

<b>COMMUNICATION WITH THE ACADEMY POLICY INCLUDING COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (PAGE 5)</b>	Page 1 of 7
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	<b>Approval by:</b> FULL GOVERNING BODY/ A&C COMMITTEE/ HR & FINANCE COMMITTEE/ BH&S COMMITTEE ACADEMY PRINCIPAL

### ***We want to hear from stakeholders - their views are important***

We want all pupils, their families/carers and the local community to be happy with the education we provide, and our staff to do their best to support this. We welcome feedback and comment – either positive or negative. All are helpful.

Visits, regular reports and open evenings help to keep parents/carers up-to-date with what is happening and how your child is getting on at the Academy. You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of the Academy that you are worried about or you may be unhappy about the way in which a member of staff has dealt with your child.

Normally, we can deal with any concerns informally, but unfortunately this is not always possible and you may wish to make a formal complaint. Whatever the issue, please come and talk to us so that we can sort it out.

We are committed to providing excellent education at the Academy and maintaining a good reputation in the local community. The Executive Principal, Campus Principal, staff and governing body take all concerns and complaints very seriously and we will do everything we can to ensure that you and your children are happy with our Academy.

#### **Our promise to you:**

- Your concern will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence
- Your concern will be considered thoroughly and fairly
- We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage
- You will receive an apology if we have made a mistake
- You will be told what we are going to do to put matters right

This procedure applies to any matter (other than matters relating to admissions and exclusions, which have their own processes) which has been raised with the Academy as a matter of concern, including issues raised by parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) about the support provided by the school.

### Communicating a concern (Informal stage)

1. In any community, misunderstandings arise or actions are taken which might be felt to go against the spirit of fairness and common sense established in the Academy. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about Academy policies or procedures, the conduct, actions or omissions of members of staff or governing body and the standards of teaching and learning. It is important to move swiftly to prevent the escalation of a minor problem into a major concern.
2. Do not hesitate to contact the Academy if you are uneasy or dissatisfied about something. It is important not to let little concerns build up into serious mistrust or irritation. We are as keen to see things run smoothly as you are.
3. When you contact the Academy, begin as informally as possible - say what concerns you have and try to find out the facts. You will be in a much better position to know if you have grounds for/need to make a complaint when you are in possession of all the facts. We may be able to give an explanation or fill in details which answer your concerns. Do not rely solely on a child's account or on information from other parent/carers.
4. A telephone call or email is better than a letter, and a temperate letter is better than an ultimatum or threat of action. We welcome telephone calls and emails from parent/carers who wish to talk about a problem before it becomes a complaint.
5. Staff are not available to meet with stakeholders without a scheduled meeting. This is due to teaching and staff management commitments. We request that initial contact is made by telephone or email. If the matter is not resolved by this, the next step would be a meeting at a mutually convenient time.
6. If a Stakeholder approaches a member of the governing body directly, the Governor will direct that person to take the complaint to the Executive Principal or Campus Principal. In circumstances where the complaint is about the Principal, it may be appropriate for the Governor to make contact with the Chair of Governors.

### Contacting the Academy

7. Talk to the right person. It may be tempting to "go straight to the top" but putting the problem to the Executive Principal or Campus Principal often escalates something that could have been better resolved at a lower level and will often be referred to the relevant member of staff. The Admin team can help direct your enquiry to the correct person.
8. **Who to contact?**  
As parents, your first point of contact will usually be your child's class teacher. If your child's class teacher is unable to resolve your concern, the next step would be to contact the Year Leader. If, having spoken to the Year Leader, the matter is still unresolved, you should contact the Key Stage Leader. Should you need to pursue the matter further, then the next step would be to contact a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Should you still be unable to reach a satisfactory outcome, the matter may then be referred to the Executive Principal or Campus Principal.

### The Academy's expectation of parent/carers and other stakeholders

9. The Academy seeks to build a partnership with parent/carers in the education of their children and with the local community. This Communication Policy sets out how the Academy will deal with your concerns. We would ask that, for your part, you consider:

#### Parents/Carers

- Should you believe everything you hear? Things are often not entirely the way they are reported (by children or by other parent/carers); children very much see things from their own point of view and important elements, circumstances and nuances of the story are often omitted in the version told to parent/carers.
- Do you know what your child is like in the Academy? You may be surprised; children can be very different people from the way they are at home - usually for the better but this is not always the case;
- How can we work together to resolve any complaint? It is important that the child sees parent/carers and the Academy working together to resolve differences or difficulties; the child should not be placed in a position where s/he appears impertinent, insolent, disobedient or acts inappropriately; remember that directly countermanding a teacher's instruction or requirement is likely to make matters worse and bring confrontation rather than resolution.
- Please remember to always take seriously, and report without delay, any concerns or suspicions of bullying;

#### All Stakeholders

- Trust the Academy to resolve matters according to the aims and methods stated in this document.
- Seek information from the Academy where you need it
- Consider what the Academy has to say
- Disclose full and frank information which would help the Academy to resolve situations with integrity and justice

### Unreasonable or Unacceptable Communication

The Academy has a duty of care to all visitors, students and staff and does not accept unreasonable or offensive language or behaviour.

