


Complaints Procedure

THE
C  **MPASS**
PARTNERSHIP OF SCHOOLS

Raising concerns and resolving complaints

From time to time parents and others will become aware of matters which cause them concern. To encourage resolution of such situations the Trust has adopted a "Complaints Procedure". A log will be maintained of all stage 2 and 3 complaints.

The procedure is devised with the intention that it will:

- Usually be possible to resolve problems at Stage 1
- Be simple to use and understand
- Be non-adversarial
- Provide confidentiality
- Allow problems to be handled swiftly
- Address all the points at issue
- Inform future practice so that the problem is unlikely to recur.

In order to resolve any complaints in a speedy and satisfactory way, anyone wishing to make a complaint should follow this procedure. We will do all that we can to ensure that any complaints are resolved quickly and will endeavour to avoid the escalation of complaints as far as possible.

Some complaints cannot be considered under this policy as separate procedures apply. Those complaints relate to:

- Admissions to Schools
- Statutory Assessments of special educational needs
- Matters likely to require a child protection investigation
- Suspension or exclusion of children from school
- Whistleblowing by employees, volunteers and contractors
- Staff grievances
- Staff complaints
- Complaints about other providers using the school premises
- Withdrawal from the curriculum (except RE or daily worship)

Complaints must be raised within 3 months of the incident(s) complained of. Any complaints raised after this time may only be considered by the Trust under this Policy in exceptional circumstances.

a) Stage 1

The complaint is discussed with the appropriate senior leader, which may be the Head Teacher.

If the Head Teacher is the subject of the complaint then an Executive Head will be responsible for the response at this stage. Where this is the case, they must write to the CEO at: The Compass Partnership of Schools, c/o Willow Dene School, Swingate Lane, Plumstead, London, SE18 2JD.

The initial communication from the complainant to the member of staff may be by letter, telephone conversation or in person by appointment. The complainant must allow the designated staff member at least 5 school working days to respond to the concern. If the concern is complicated and further time is

required to fully respond to the concern, the member of staff will contact the complainant and advise of the further period required to respond.

If this does not lead to a resolution of the problem then the concern/complaint must be referred to the next stage of the process which is the commencement of the formal process.

b) Stage 2 (if unresolved at Stage 1)

The complaint is heard by the Head Teacher of another Trust School or the Executive Head Teacher (neither of whom will have been involved in Stage 1 of the process).

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response from the member of staff at Stage 1 they should be advised to put their complaint in writing, within 10 school working days, to the Head Teacher, who will deal with it formally at Stage 2. The complainant must ensure that they include details of why they are still dissatisfied and what action they would like to resolve the complaint. They can also attach any evidence to support their concerns.

Where the CEO is the subject of the complaint, the complainant should be advised to address it to the Chair of the Trust Board at The Compass Partnership of Schools c/o Willow Dene School, Swingate Lane, Plumstead, London, SE18 2JD. If the complaint is being dealt with by the Chair this will bypass Stage 2 and go to Stage 3 of the procedure.

The person managing the complaint will acknowledge the complaint within 5 school working days by writing to the complainant. The acknowledgement should state a further communication will follow, within 20 school working days that will set out the actions taken to investigate the complaint and the findings. Where further time is required to investigate the complaint, the complainant will be informed of any new deadline set.

Once satisfied that the investigation has been concluded and a decision has been reached, the person managing the complaint must notify the complainant in writing of the conclusion and any actions that will be taken as a result. The decision can be communicated to the complainant in writing or, if they may feel it appropriate, meet with them first to communicate their findings and then confirm in writing afterwards.

The complainant must also be informed that if they are still dissatisfied with the outcome they can write to the Chair of the Trust Board at The Compass Partnership of Schools c/o Willow Dene School, Swingate Lane, Plumstead, London, SE18 2JD, outlining why they are still unhappy.

All stage 2 complaints will be reviewed by the CEO of the Compass Partnership of Schools to ensure that procedures have been followed in dealing with the complaint, unless the complaint is about the CEO, in which case it will be reviewed by the Chair of Trustees.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and wishes to proceed to Stage 3 this must be put in writing and sent within 10 school working days.

c) Stage 3 – Formal Panel Stage (if not resolved at Stage 2)

The complaint is heard by a governors' complaints panel selected by the Chair of the Trust Board. At least three people, all of whom were not involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, will be part of the panel. This is the final stage of the internal process.

The complaint will be acknowledged within 10 school working days. The panel must be independent and impartial. No governor/trustee may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.. The panel can be made up of trustees from the Trust Board or governors from the Local School Committee (LSC) of any school within the Trust, and must include one member who is wholly independent of the management and running of the Trust. Complaints should not be shared with the whole LSC, except in very general terms.

The panel must convene a meeting to discuss the complaint and all the investigation evidence to make a final decision on how to progress. A clerk should be appointed to take notes of the meeting and records must be kept.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

The head teacher has a statutory duty for the internal organisation and management of the school, which they must carry out in accordance with any rules, regulations or policies laid down by the Trust or LSC. Therefore the remit of the panel's consideration of a complaint about a matter of internal organisation and control will be as to whether the head teacher has followed any relevant requirements, including school policies and whether the member of staff who considered the complaint was fully equipped to do so; it is not to substitute its own operational judgement for that of the head teacher.

The person chairing the meeting, will write to the complainant to acknowledge the complaint within 10 school working days. The letter would also include the date, time and venue of the convened meeting to hear the complaint. The Panel hearing will usually be held within 20 school working days from the acknowledgement of the complaint.

The complainant may be accompanied by a friend or relative. The panel can decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.

Possible outcomes for the Panel are:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part – not upheld
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part – upheld / partially upheld
- Recommend changes to school systems or procedures to ensure that similar incidents do not occur.

Findings and recommendations should be communicated in writing to the complainant and, where relevant, to the person complained about, and include the right to complain to the ESFA should the complainant remain dissatisfied with the outcome: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy/complain-about-an-academy>.

The findings and recommendations are available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher.

Record of complaints

A record is kept of all complaints, whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing, including the action taken by the school as a result of the complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

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

Complaints against the Chair of Governors, Individual Governors/Trustees or the entire Local School Committee

Complaints of this nature should be made in writing to the Chair of Trustees, The Compass Partnership of Schools C/O Willow Dene School, Swingate Lane, Plumstead, London, SE18 2JD, who will select the most appropriate method of dealing with this complaint.

Complaints against the Chair of Trustees or the entire Trust Board

Complaints of this nature should be made in writing to the Clerk to the Trust Board, who will select the most appropriate method of dealing with this complaint. C/O NPW Governor Services, The Education Space, Francis House, 760 Barking Road, London, E13 9PJ / clerk@npw.uk.com

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will not usually be considered, but the Headteacher/CEO or Chair may choose to investigate further under exceptional circumstances.

Complaint Campaigns

Where a school or the Trust receives a large volume of complaints about the same issue from persons who are unconnected to the school or trust, this complaint policy will not apply. The Chair of Trustees will determine the appropriate response to such complaints which may include a template letter being sent to all complainants or a single letter being published on the Trust's website. Any complainants remaining dissatisfied may escalate the complaint to the Education & Skills Funding Agency.

Vexatious or repeat complaints

There will be occasions where, despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant, or person closely connected to the complainant, tries to reopen the same issue the Chair of the Trust Board can inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Audio and Video recording

At no point within this process can any secret recordings be used. The DfE will support schools who refuse to use any conversations obtained falsely or without the consent of all parties.

Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it.

Stage 2 Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Head Teacher of the school who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Use separate sheets for any information where necessary.

Your name:	
Pupil's name (if relevant):	
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone number:	
Email:	
Preferred method of contact:	
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 as this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.	
Signature:	Date:
Office Use	

Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Sent to the CEO for review:
Sent to Chief Operating Officer for the Trust Register:
Date:

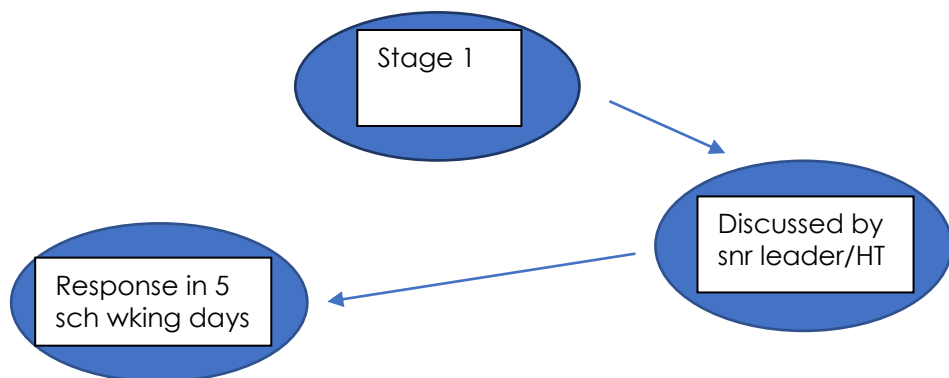
Stage 3 Complaint form

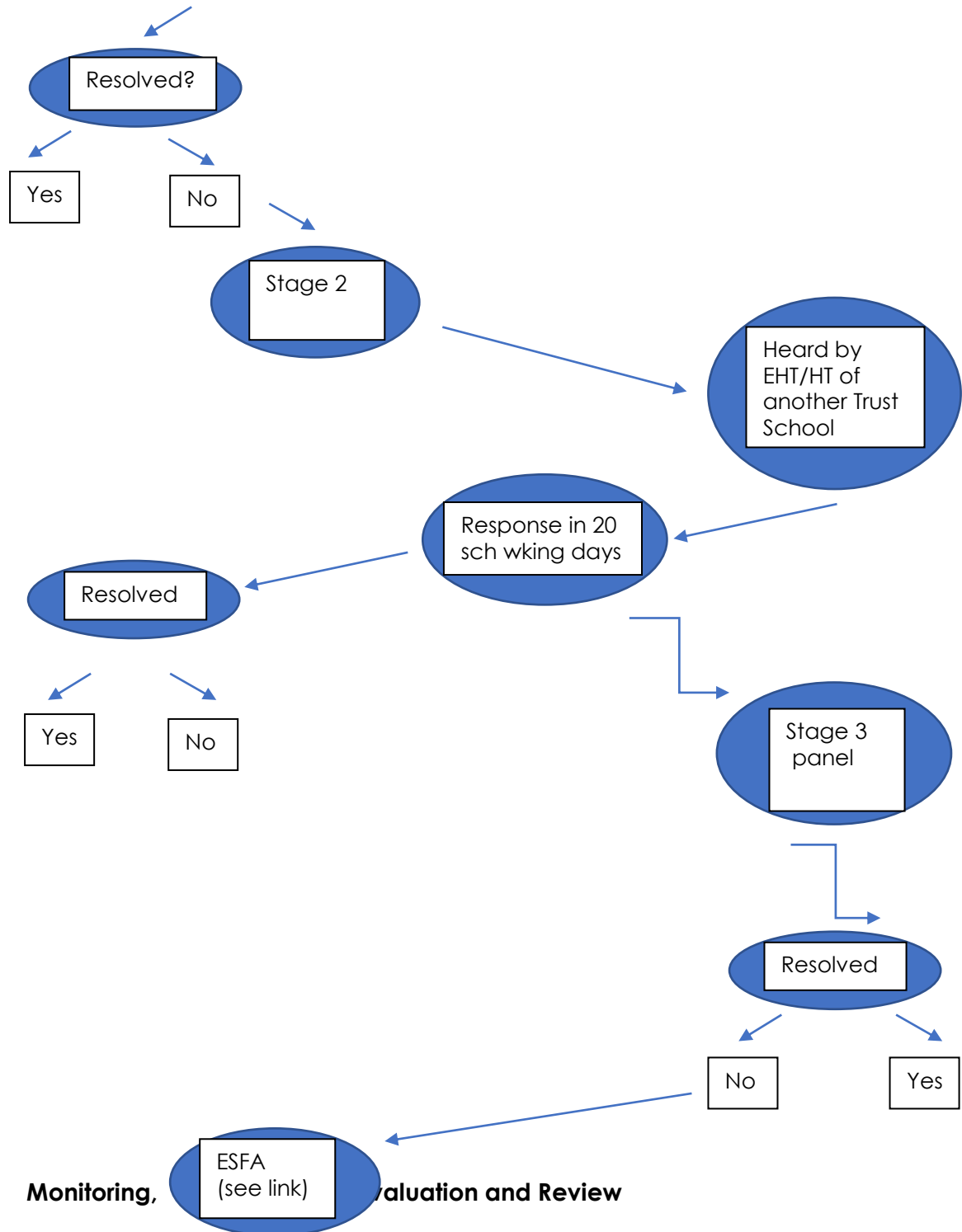
Please complete and send to the Chair of the Trust Board, The Compass Partnership of Schools c/o Willow Dene School, Swingate Lane, Plumstead, London, SE18 2JD, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken. Use separate sheets for any information where necessary.

Your name:

Name of school that complaint relates to:	
Date(s) that the complaint was dealt with at stage 2 of the Compass Partnership of Schools Complaints Procedure:	
Pupil's name (if relevant):	
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone number:	
Email:	
Preferred method of contact:	
Please give details of why you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint at Stage 2 of the procedure and what action(s) might resolve the complaint.	
Is there any additional information or paperwork relating to the complaint that was not submitted at stage 2?	
Signature:	Date:
Office Use	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
Sent to Chief Operating Officer for the Trust Register:	
Chair notified of the complaint:	
Action to be taken:	

Complaints procedure: flow chart





The Board of Trustees will assess the implementation and effectiveness of this policy. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout all Trust schools.

This Policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees.

Adherence to the policy will be monitored by the local school committee.

Policy Reviewed:	Autumn 2022
Other related policies:	Governance Code of Conduct Grievance Procedure Whistleblowing
Next Review:	Autumn 2023