



**TRENT
ACADEMIES
GROUP**

**Complaints Policy
and Procedure**

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1. Policy Statement

1. Trent Academies Group is committed to developing a strong partnership with pupils, parents/carers and other stakeholders. This provides a good basis for mutual understanding and for preventing and resolving complaints.
2. The adoption of a clear complaints procedure will help to ensure that most complaints are resolved quickly and smoothly and as close to the source of the misunderstanding or problem as possible. In this way complainants can feel assured from the outset of a fair hearing, in line with a defined procedure for dealing with issues that have not immediately been resolved.
3. A clear framework can prevent an early and unnecessary escalation of the problem. In addition, lessons learned from the investigation of complaints will prove useful to improve the school's policy and practice.

2. Scope of the policy

1. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of actions by the Trent Academies Group, its school/academies or its staff that affects an individual or a group and requires a response from the Group or its schools/academies.
2. This policy and procedure deals with such complaints if made by a pupil, a parent/carer, member of the local community or other external stakeholder.
3. This policy and procedure is not for use in the case of a decision regarding either the admission or the exclusion of a pupil or for appeals against the grade awarded to a pupil in an external examination. Separate policies are available for use in these cases.
4. There are also separate policies to deal with a complaint raised by or on behalf of a member of staff. These include the Grievance Procedure for a complaint by an employee of unfair treatment, the Harassment Procedure for an employee complaining of bullying or intimidation, the Disciplinary Procedure for an employee complaining about the conduct of another member of staff and the Whistle Blowing Procedure for an unresolved allegation of institutional malpractice.

3. Principles

1. Most complaints can be resolved satisfactorily by informal discussion either over the telephone or through a meeting involving the key people involved.
2. Informal queries and complaints should be taken up directly with the relevant member of staff either verbally or in writing.
3. Formal complaints concerning an individual school/academy should be addressed to the appropriate Headteacher in writing.
4. Complaints concerning the Trent Academies Group should be addressed to the Executive Headteacher or The Chair of the Trent Academies Group Board.
5. All complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt and dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible. The length of the period will vary with the gravity and complexity of the

complaint and the urgency with which it needs to be settled. However, the intention is that all complaints should be settled within a period which is reasonable in the circumstances.

6. All formal complaints will be investigated fully, fairly and carefully and complainants will be kept informed of progress.
7. The aim is always to secure the resolution of the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant if possible.
8. The complaint will be recorded, together with the outcome and reasons for the outcome. The complainant will be informed of the outcome in writing, together with their entitlement to appeal the outcome.
9. Where the complaint is upheld, any action to be taken by the Group school/academy in response will also be recorded.

4. Stage One: Informal Complaints

1. Informal complaints or concerns should be raised with the relevant member of staff, such as class teacher, form tutor, head of year, head of faculty or HR Director.
2. Where an informal complaint is raised with the Headteacher it will normally be passed to the most appropriate member of staff to deal with it informally. If the complainant indicates that they would have difficulty discussing the complaint with this member of staff, the Headteacher may direct them to another member of staff. Similarly, if the most appropriate member of staff feels they would have difficulty in dealing with the complaint objectively, the Headteacher may direct the complainant to another member of staff.
3. In certain circumstances, the Headteacher may instead choose to deal with the complaint informally in person, or the relevant member of staff may ask the Headteacher to deal with it informally in person.
4. If the complaint has been made in writing, the Headteacher may choose to treat it as a formal complaint and invoke the formal procedure.
5. If the complaint has been made to the Chair of Governors in the first instance, they will refer the complaint to the Headteacher. However, if the complaint concerns the Headteacher and has already been taken up with the Headteacher without being resolved, the complaint must be made in writing to the Chair of Governors using the Complaint Form (see Appendix A). The Chair will then invoke the formal procedure.
6. The member of staff to whom the complainant is referred will carry out an investigation and decide on any appropriate action. The complainant and the Headteacher will be informed of the conclusions drawn from the investigation and action to be taken, together with details of how to make a formal complaint if they remain dissatisfied.
7. In some cases, matters affecting general school policy may be judged by the Headteacher, in consultation with the Chair of Governors, to be an appropriate area for discussion at Governing Body level, in order to resolve the complaint. In these circumstances care will be taken to ensure that the identity of the complainant and the individual complained of are not disclosed in case a formal complaint is made subsequently.