#### Face to Face:

We politely request all visitors to the Academy consider their behaviour when on site. In cases of unreasonable behaviour, a member of staff may advise the visitor that their behaviour is unacceptable and that they will be asked to leave if the behaviour does not stop.

**Communication by telephone:** Staff will end telephone calls if they feel the caller is being aggressive, abusive or offensive. The employee dealing with the caller has the right to make this decision and will advise that the call will be ended if the behaviour does not stop.

**Unmanageable demands:** Although not always intentionally, stakeholders may make what we consider unmanageable demands due to the amount of information they seek; the nature and scale of service they expect; or, the number of approaches they make. Examples of this include demanding responses within an unreasonable time-scale; insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff, excessive telephone calls and duplicate requests to more than one member of staff.

We will consider this contact to be unacceptable and/or unreasonable if it starts to impact substantially upon workload to the disadvantage of other stakeholders or academy service delivery.

### **What you can expect of the Academy**

10. You can expect to receive a response to your communication within a minimum of 48 hours (2 school days).
11. You can expect staff to be professional. This may sometimes mean we do not agree with you and must put forward a view or make a decision that you may not like - but we will always explain our reasons.
12. Parent/Carers are sometimes worried that if they complain there will be adverse consequences for their child. The Academy is committed to ensuring that this is never the case.
13. You can expect members of staff to treat the complaint professionally and with appropriate confidentiality.

### **Anonymous complaints**

14. Anonymous complaints are unhelpful and will not usually be acted upon.

### Oxley Park Academy Formal Complaint Procedure

It is a precondition to the operation of the formal complaints policy that the complainant shall have made reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution and shall have acted in relation to the matter in a reasonable and measured way.

The Executive Principal, Chair of Governors and the Chair of the Aims & Curriculum Committee shall have discretion to not allow a formal complaint to be pursued unless this precondition has been met.

We have adopted a formal procedure for dealing with complaints which have not been resolved following the informal route.

#### Stage 1 –

15. The complaint should be made formally in writing to the Executive Principal via his Personal Assistant, detailing the nature of the complaint and the desired outcome.
16. The Academy will document the complaint, acknowledge it in writing within 7 school days of receipt, and the Executive Principal will consult with those directly involved, and aim to deal with the complaint within 14 school days of the receipt of the formal letter of complaint. Senior staff will be involved as appropriate at this level.
17. The Executive Principal or a senior member of staff may also meet with the complainant and, following any necessary investigation or actions, provide a written response to the complaint.
18. If the complaint cannot be resolved, the complainant will be advised of the next stage which is to have the complaint heard before a panel.

#### Stage 2 –

19. If the stakeholder is not satisfied with the response to the complaint as dealt with at Stage 1 above then they will be invited to write to the Chair of Governors (at the Academy address) requesting a panel hearing.
20. The request for a panel hearing must be submitted as soon as possible and, in any event, within 7 school days of the decision in Stage 1 of the complaint being notified to parents. A panel hearing will be convened for the majority of complaints not capable of stage 1 resolution. The Chair of Governors retains the discretion not to move to stage 2 when the complaint concerns agreed Academy policies, procedure or is clearly vexatious.
21. The Chair of Governors will appoint a panel that will consider the complaint, within 21 school days of receipt of the notification.
22. The panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, including one person who is independent of the management and the running of the Academy.
23. Stakeholders may attend and be accompanied by a witness at a panel hearing if they wish.

24. The panel will also consider the Academy's response and may require further investigations and/or interviews as appropriate.
25. The panel will aim to reach a conclusion as quickly as possible, normally within 7 school days after the panel hearing.
26. The panel will record in writing its findings and recommendations and these will be sent to the complainant, the Executive Principal and where relevant, the person complained about. This will normally be within 21 school days of the hearing.
27. A written record will be kept of all formal complaints, including whether they were resolved at stage 1 or progressed to a stage 2 panel hearing, and what action was taken by the Academy as a result of those complaints (whether or not the complaints were upheld).
28. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints must be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State (or someone acting on his/her behalf) request access to them.

### **Support**

29. At any stage of the complaints procedure, stakeholders are welcome to bring with them a supportive friend who is not involved in the complaint.
30. Within the complaints procedure it is not appropriate for the Academy to engage in meetings to which stakeholders bring legal representatives or advisors.
31. The Academy will not generally enter into correspondence with solicitors or others in place of direct communication with parents.

### **Vexatious Complaints**

There may be occasions when the complainant is deemed to be "vexatious". This could be because it is clear that the complainant has insufficient grounds for complaint and is seeking to annoy, or that a complaint has been investigated and is found not to be justified, but the complainant persistently engages in making further accusations relating to the same issue. Any such case will be dealt with on an individual basis but the Executive Principal and Chair of Governors reserve the right to close the complaint if the complainant is deemed to be "vexatious", and to determine that the matter is now concluded.

## Education Funding Agency

The Education Funding Agency also considers some complaints about Academy schools. They can be contacted at:

Ministerial and Public Communications Division  
Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD