



Sharnbrook Academy Federation Complaints Policy

The Federation's aims and values put the student at the centre of its work and seek to provide high quality education and opportunities for all in each of its schools. The Governing Body believes that feedback is an important ingredient for self-improvement and raising standards. If you have a concern or complaint please be assured that what you have to say will be heard and considered seriously.

Legal context

This policy must comply with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2010. This means that parents must be offered:

- An opportunity to resolve a complaint with the relevant school on an informal basis for example through discussion with a senior member of staff;
- A formal complaint stage where a complaint is made in writing;
- A hearing with a panel appointed by or on behalf of the Governing Body and consisting of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in a complaint, one of whom must be independent of the management and running of the school

How complaints will be dealt with

The Federation will be guided by the following principles:

- It should be receptive to genuine expressions of dissatisfaction;
- Complaints need to be dealt with promptly, fairly and proportionately;
- In dealing with complaints it will take account of its public sector duty.

Parents and students will have questions for a school and these can give rise to concern. These matters will in most circumstances be resolved by discussion which will involve parents, students and the relevant member of staff. Where this is not achieved, parents can follow the procedure outlined below.

At each stage of the procedure, the person investigating the complaint will seek ways to resolve the complaint satisfactorily.

For some issues it will not be appropriate to use this procedure. These include child protection allegations, exclusions and assessment decisions for external qualifications. Where a different procedure applies, parents will be advised accordingly.

Complaints Procedure

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

1. It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved quickly and informally.
2. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's tutor who will consult with other staff as necessary. If the complaint does not relate to teaching, learning or pastoral care, then the line manager for the relevant area will look into the issues raised.
3. Complaints made to a headteacher or head of school will usually be referred to the tutor
4. All reasonable endeavours will be made to resolve any informal complaint within ten school days.
5. Should the matter not be resolved as described in paragraph 4 above, or in the event that the Tutor and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the parents can decide whether they wish to proceed with their complaint under Stage two set out below
6. In the event that the complaint relates to a headteacher, a governor will look into the issues raised within the timescale set out in 4 above

Stage 2: Formal Resolution

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally as set out in stage 1, then parents should put their complaint in writing to the company secretary, within ten school days of the conclusion of the stage 1 process. It would be helpful if parents could also identify how they wish their complaint to be resolved. The complaint will be acknowledged within 2 working days
2. The complaint will be thoroughly investigated by a senior member of staff or where the complaint is against a headteacher, a governor, and this may involve a meeting with the parents. All reasonable endeavours will be used to ensure that the parents are advised of the outcome of their complaint within ten school days. Where the investigation will take longer than this, the parents will be advised within ten school days and be given a time by which it is anticipated the investigation will be concluded.
3. The parents will receive a written response by email or post setting out the conclusions reached.
4. Where the parents are dissatisfied with the outcome of the school's response to their formal complaint, the parents have the opportunity to have their complaint heard by a panel as outlined in Stage 3 below

Stage 3: Panel Hearing

1. If parents wish to have their complaint heard by a panel having gone through stage 1 and 2 of the procedure described above, they must submit a request in writing to the Company Secretary within 10 school days of the date of the school's letter advising them of the outcome of the Stage 2 procedure.
2. Parents should provide a list of their complaint(s) and explain why they feel their complaints have not been resolved satisfactorily.

3. The company secretary will convene a meeting of the panel who will hear the complaint within 20 school days of receiving the parent's request, dependent upon the availability of panel members.
4. The parents and the school will be given 5 school days' notice of the date of the hearing by the panel
5. The panel will comprise two members of the Governing Body of the Federation who have not been previously involved in the complaint and one person independent of the management and running of the school.
6. Proceedings of the panel:
 - The hearing will be closed to the public
 - The complainant will be invited to attend and can be accompanied
 - The relevant headteacher will be invited to attend and may be accompanied
 - If witnesses attend they will only be present for that of the hearing where they give their evidence
 - The company secretary will ensure any documents are circulated to all parties involved 5 school days before the hearing
 - The panel may ask questions at any point
 - The panel may agree to the submission of documents less than 5 school days before the hearing
 - The panel will deliberate in private
 - The panel will reach a decision as quickly as possible and in no more than 3 school days following the hearing
 - The decision of the panel will be final
7. Remit of the panel – 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 occur
8. The Panel's findings will be sent by the company secretary in writing to the parents, the relevant headteacher, the chair of the Governing Body, and where relevant the person complained of.

Records

A record of all complaints will be kept. They will be monitored by the Governing Body.

Vexatious or persistent complaints

The Federation reserves the right not to investigate complaints considered to be vexatious, malicious or persistent. The decision will be taken by the Chair of Governors and the parents will be notified in writing.

Education Funding Agency

Parents can contact the Education Funding Agency if they wish to complain about how their complaint to the Federation was handled. The relevant contact details are:

academyquestions@efa.education.gov.uk

Academies Central Unit (Academy Complaints)
Education Funding Agency
Earlsdon Park
53-55 Butts Road
Coventry
CV1 3BH

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Further information	Tracy McDonagh Governance & School Relationship Manager
