Liberty Academy Trust

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Date	February 2026
Written By	Director of Governance and Operations
Approval Date	
Review Date	January 2027

Table of Contents

1. Aims and application 3
2. Key principles 4
3. Records of complaints 5
4. Complaints procedure for parents 6
5. Roles and Responsibilities 11
6. Concerns or complaints from other persons 12
7. Repetitious and vexatious complaints and complaints pursued in an otherwise unreasonable manner. 13
8. Complaint campaigns 15

Appendix 1: Matters excluded from scope of this policy. 16
Appendix 2: Complaints Form 18
Appendix 3: Summary of Complaints Procedure for Parents (Part 1) 19
Appendix 4: Complaints Committee Roles and Responsibilities 20

1. Aims and application

1.1 The aims of the procedure are to deal with complaints and concerns:

- about a school, the academy trust ("trust") or any individual connected with it by following the correct procedure.
- thoroughly and in an open, honest, and fair manner.

1.2 Liberty Academy Trust (Liberty) and our schools will take all concerns and complaints seriously and will make every effort to deal with complaints informally, at an early stage, in the spirit of continued respect and partnership.

1.3 This complaints procedure is not limited to parents of children who are registered at one of the schools within the trust. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to an individual school within the trust, or the trust itself, about any provision of facilities or services that we provide.

1.4 **Part 1** of this policy outlines how parents of registered pupils currently attending one of our schools within the trust can raise a concern or complaint.

1.5 Concerns or complaints from other persons will be dealt with in accordance with **Part 2** of this policy.

1.6 This procedure does not apply to concerns and complaints relating to the matters listed in Annex 1.

1.7 Anonymous concerns or complaints will not normally be investigated under this procedure. The Principal or Executive Director, if appropriate, will determine whether there are exceptional circumstances to justify investigating the issues raised.

1.8 All staff will be made aware of this complaints procedure and are expected to review this policy regularly in order that they are familiar with our process of dealing with complaints and can be of assistance when an issue is brought to their attention.

In this procedure:

- **complaint** means an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.
- **concern** means an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.
- **meeting** means an in person or virtual meeting (i.e. telephone or video conference where all parties can participate verbally), virtual meetings will only be held if all parties have access to appropriate equipment to attend and are happy to do so. If the parties are unable to meet virtually and the meeting must take place in person, the meeting may be postponed until it is deemed safe to hold an in-person meeting, at the discretion of the trust.
- **parent** means a parent, carer or anyone with legal responsibility for a child.
- **school days** exclude weekends and school holidays and periods of partial or total school closure.

- **trust** means the academy trust.

1.9 The timeframes referred to in this policy are our usual timeframes and the school will seek to adhere to these timeframes where possible.

1.10 Reasonable adjustments will be made to this procedure where required to ensure that all complainants can access and complete this complaints procedure. For example, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

2. Key principles

2.1 The trust acknowledges that raising concerns or complaints can be a difficult, emotional, and stressful time, particularly for parents and carers. We expect our staff to always be respectful and courteous when dealing with you. We also expect you to treat our staff with the same respect and courtesy. We will not accept abusive and threatening behaviour towards our staff from anybody at any time. In circumstances where this happens, the trust will take the action outlined in Part 3 of this policy.

2.2 The trust expects all complainants to make reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution. This will usually be the most effective way to resolve any concerns.

2.3 The trust encourages parents and others to approach the school with any concerns and refrain from airing concerns about the school and its staff on social media sites. Posting negative comments on social media can cause damage and upset and is often counter-productive to pupil education.

2.4 To investigate your complaint properly and fairly, we have implemented a staged approach. We anticipate that almost all complaints that arise will be resolved at Stage 1 or Stage 2 outlined below.

2.5 We expect our members of staff to be addressed in a respectful manner and for communication to always remain calm. The procedure under Part 3 will only be used on very rare occasions to deal with repetitious and/or vexatious complaints or complaints pursued in an otherwise unreasonable manner.

2.6 Concerns or complaints should be brought to our attention as soon as possible. Any matter raised more than 3 months after the incident being complained of (or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within 3 months of the last of these incidents) will not be considered unless the Principal or an Executive Director accepts that there are good reasons to explain the delay, or the complaint is about a particularly serious matter.

2.7 Escalation to stage 3 must consider any new or additional evidence, including issues with a preceding stage in the process.

