



Complaints Policy

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thesovereigntrust.uk

The Sovereign Trust is a Multi Academy Trust registered in England No. 09666511. Registered Office: Manor Academy Sale, Manor Avenue, Sale M33 5JX



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Complaints Policy & Procedure

1. ABOUT THIS POLICY

- 1.1 The Sovereign Trust ("the Trust") aims to ensure that a concern, difficulty, or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently, and appropriately. We try to resolve all complaints as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, fair to those concerned, and promotes parents' and pupils' confidence in the Trust's ability to safeguard and promote welfare.

2. APPLICATION

- 2.1 This Complaints Policy applies to all concerns and complaints of the parents of students at an Academy within the Trust, other than those involving child protection issues or relating to admissions, exclusions, and SEN, for which there are separate statutory procedures. Where a complaint is made against a member of staff, depending upon the nature and seriousness of the complaint, the matter may be dealt with under separate HR procedures, which are strictly confidential, rather than under this Complaints Policy.

3. PROCEDURE

- 3.1 The Trust's complaints procedure consists of 3 stages and is set out in Appendix 1.

- 3.2 The difference between a concern and a complaint

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

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

- 3.3 It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally without using the formal stages of the complaints procedure. The Trust takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

- 3.4 If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular staff member, we will respect your views. In these cases, you will be referred to an appropriate alternative staff member. Similarly, if the staff member directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, you will be referred 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.

- 3.5 We understand, however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the Trust will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

4. HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN OR MAKE A COMPLAINT?

- 4.1 Concerns can be made in person, in writing, or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of the person with the concern, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so. Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or Deputy Headteacher.
- 4.2 If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint, using the Contact details (Appendix A) and the Complaint form (Appendix B). If you require assistance with completing the form, please contact the Academy office. You can also ask a third-party organisation such as Citizens Advice to help you.
- 4.3 Complainants should not approach individual Directors or Trustees to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis, and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at a later stage of the procedure.
- 4.4 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 helps complainants raise a formal complaint or hold meetings in accessible locations.

5. ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

- 5.1 The Trust will not investigate anonymous complaints under the procedure in this Complaints Policy.
- 5.2 However, the Headteacher, Chair of the Board, CEO, or Chair of Trustees, as appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

6. TIME LIMITS

- 6.1 You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame only if exceptional circumstances apply.
- 6.2 Note: Exceptional circumstances are defined here as circumstances that could not reasonably have been foreseen and for which there is insufficient time to take the necessary action to resolve the situation arising from those circumstances within the published timescales.

7. COMPLAINTS RECEIVED OUTSIDE OF TERM TIME

- 7.1 We will consider complaints made outside term time to have been received on the first Academy day after the holiday period.

8. AUDIO OR VIDEO EVIDENCE

- 8.1 Complainants should make sure they obtain informed consent from all parties present before recording conversations or meetings. In line with DfE guidance, we do not normally accept electronic recordings as evidence when asked to consider a complaint. Unless exceptional circumstances apply, we will not accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

9. DEVIATION FROM THE PROCEDURE

- 9.1 There may be occasions when it is necessary or reasonable to deviate from the published complaints procedure. In these cases, the Complainant will be kept informed, and reasons for the deviation given.

10. SCOPE OF THIS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to Academies	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the local authority.
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 or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). LADO details can be accessed through this link for all of GM boroughs (so Trafford and Salford) 11.1 Local Contacts (proceduresonline.com)</p>
Exclusion of children from Academy *	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at www.gov.uk/Academy-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the Academy's complaints procedure.</i></p>

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 whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our Academy should complain through the Academy's 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>
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the Academy's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the Academy'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 the matter is being addressed.</p>

- 10.2 If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example, the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact 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 this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale. If a complainant commences legal action against the Trust in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

11. RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

- 11.1 At each stage in the procedure, the Trust wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:
- 11.1.1 an explanation
 - 11.1.2 an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
 - 11.1.3 an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur

11.1.4 an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made.

11.1.5 an undertaking to review Academy policies in light of the complaint.

11.1.6 an apology.

11.1.7 withdrawal of a complaint

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

12. CONCERNS AND INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

12.1 It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis, within ten working days.

12.2 Concerns should be raised with the most appropriate person, e.g. class teacher, year head/subject head, or the Headteacher. Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis, and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at a later stage of the procedure.

12.3 If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

13. FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

13.1 Summary of stages and timeline for the formal complaints procedure

Stage 1: Headteacher Investigation

13.1.1 Acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint is to be sent within three working days of receipt of the complaint.