8. Every effort will be made to resolve the problem to the satisfaction of the complainant at this informal stage. Possible outcomes include:
 - complaint resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant
 - complaint not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant
 - complaint dealt with under another procedure

5. Stage Two: Formal Complaints

1. The Headteacher will ensure the complaint is investigated fully. The Headteacher may delegate responsibility for conducting the investigation to another member of staff.
2. Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, they will inform the complainant in writing that they should send a completed Complaint Form to the Chair of Governors, who will then take the place of the Headteacher throughout the formal procedure.
3. Once the investigation has been completed, the Headteacher/ Chair of Governors will review all the information and discuss the findings with the complainant with the aim of resolving the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction.
4. The Headteacher/Chair of Governors will decide on the outcome and inform the complainant in writing of the decision, together with details of how to appeal against the decision if they remain dissatisfied. A meeting may be arranged to convey the reasons for the decision.
5. If the outcome of the investigation into the complaint leads to a decision that may involve taking disciplinary action against an individual then the Staff Disciplinary Policy will be used. In this event, the complainant will be informed that the complaint will be pursued through disciplinary action. The Group's disciplinary procedures require that all details of proceedings remain confidential, and consequently the complainant will not be informed of the outcome.
6. Possible outcomes include:
 - complaint withdrawn
 - complaint dismissed
 - complaint dealt with under another procedure
 - complaint upheld.

6. Stage Three: Appeals

1. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they should send a completed Complaint Appeal Form (see Appendix B) to the Executive Headteacher.
2. The Executive Headteacher may be able to resolve the complaint informally, with the result that the complainant withdraws their appeal.
3. If this is not possible, the Executive Headteacher will convene an appeal hearing. The panel hearing the appeal will include at least one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the academy. The panel will also include two additional members who may not be independent (for example, Governors' or individuals from the Group Appeals Committee)

7. Appeal Hearing

1. The appeal will be heard by a panel which will consist of at least one independent panel member and a Governors' or Group Appeal Committee (comprising at least three governors or Trustees, one of whom will act as Chair of the hearing). The Committee may not include the Chair of Governors, a Group employee or a Governor or Trustee who has had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the incident to which the complaint refers.
2. The Appeal Committee will decide whether or not the outcome of the formal procedure was correct. Accordingly, the respondent will be the person who made that decision, that is, either the Headteacher or the Chair of Governors.
3. The Appeal Committee Chair will decide the procedure to be followed, ensuring that:
 - the remit of the Committee is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption.
 - members of the Committee are objective and open minded, and act independently.
 - the complainant and any others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease.
 - the hearing is conducted in an informal though clearly structured manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy
 - each side is given the opportunity to state their case and to ask questions.
 - any written material is seen by all parties and any new issue arising are known by all parties who should be given the opportunity to consider and comment.
 - any witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
 - the issues are addressed.
 - key findings of fact are made.
4. The hearing should generally proceed as follows:
 - introductions and introductory comments from the Committee Chair.
 - the complainant explains the complaint, followed by questions from the panel.
 - any witnesses to support the complaint give evidence and are questioned.
 - the respondent explains the outcome of the formal procedure, and briefly describes the preceding informal procedure if applicable, followed by questions.
 - any witnesses to support the respondent give evidence and are questioned.
 - the complainant sums up.
 - the respondent sums up.
 - with the exception of the Committee members and any independent adviser they may have, all persons withdraw while the Committee reviews the evidence and decides the outcome.
 - the complainant and the respondent are informed of the decision.
5. The Appeals Committee may decide to;
 - dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
 - uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
 - decide on any further action to be taken
 - recommend changes to the Group, school/academy systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.
6. The complainant will be informed in writing within five days of the outcome of the hearing and the reasons for it, and that the decision is final.

7. In the outcome letter the complainant will also be informed that if they are dissatisfied with the way that their complaint has been handled, they can contact the DfE directly. DfE contact details will be provided to the complainant.

8. Record Keeping

1. Accurate and contemporaneous records will be maintained throughout the process, including details of any initial informal process.
2. Records will be held in a secure and confidential manner.

9. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

1. The Group will review this procedure within three years and assess its implementation and effectiveness.

Appendix A
Complaint Form

Complainant

Name	
Address	
Tel/Mobile	email

Details of Complaint

Please include full details, including dates, times and names of those involved.

DRAFT

Signed _____ Date _____

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary. Once completed, send this form to The PA to the Trent Academies Group who will arrange for your complaint to be investigated.

For office use
Date Received _____ Date of Response to Complainant _____

Appendix B
Complaint Appeal Form

Complainant

Name	
Address	
Tel/Mobile	email

Date complaint was submitted in writing:

Date response received from Executive
Headteacher in writing:

I am dissatisfied with the response to the above complaint and would like an Appeal Hearing for the following reasons:

DRAFT

Signed _____ Date _____

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary. Once completed, send this form to the PA to the Trent Academies Group who will arrange for your appeal to be heard.
For office use

Date Received _____ Date of Response to Complainant _____