2.8 An investigating officer will be appointed for all stage 2 complaints who have no prior knowledge or experience of the complaint. The investigating officer may be a senior member of staff or be independent from the Trust.

2.9 Where a complaint is received outside of term time, we will consider it to have been received on the first school day following the holiday period.

2.10 On rare occasions a school may receive complaints from several parents relating to the same issue. To deal with these complaints efficiently, the school will follow the procedure set out in **Part 4**.

2.11 If it becomes necessary to alter the time limits and deadlines set out within this procedure, you will be advised accordingly and given an explanation as to why this has been the case and provided with revised timescales. If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority safeguarding teams or tribunals/courts, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

2.12 Complainants should not approach individual trustees or local committee members to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may prevent them from considering complaints at later stages. **Where trustees or local committee members become aware of a complaint, they should alert the Director of Governance and Compliance and/or the Director of Safeguarding.**

2.13 If a complainant commences legal action against the trust in relating to their complaint, we will consider whether it would be appropriate to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

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

Part 1:

3. Records of complaints

3.1 A record will be kept of all written formal complaints, within the school's complaints log, including at what stage they were resolved, and action taken by us because of those complaints regardless of whether they were upheld.

3.2 Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where:

- Access is requested by the Secretary of State.
- Disclosure is required during a school inspection.
- An individual has a legal right to access their own personal data contained within such documentation; or
- Under other legal authority.

3.3 We will make the findings and recommendations of the panel available for

inspection on the school premises by the trust and the principal.

4. Complaints procedure for parents

4.1 Stage 1: Informal Concerns

a) Our schools take pride in the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, we recognise that parents may, from time to time, have concerns about the progress, achievement, behaviour or welfare of their child. Parents are encouraged to make those concerns known to staff so that they can be addressed in partnership with the School.

b) An informal concern can be raised in person or by telephone. Concerns may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant if they have appropriate authority to do so. Most enquiries and concerns can be dealt with satisfactorily by the keyworker, class teacher/form tutor or other members of staff without the need to resort to the formal procedure. We value informal meetings and discussions and encourage parents to approach staff with any concerns they may have and aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding.

c) It is always helpful if you can fully explain the nature of the concern and identify the outcome you are looking for. Where appropriate, you may be invited to an informal meeting with the member of staff most appropriate for dealing with that concern. The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure that you are clear on what action (if any) has been agreed. This may be put in writing if appropriate.

d) If the matter is brought to the attention of the principal, they may decide to deal with your concerns directly at this stage. If the concerns are about the principal, these should be referred directly to an Executive Director under Stage 2.

e) The school will respect the views of a complainant who indicates that they would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In this case, the principal will refer the complainant to another designated member of staff. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved in the circumstances leading to the complaint feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the principal may consider referring the complainant to another member of staff. The member of staff may be more senior, but this is not essential.

f) Staff members should log all informal complaints and inform the Principal of any serious concerns.

g) There is no suggested timescale for resolution at this stage given the importance of dialogue through informal discussion, although it would be expected that most issues will be resolved within 15 school days.

h) All complaints, regardless of their severity, should be concluded with confirmation in writing by the Principal or other senior leader in school. This must include a description of the information reviewed, the conclusion reached and the subsequent actions or recommendations. These must be made available commencing stage two process.

i) Where no satisfactory solution has been found, you will be advised that if you wish your concerns to be considered further you should write to the Principal under Stage 2 of this procedure within 15 school days.

4.2 Stage 2: Formal written complaints

a) If your concerns are not resolved under Stage 1, you should put your complaint in writing and send this to the Principal of the relevant school.

b) It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions that you would like us to take to resolve your complaint. We strongly encourage you to use the Complaint Form provided at Annex 2 of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you. In all cases your written complaint must include:

- The nature of the complaint.
- Details of how the matter has been dealt with so far.
- The names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events and copies of all relevant documents; and
- A clear statement of the actions that you would like us to take to resolve your complaint.

c) If necessary, witnesses will be interviewed, and statements taken from those involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil should also be interviewed. Pupils should normally be interviewed with their parent present, but if this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious or urgent complaint or if the pupil has specifically said that s/he would prefer that their parents were not involved, another member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable should be present. If the matter includes a complaint relating to a member of staff, the member of staff must have the opportunity to respond.

d) Your complaint will normally be acknowledged in writing within 5 school days of receipt. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the school's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This will normally be within 15 school days of receipt.

