher or Chair of Governors. However, if there is difficulty in discussing the issue with the relevant member of staff the complainant can be referred to another member of staff, who will clarify the nature of the issue and the outcome required.

In the case of serious concerns it may be appropriate to address them to the Head teacher directly (or to the Chair of the Local Governing Body, if the complaint is about the Head teacher)

If the member of staff first contacted cannot resolve the matter immediately, they should make a clear note of the date, name, contact address, phone number and brief details of the concern/complaint. This information will be passed to the Head teacher or Complaints Co-ordinator at the earliest opportunity and recorded in the academy's complaints log.

The Headteacher or Complaints Co-ordinator will identify the appropriate procedure and either conduct the investigation or nominate an appropriate colleague to do so. Complainants should be encouraged to state what they feel might resolve the problem. The Headteacher or Complaints Co-ordinator will communicate verbally with the complainant to ensure they are clear about what action or monitoring of the situation has been decided on, giving a date if appropriate and only putting this in writing if this seems the best way to make things clear

If a parent or pupil felt that their initial contact with a member of staff did not deal with the concern to their satisfaction they should complete a Complaints Form (Appendix B) and return it to the Head teacher.

If the complaint refers to the Head teacher then the Complaints Form should be returned to the Chair of the Local Governing Body (contact details are available in confidence from the academy office).

If the complaint concerns the local governing body then the form should be returned to the Diocese of Worcester Multi Academy Trust The Old Palace Deansway Worcester WR1 2JE

## **STAGE 2 - Formal Referral to The Head Teacher**

Where the Head teacher has acted as Complaints Co-ordinator at stage one another senior member of staff may be nominated to investigate the complaint.

The complaint will be acknowledged in writing within **five academy days**, giving the name of the person who will conduct the investigation and a target date for providing a response, usually within **10 academy days**.

The nature of the complaint will be clarified and unresolved issues outlined. It will be established what has happened so far and who has been involved. A meeting will be arranged to ensure all the information relating to the complaint has been documented and to find out what action the complainant feels would put things right.

Everyone involved in the complaint will be interviewed, accompanied by a friend or companion, if they wish, to ensure that all the facts of the complaint are understood. A written record of the complaint, the process of investigation, meetings, telephone conversations and other documents will be kept for two years. These are confidential.

Those involved in the complaint will be encouraged to say what actions they feel would remedy the situation at any time. The person investigating the complaint will produce a report and a written response to the complainant. Whilst every effort will be made to complete investigations promptly, in some cases, requiring detailed investigations, and/or where a number of witnesses may need to be interviewed, it will take longer to produce a written response. Where this is the case the complainant will be advised of any revised timescale for production of the written response.

The written response will include:

- details of the agreed subject matter of the complaint
- details of who was contacted in connection with the subject matter of the complaint (and in brief) the evidence that was obtained
- a full explanation of the decision reached and the reasons for it.
- where applicable, what action the academy will take to address the complaint and prevent recurrence.
- what to do if the complainant is not satisfied, information on how to request a review by the governing body and the timescale.

### **STAGE 3 – Local Governing Body Complaints Panel**

A request to review a complaint investigation should be made in writing to the Chair of the Local Governing Body within **28 academy days** of receipt of the outcome letter and should give the reasons for requesting a review.

The Chairman of the Local Governing Body will convene a Complaints Panel consisting of two governors who should not have been involved in the early stages of the complaint and one person who is independent of the management and running of the academy. The Multi Academy Trust will arrange for the appointment of an independent person for the Complaints Panel. The panel will elect their own chair.

A clerk will be appointed to the panel. The Clerk will usually convene the Complaints Panel hearing within **15 academy days** of receipt of the review request. The Clerk will:

- set the meeting date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- where possible give a minimum of 5 academy days' notice of the hearing;
- 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 and notify all parties of the panel's decision;

The Complaints Panel is the last academy based stage of the complaints process. Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole governing body at any stage as this would compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

The Complaints 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 academy's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

It is important that the Complaints Panel hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor 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, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.

The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the academy and the complainant. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The complaint may bring a friend or representative to the meeting, if they wish. 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 Chair of the Complaints Panel will notify the complainant of the panel's decision in writing within 5 academy days. Copies of the panel's findings or recommendations will be made available at the academy for inspection by the Multi Academy Trust and the Head teacher. The letter will explain that in the event the complainant does not feel their complaint has been dealt with to their satisfaction by the academy they may contact the Multi Academy Trust at The Old Palace Deansway Worcester WR1 2JE

Any complaints referred to the Multi Academy Trust will be dealt with under a separate policy titled Policy Relating to the Management of Complaints to the Multi Academy Trust. This policy will be available on the Academy website or is available on request from the Diocese of Worcester Multi Academy Trust offices.

If, following a review of the complaint process by the Multi Academy Trust the complainant is still not satisfied they have the right to complaint to the Education Funding Agency, using an online complaints form

### **Records of Complaints**

A confidential written record will be kept of all complaints and any action taken by the academy as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether they were upheld, resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing.

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

### **Review of Complaints**

The local governing body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. The Head teacher will report any official complaints in the Head teacher's Report to Governors and to the Multi Academy Trust Board of Directors.

As well as addressing an individual's complaint, the process of listening to and resolving complaints will contribute to academy improvement. When individual complaints are heard the local governing body may identify underlying issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by the academy and the local governing body will be a useful tool in evaluating the academy's performance.

### **Acceptable Behaviour**

Whilst the Academy recognises that the process of raising a concern or complaint can be very stressful the Diocese of Worcester Multi Academy Trust will not tolerate aggressive, violent, abusive or anti-social behaviour towards anyone on the academy site. Parents and members of the public are required to behave in a polite and courteous manner and to abide by the guidance set out in the "Expected Behaviour of Parents and Visitors to an Academy" policy which is available on the academy website or on request from the Multi Academy Trust offices. Academy staff are expected to behave in a courteous and professional manner when dealing with parents and member of the public at all times.

**Vexatious Complaints**

It is the aim of the Diocese of Worcester Multi Academy Trust to resolve all complaints to the satisfaction of all parties. However, if there is an occasion when, despite all stages of the complaints procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied and tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Local Governing Body is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

**Publicising the Procedure**

There is a legal requirement for the complaints procedure to be publicised. Each academy will include this information on the academy website. A copy will also be included in the policy file held in the academy office.

**Review of Policy**

There will be review of this policy every 3 years by the multi academy trust

**Relevant Legislation**

Part 7 of the Education (Independent Academy Standards) (England) Regulations



Annex 1 - Complaint Form

Please complete and return to .....(complaints co-ordinator) 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: