
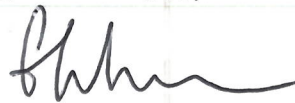




WESSEX
MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

Complaints Policy

Approved By:	Wessex MAT Board of Directors
Date:	13.1.21
Review Date:	12.1.24
Signed:	Chair of Directors – G.Batt 
Adopted By:	LGB
Date:	24-1-2021
Signed:	

POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR HEARING AND DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

Aims

The schools in Wessex Multi-Academy Trust are committed to working in close partnership with all members of their community. The Trust places great value on the role which parents and carers can play in supporting children's learning. Directors, Governors and Staff actively encourage a positive relationship between Trust schools and the families of children who attend a Trust school.

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the schools within the Trust. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Wessex Multi-Academy Trust or any of its schools about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

Definitions - The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as '*an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought*'.

A complaint may be defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*'.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Wessex Multi-Academy Trust and its schools take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

Concerns about an aspect of life at a Trust school will be dealt with by the relevant school as quickly, sympathetically and effectively as possible. It is hoped that most concerns will be settled amicably at this stage. If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases the headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern the headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand, however, that there are occasions when people like to raise their concerns formally or, if there is a continuing concern, the Trust will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Wessex Multi-Academy Trust or its schools, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs School re-organisation proposals 	<p>Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the Local Authority.</p> <p>Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Dorset Council</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding (01305 221122) or the Children’s Advice and Duty Service (01305 228866).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the complaints procedure.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our Trust or Trust schools should complain through the complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the Trust’s internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the Trust’s internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that</p>

	the matter is being addressed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Curriculum - content 	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, 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.

If a complainant commences legal action against Wessex Multi-Academy Trust or any of its schools in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or their line manager. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to Governors via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or a trustee of the Trust, should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees, Wessex MAT, c/o The Thomas Hardy School, Queens Avenue, Dorchester, DT1 2ET. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.