e) If appropriate, the Principal (or someone appointed by them) may invite you to a meeting to clarify your complaints and to explore possible resolutions. If you accept that invitation, you may be accompanied by one other person, such as a friend, relative, advocate or interpreter, to assist you. Where possible, this meeting will take place within 10 school days of receipt of the written complaint.

f) Once the relevant facts have been established as far as possible, you will be provided with a written response to the complaint, including an explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. This will include what action will be taken to resolve the complaint (if any).

g) You will be advised that if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint, you may request that your complaint be heard by the Complaints Committee under Stage 3 of this procedure. Escalating your complaint to stage three should include an indication of whether new information has emerged or there is a procedural issue with one of the preceding stages.

h) To request a hearing before the Complaints Committee, you should write to the Clerk to the trustees c/o governance@libertytrust.org.uk within 15 school days of receiving notice of the outcome of Stage 2. Requests received outside of this timeframe will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

i) The trust may engage an independent, external person to carry out the investigation into the Stage 2 complaint or to review the investigation and response at Stage 2. This may be appropriate where the complaint is particularly complex and involves legal issues.

Q. What if the complaint is about the Principal or the Principal has already considered your complaint under Stage 1?

In these cases, your complaint should be sent to the Director of Governance and Operations, Chris Rossiter (chris.rossiter@libertytrust.org.uk) who will make arrangements for Stage 2 procedure.

Q. What if the complaint is about a member of the local committee?

Complaints about a member of a local committee or the whole local committee should be addressed to the Director of Governance and Operations, Chris Rossiter (chris.rossiter@libertytrust.org.uk). Please mark them as Private and Confidential. The Clerk will make arrangements to investigate the concerns in accordance with Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the Clerk of the local committee or the local committee as a whole, you should send your complaint c/o governance@libertytrust.org.uk, who will then determine the most appropriate action with regards stage 2 and stage 3.

Q. What if the complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer?

If the complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer of the trust, or if they have been closely involved at Stage 1, your complaint should be sent to the Clerk of the trustees c/o governance@libertytrust.org.uk who will arrange for a trustee to carry out all the Stage 2 procedures.

Q. What if the complaint is about a trustee, clerk of trustees, or a member of the Trust?

If the complaint is about a trustee or member of the trust, you should contact the Clerk of the trustees c/o governance@libertytrust.org.uk who arrange for another trustee to investigate the concerns in accordance with Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the Clerk of the trustees, your complaint should be sent to the Chair of the Trustees c/o info@libertytrust.org.uk.

If your complaint is about the trust board as a whole, you should send your complaint to the Clerk of the trustees c/o governance@libertytrust.org.uk who will arrange for the matter to be independently investigated.

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

4.3 Stage 3: Referral to the Complaints Committee

a) If you are dissatisfied with the decision under Stage 2, you may request that a Complaints Committee be convened to consider your complaint. The Complaints Committee will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint.

b) New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

c) To request a hearing before the Complaints Committee, you should write to the Clerk to the trustees c/o governance@libertytrust.org.uk within 15 school days of receiving notice of the outcome of Stage 2. Requests received outside of this timeframe will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

d) You should ensure that you provide copies of all relevant documents and state all the grounds for your complaint and the outcome that you are looking for.

e) Your written request will be acknowledged within 5 school days of receipt.

f) The Clerk will arrange for a Complaints Committee to be convened, made up of at least three members, including:

- Members of a local committee and/or trustees of the school (as appropriate) with no prior involvement in the matter; and,
- One person who is independent of the management and running of the school. (for example, this might be from another local committee within the trust, the central team, a governor from another local school/college or an educational professional who has no link to the school);
- The Clerk shall appoint one of these members to be the Chair of the Committee.

g) Every effort will be made to enable the hearing to take place within 20 school days of the receipt of your request. As soon as reasonably practicable and in any event at least 5 school days before the hearing, you will be sent written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing, together with brief details of the committee members who will be present.

h) Fair consideration will be given to any bona fide objection to a particular member of the committee. You will also be informed of the name of the person who will be presenting the case on behalf of the school (referred to in this policy as the 'school representative'). This may be the person who is the subject of the complaint, the person who undertook the investigation at Stage 2 or another person with sufficient knowledge of the matter.

i) If, despite best efforts, it is not possible to find a mutually convenient date and time for a hearing within a reasonable timeframe, the Clerk may determine that the hearing proceeds based on written submissions from both parties.

j) You have the right to be accompanied by a friend, relative, advocate or interpreter. You should notify the Clerk in advance if you intend to bring anyone to the hearing. We do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the Complaints Committee meeting. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend. The Complaints Committee itself may take legal advice on matters of law and procedure.

k) A copy of the complaint and any other documents provided by you in

support of your complaint, or by the school representative in defense of the complaint, will be provided to the Complaints Committee as soon as practicable upon receipt. Copies of these documents shall also be provided to you or school representative (as applicable) at least 3 school days before the hearing.

l) The Complaints Committee reserves the right not to consider any documentation presented by either party less than 3 school days prior to the hearing. The Complaints Committee is under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account.

m) The committee will not normally accept recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

n) The hearing will be conducted to ensure that each party can address the Complaints Committee. The procedure to be followed during the hearing will be explained to the parties by letter in advance of the hearing. The Clerk will ensure that sufficient notes are taken to record an accurate reflection of the points considered and any decisions taken, or actions agreed.

o) Electronic recordings of the hearing will not normally be permitted and, in any event, would require the consent of all those present.

p) **Unless otherwise stated, the procedure for the Stage 3 hearing is as follows:**

- The parent and school representative will enter the hearing together.
- The Chair of the Committee will introduce the committee members and outline the process.
- The parent will explain the complaint.
- The school representative and committee members will question the parent the school representative will explain the school/trust's actions.
- The parent and the committee members will question the school representative.
- The parent will sum up their complaint.
- The school representative will sum up the school/trust's actions.
- The Chair of the Committee will explain that both parties will hear from the committee within 5 school days.
- Both parties will leave together while the committee decides.
- The Clerk will stay to assist the committee with its decision making.

q) The Clerk and or Complaints Committee reserves the right to modify the above procedure at their sole discretion, for example requiring the parent and the school representative to present their complaint/actions separately to the Complaints Committee in the absence of the other party.

r) A Complaints Committee may be adjourned if the Complaints Committee require further evidence or in exceptional circumstances (for example, if clarification sought by the Complaints Committee is essential to the proceedings). The adjourned date must be as soon as possible.

s) After the hearing, the Complaints Committee will consider their decision

and inform you and, where relevant, the person complained about their decision in writing within 5 school days. The letter will set out the decision of the committee together with the reasons underpinning that decision. The committee can (by a majority if necessary):

- 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 or trust systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

4.4 Complaints that relates to data protection and the general data protection principles

If you would like to raise a complaint about any matter that relates to the collection, use, storage or processing of personal data you should do so directly to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO). The Trust will not progress complaints relating to data to stage 3. Further information about making complaints of this kind are available in the Data Protection Policy.

4.5 Stage 4: Referral of complaint to the Department for Education (DfE)

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of the Complaints Committee, you are entitled to refer your complaint to the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE will only investigate the complaint in limited circumstances.

For more information on the DfE's remit in relation to academy complaints, visit: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy/complain-about-an-academy

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 The role of the Clerk of the trustees

The Clerk of the trustees is the contact point for the complainant and the Complaints Committee, and should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure;
- liaise with staff, including the Principal, the Chief Executive Officer, Chair of the trustee board (as applicable) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure;
- be mindful of the timescales to respond to complaints;
- ensure that all people involved in the complaints process are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR);
- ensure that the Complaints Committee has access to legal advice, where appropriate;
- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, taking reasonable steps to find a date that is convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;

- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example: stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing within an agreed timescale;
- minute the hearing;
- notify all parties of the Complaint Committee's decision;
- assist the school/trust in issuing a summary letter to the complainant.

5.2 The role of the Principal or investigating officer at Stage 2

- to ensure that the complainant is fully updated throughout the stage 2 procedure;
- to ensure that the correct procedure has been followed;
- to ensure that an investigation is carried out, and a report compiled, including the consideration of the outcome at stage 1;
- to meet the complainant, if appropriate;
- if the complaint is being referred to Stage 3, notify the Clerk of the trustees to arrange the Complaints Committee.

5.3 The role of the Chair of the Complaints Committee

- The Chair of the Complaints Committee has a key role, ensuring that:
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy;
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
- the remit of the Complaints Committee is explained to the complainant;
- the written material is seen by everyone in attendance (provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR);
- key findings of fact are made, and that any issues not previously mentioned in writing should not be raised at the hearing and, if they are mentioned at the hearing, these should not be noted or considered by the Complaints Committee;
- both the complainant and the school/trust are given the opportunity to make their case, and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the hearing, or verbally in the hearing itself;
- the Complaints Committee is open-minded, acts independently and no committee member has an external interest in the outcome or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- the hearing is minuted.

Part 2:

6. Concerns or complaints from other persons

a) Part 1 of this complaints policy applies only to complaints made by parents of current registered pupils of our schools within the trust. However, the trust wishes to work closely with other members of the local community and will deal with their concerns and complaints as follows:

- **Stage 1** - a concern regarding a school or its operations may be made to

any member of staff. That member of staff will attempt to resolve the matter immediately or may, if appropriate, refer the matter to their line manager or member of the senior leadership team (SLT) who is best placed to deal with the concern. It is expected that most concerns will be responded to orally or in writing within 5 school days.

If a longer period is required, you will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation.

- **Stage 2** - where a concern is not resolved at stage 1, or you wish your concerns to be dealt with immediately as a formal complaint, you should put your complaint in writing and send this to the principal of the relevant school to investigate.

b) The principal may delegate the task of investigation and/or responding to the complaint to a member of SLT or may escalate the **complaint** straight to stage 3. A formal response to the complaint will usually be provided within 10 school days of receipt of the letter of complaint although if a longer period is required to respond, you will be kept updated.

- **Stage 3** - if you are not satisfied with the response at stage 2, you may request a review by writing to the Director of Governance and Compliance. You should do so within 10 school days of receipt of the letter at stage 2.

c) Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if **exceptional** circumstances apply. The Director of Governance and Compliance will arrange for a trustee to consider the complaint alone or may convene a complaints committee on the same terms as set out in Part 1 of this complaints policy.

d) The decision at this stage will usually be sent to you within 20 school days of receipt of the request for a review. The decision at stage 3 exhausts the school's complaints procedure.

e) Concerns or complaints regarding the Principal or the trust as a whole should be referred direct to the Clerk of the trustees c/o governance@libertytrust.org.uk who will arrange for the stages above to be considered by an appropriate person.

Part 3:

7. Repetitious and vexatious complaints and complaints pursued in an otherwise unreasonable manner.

There are rare circumstances where we will deviate from the Complaints Procedure set out in Parts 1 and 2. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

7.1 Repetitious, including serial and/or persistent, complaints.

a) Where the complainant's complaint is the same, similar to or based on the same facts of a complaint which has already been considered in full and we have:

- taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns; and
- given the complainant a clear statement of our position and their options,

We will write to the complainant to advise that the complaints procedure has

been exhausted and that we will not be responding to any further correspondence in relation to these matters. The complainant will be referred to Stage 4.

7.2 Vexatious complaints

a) The Office of the Independent Adjudicator defines the characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaint as:

- complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific or repetitious.
- insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason.
- insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner.
- complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance; and
- demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value.

b) Examples include but are not limited to:

- refusal to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- refusal to co-operate with the complaint's investigation process.
- refusal to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint's procedure.
- insistence on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice.
- introducing trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be considered and commented on.
- raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeks to have them replaced.
- changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- seeking an unrealistic outcome, such as the inappropriate dismissal of staff.
- making excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.
- knowingly providing falsified information.
- publishing unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

7.3 Complaints pursued in an otherwise unreasonable manner.

a) Where the complainant's behaviour or language towards staff, [governors], trustees or members is aggressive, abusive, offensive, discriminatory or threatening or insulting personal comments are made about, or threats are made towards, staff.

b) In the circumstances outlined in (2) and (3) above, we may:

- inform the complainant that we consider their complaint to be vexatious or the way they are pursuing their complaint to be unreasonable and why and ask them to desist.
- conduct the Complaints Committee on the papers only i.e. not hold a hearing.

- refuse to consider the complaint any further and refer the complainant directly to Stage 4.

c) We may also restrict the complainant's access to the school, e.g. requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only), requiring contact to take place with a named person only, restricting telephone calls to specified days and times or number of contacts or banning the complainant from the school premises.

d) Where the complainant's behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, Executive Directors, Trustees or Members will consider other options - for example, reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant warning of that action.

Part 4:

8. Complaint campaigns

a) For the purposes of this policy, a complaint campaign is defined as a complaint from three or more separate individuals (whether connected with a school or the trust) which are all based on the same subject.

b) Depending on the subject in question, we may deviate from the procedure set out in this policy and instead:

- Send a template response to all complainants and/or
- Publish a single response on the school/trust's website (as applicable)

Appendix 1: Matters excluded from scope of this policy.

Excluded Matters	Signposting
Admissions	The process for challenging admissions decisions are set out in our admissions policy in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.
Child protection matters	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
Exclusions	The process for challenging exclusions decisions are set out in the DfE's statutory guidance and information can be found at: School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
National Curriculum content	Please contact the Department for Education at www.education.gov.uk/contactus
School re-organisation proposals	Where concerns are not adequately addressed by the trust, complaints can be raised directly with the Department for Education.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Certain complaints about staff may need to be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member because of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Concerns about statutory assessments of special educational needs should be raised directly with the local authority.

Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for whistle- blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of the complaint

Appendix 2: Complaints Form

Your name:
Pupil's name:
Your relationship to pupil:
Your address and postcode:
Your daytime telephone number:
Your evening telephone number:
Your email address:
Your complaint is: (if you have more than one complaint, please number these)

Are you attaching any additional information or evidence? If so, give details here:

Your signature..... Date .....

All functions of the complaint's procedure must adhere to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Please complete and return to the school office by email or in a sealed envelope addressed to the Principal, Director of Governance and Compliance of or Clerk to the local committee/trustees (as appropriate).

Office use

Date received .....

Date acknowledgement sent .....

Responsible member of staff .....

Appendix 3: Summary of Complaints Procedure for Parents (Part 1)

Stage 1: **Informal concerns**	Parent brings complaint to attention of member of staff and/or Principal
	Issue to be resolved within 15 school days
	Where no satisfactory solution has been found, parent to be advised that they should proceed to Stage 2
Stage 2: **Formal Written Complaint**	Parent to put complaint in writing using Complaint Form within 15 school days
	Complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school days
	(Optional) Meeting with parents within 10 school days
	Response to the complaint sent within 15 school days
Stage 3: **Referral to Complaints Committee**	Parent to request hearing within 15 school days of receiving notice of the outcome of Stage 2
	Request to be acknowledged within 5 school days
	Hearing to take place within 20 school days of receipt of request
	Notification of date, time and place of the hearing and details of the committee members present sent at least 5 school days before the hearing
	School representative and parents to submit evidence in support of their case to Clerk at least 3 school days before the hearing
	Complaints Committee decision sent not more than 5 school days after the hearing

Appendix 4: Complaints Committee Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the Clerk

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

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure.
- liaise with staff, Principal, CEO, local committee chair and chair of the trustee board to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure.
- be mindful of the timescales to respond to complaints.
- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).
- ensure that the Complaints Committee has access to legal advice, where appropriate.
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, taking reasonable steps to find a date that is convenient to all parties and that the venue, and proceedings are accessible.
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example: stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale.
- minute the meeting.
- notify all parties of the Complaint Committee's decision.
- assist the school/trust in issuing a summary letter to the complainant.

The role of the principal (or other party investigating as applicable in accordance with the procedure) at Stage 2

- to ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure; to ensure that the correct procedure has been followed.
- to ensure that an investigation is carried out, and a report compiled; to meet the complainant, if appropriate.
- if the complaint is being referred to Stage Three, notify the clerk to arrange the Complaints Committee.

The role of the Chair of the Complaints Committee

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

- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy.
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child.
- the remit of the Complaints Committee is explained to the complainant.
- the written material is seen by everyone in attendance (provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018

or GDPR).

- key findings of fact are made, and that any issues not previously mentioned in writing should not be raised at the meeting and, if they are mentioned at the meeting, these should not be noted or considered by the Complaints Committee.
- both the complainant and the school/trust are given the opportunity to make their case, and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting, or verbally in the meeting itself.
- the Complaints Committee is open-minded, acts independently and no Complaints Committee member has an external interest in the outcome or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.
- the meeting is minuted.

Social responsibility statement:

Liberty Academy Trust acts with integrity and accountability in all aspects of its operations. We strive to make a positive impact on our students, staff, communities, and the environment by promoting equity, sustainability, and ethical practices. Our commitment to social responsibility underpins every decision we make, ensuring that we contribute to the well-being of society while fostering an inclusive and respectful educational culture.