13.1.2 Complaint to be investigated and written response to be received by Complainant within fifteen working days of receipt of the formal complaint.

Stage 2: Director Investigation

13.1.3 If the Complainant believes that their complaint has not been fully addressed at stage 1,

13.1.4 They may request to move to stage 2. This request must be made within ten working days of the receipt of the outcome letter at stage 1.

13.1.5 Acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint is to be sent within three working days of receipt of the complaint.

13.1.6 Complaint to be investigated and written response to be received by Complainant within fifteen working days of receipt of stage 2 formal complaint

Stage 3: Directors/Trustees Panel Hearing

- 13.1.7 If the Complainant believes that their complaint has not been fully addressed at stage 2, they may request to move to stage 3. This request must be made within ten days of the receipt of the outcome letter at stage 2.
- 13.1.8 Acknowledgement of receipt of the request to escalate the complaint to stage 3 to be sent within five working days.
- 13.1.9 Hearing to be held within 30 working days of receipt of the request to go to stage 3
- 13.1.10 Paperwork for Stage 3 hearing to be received from all parties at least ten working days before the hearing.
- 13.1.11 Paperwork for Stage 3 hearing to be sent to all parties at least five working days before the hearing.
- 13.1.12 Outcome letter from Panel to be received by Complainant within ten working days of the hearing.
- 13.1.13 Note: In all cases, timescales refer to working days, so exclude weekends, Academy holidays, Public Holidays, and INSET days.
- 13.1.14 A written record will be kept of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing.

13.2 Stage 1: Headteacher Investigation

- 13.2.1 Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher) via the Academy's office. This should be done in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form; see Appendix A for the Headteacher's contact details and Appendix B for a copy of the form).
- 13.2.2 The form is useful as it ensures that relevant information is communicated at the outset. The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within three working days.
- 13.2.3 Within this response, the Headteacher will seek to clarify the complaint's nature, ask what remains unresolved, and what outcome the Complainant would like to see. The Headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.
- 13.2.4 Note: The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the Academy's senior leadership team but not delegate the decision to be taken.
- 13.2.5 During the investigation, the Headteacher (or investigator) will:
- 13.2.6 If necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish to keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

13.2.7 After their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within fifteen working days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

13.2.8 If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the Complainant with an update and revised response date.

13.2.9 The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the Trust Academy will take to resolve the complaint.

13.2.10 The Headteacher will advise the Complainant on how to escalate their complaint if they believe it has not been fully addressed at this stage.

13.2.11 If the complaint is about the Headteacher or a member of the Trust's Board (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), an appropriately skilled Trustee will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

13.2.12 Complaints about the Headteacher or member of the Trust's Board must be made to the Clerk via the Academy's office using the Complaints Form in Appendix B.

13.2.13 If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice-Chair; or
- the entire Board; or
- the majority of the Board;

13.3 The complaint will move to Stage 2 of the process and be investigated by the Trust CEO. The process will mirror that described in the governor's investigation. After their investigation, the CEO will provide a formal written response to the Complainant with a copy to the Headteacher.

13.4 Stage 2 – Directors Investigation

13.4.1 If the Complainant believes that their complaint has not been fully addressed at Stage 1, they may request a Director's investigation. This should be done in writing, preferably using the Complaint Form (see Appendix A for the Clerk's contact details to the Governors and Appendix B for a copy of the form) specifying how their complaint has not been fully addressed.

13.4.2 A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk (see Appendix A) within ten working days of the Stage 1 response. The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five working days.

13.4.3 Requests received outside this timeframe will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

13.4.4 Note: Exceptional circumstances are defined here as circumstances that could not reasonably have been foreseen and for which there is insufficient time to take the necessary action to resolve the situation arising from those circumstances within the published timescales.

13.4.5 The Chair of the Trust's Board may choose to delegate the investigation of the complaint to a Nominated Director who may be independent of the Academy at the sole discretion of the Chair of the Trust's Board. The investigating director will have had no prior involvement in the complaint.

13.4.6 In order to clarify which parts of the complaint have not been fully addressed or which parts of the process have not been carried out effectively, the Nominated Director will consider all relevant evidence; this may include but is not limited to:

- evidence and outcome from Stage 1 investigation, if applicable
- a statement from/discussion with the Complainant
- where relevant a meeting with/statement from the Headteacher/ Investigator of Stage 1
- any previous correspondence regarding the complaint
- any supporting documents from all parties
- interviews with / statements from anyone related to the complaint
- relevant policies and whether they were followed.

13.4.7 After considering the available evidence, the Nominated Director may:

- uphold the complaint and direct that certain action be taken to resolve it;
- dismiss the complaint in part: in other words, the Nominated Director may find one aspect of the complaint to be valid, but not another aspect. They may recommend certain action to be taken to resolve any aspect that they find in favour of the Complainant;
- dismiss the complaint in full.

13.5 The Nominated director should inform the Complainant of their decision in writing within fifteen working days of receipt of the request to escalate to Stage 2. They should explain clearly why they have come to the decision that they made. They should detail any agreed actions as a result of the complaint. Finally, they should provide the Complainant with details of how to progress the complaint to Stage 3 if they believe their complaint has not been fully addressed, providing them with the Clerk's Trust's Board.

13.6 Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

13.6.1 If the Complainant does not believe that their complaint has been fully addressed at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3. This consists of a Panel Hearing with at least three Directors not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint or any previous investigation. One of the Complaint Panel members will be independent of the management and running of the Academy. This means that the independent Complaint Panel member will not be a Trustee or an employee of the Trust. The independent panel member may be a governor at one of the other Academy s in the Trust.

13.6.2 Before the hearing, the panel members will decide who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Appeal Panel. This is the final stage of the Academy's complaints procedure.

13.7 Timeline for Panel Hearing

13.7.1 A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the Academy office, within ten working days of receipt of the Stage 2 response. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply and are explained to the Clerk at the same time that the request for a Stage 3 hearing is made.

13.7.2 The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five working days.

13.7.3 The Clerk will write to the Complainant to inform them of the meeting's date, which may be held by video conference if appropriate. They will aim to convene a meeting within thirty working days of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the Complainant informed. If the Complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. In this case, the Panel will meet with the Clerk in attendance and consider the complaint based on both parties' written submissions, with neither party being present.

13.7.4 At least fifteen working days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify both parties of the date, time, and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the Complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible and
- inform all parties that copies of any further written material should be submitted to the Clerk at least ten working days before the meeting. Any evidence submitted after this, including the day of the hearing, will only be considered in exceptional circumstances with the Panel's agreement, whose final decision.

13.8 Any written material will be collated and circulated by the Clerk to all parties to receive at least five working days before the meeting date. The Panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

13.9 Attendees at the meeting

- The Clerk will invite the following parties as applicable:
- a panel of three directors, one or more of whom is independent of the Complainant
- the Headteacher
- the investigator (if appropriate)
- the Nominated Director who dealt with the complaint at Stage 2
- relevant witnesses

- 13.10 The Complainant may ask to be accompanied to the meeting by a supportive companion, interpreter, or advocate. This person should not be a member of the Academy community for confidentiality and avoid conflict of interest. The Complainant must advise the Clerk to the Complaint Review Panel of this additional

person's name and role before the hearing, and the Clerk will seek agreement from the Chair of the Panel. If the additional person is attending as an advocate, they will be presenting the Complainant's case and speaking on their behalf, and therefore the Complainant will not be able to address the Panel directly. If the additional person is attending as a supportive companion, they will not address the Panel directly.

- 13.11 As this is not a legal process, neither party may bring legal representation except in exceptional circumstances by the Panel's prior agreement. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

13.12 Conduct of the Meeting

- 13.12.1 The meeting aims to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the Academy and the Complainant. The Panel will:

- consider those aspects of the complaint that the Complainant believes have not been fully addressed at the previous stages in the complaints procedure and where the Complainant believes that the Academy has not followed its complaints policy.
- consider the effectiveness of the investigation process at Stages 1 and 2
- consider ways to resolve the complaint and, if possible, achieve reconciliation between the Academy and the Complainant

- 13.12.2 The Panel will consider handling the complaint at the previous stages and consider those aspects of the original complaint that the Complainant believes have not been fully addressed.

- 13.12.3 The panel hearing will consider the complaint as was submitted at stages 1 and 2. Any new issues will need to be dealt with by a separate complaint procedure.

- 13.12.4 We recognise that the Complainant might not be satisfied with the meeting's outcome does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations. Financial compensation is not a possible outcome of the process.

- 13.12.5 The meeting will be held in private and is confidential. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's disability or additional needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations are recorded. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

- 13.12.6 The Panel Chair's role is to ensure that the meeting is conducted professionally and that each party is treated with respect. In exceptional circumstances, the Panel Chair may decide to hold the

meeting with one party in the room at a time. In this case, the model agenda will need to be adapted accordingly.

13.12.7 The meeting's format is that the Complainant is given a set amount of time to make their case. The Panel and the Academy may then ask the complainant questions for clarification. The Academy then has the same amount of time to make their case. The Panel and Complainant then have the opportunity to seek clarification from the Academy. Both parties then leave the meeting, and the Panel will deliberate. (See Appendix C).

13.12.8 The Panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and will come to their decisions on the balance of probabilities. The Panel can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or part
- determine that all or part of the complaint is out of their scope to consider

13.12.9 If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the Panel will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the Academy's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

13.12.10 The Chair of the Panel will provide the Complainant and the Headteacher of the Trust's Academy with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, and a copy of the minutes of the Panel hearing, within ten working days.

13.12.11 The Complainant's letter will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they believe that their complaint has been handled unreasonably or unlawfully by the Trust.

13.12.12 The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the Trust's Academy will take to resolve the complaint.

13.12.13 The Panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by post, electronic mail or otherwise given to the Complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, with a copy to the Headteacher.

13.12.14 The Panel's findings and recommendations will also be made available for inspection on the Trust Board and the Headteachers Academy premises.

14. WRITTEN RECORDS

- 14.1 A written record will be kept of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing.
- 14.2 The complaint investigator/the Chair of the Complaint Review Panel will ensure that a copy of all relevant information relating to the complaint is kept at the Academy in a secure, confidential* file, separate from staff and pupil records.
- 14.3 This information should be retained for six years from the date of the complaint, in line with guidance from the Information and Records Management Society (www.irms.org.uk) and in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). The Complainant should be informed that this will be done.

* Please note that the Secretary of State or a body inspecting section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 may request access to complaints documentation.

15. COMPLAINTS ABOUT DIRECTORS

15.1 if the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice-Chair or
- the entire Board or
- the majority of the Board

15.2 Stage 3 will be heard by a committee of trustees and an independent panel member.

16. COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE TRUST

- 16.1 If a complainant wishes to complain directly about the Trust, then the complaint should be sent to the CEO to be investigated.
- 16.2 The CEO will write to the Complainant acknowledging the complaint within five working days of the date that the written request was received. The acknowledgment will confirm that the complaint will now be investigated under Stage 2 of this Complaints Policy and confirm the date for responding to the Complainant.
- 16.3 Following the investigation, the CEO will write to the Complainant confirming the outcome within fifteen working days of the letter's date. If this time limit cannot be met, the CEO will write to the Complainant explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised date.
- 16.4 If the complaint concerns the CEO or a Trustee, the Trust Board Chair should investigate the complaint. If a formal complaint form is received about the Chair, the complaint will be referred to the Vice-Chair for investigation.

Note: Where the Chair of the Trust Board has investigated the complaint, they will write the Complainant's outcome letter and provide a copy to the CEO.

16.5 If the Complainant is not satisfied with the previous stage's outcome, the Complainant should write to the Clerk to the Trust Board asking for the complaint to be heard before a Complaint Panel within ten working days. The procedure will mirror that outlined under Stage 3 – Panel Hearing above.

16.6 If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Trust or
- the entire Board or
- the majority of the Board,

16.7 Stage 3 will be heard by a completely independent panel.

17. NEXT STEPS

17.1 If the Complainant believes the academy/the Trust did not handle their complaint according to the published complaints procedure or acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the ESFA after they have completed Stage 3, the panel hearing.

17.2 The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any Trust Academy's decisions. They will consider whether the Trust's Academy has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed Part 7 of the Education (Independent Academy Standards) Regulations 2014.

17.3 The Complainant can refer their complaint to the ESFA online at www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone at 0370 000 2288, or by writing to:

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
5 Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

18. PROCEDURE FOR MANAGING SERIAL AND UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS

18.1 The Trust's academies are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our Academy. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will act to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive, or threatening.

18.2 The Trust's academies define unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the Complainant's contact with the Academy, such as, if the Complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to cooperate with the complaint's investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint's procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways that are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be considered and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the Academy's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on Academy 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
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive, or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes inappropriate information on social media or other public forums.

18.3 Complainants should try to limit their communication with the Academy related to their complaint while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email, or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

18.4 Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of the Board will discuss any concerns with the Complainant informally before determining that they may be acting "unreasonably".

18.5 If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the Complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact an Academy, causing

a significant disruption level, we may specify communication methods and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

- 18.6 In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the Trust Academy. A decision to bar an individual will be reviewed by either the Chair of Governors or a Governor's committee. If confirmed, the Academy will notify the decision in writing, confirming the length of when the Complainant may review it.
- 18.7 Procedure for managing complaint campaigns
- 18.8 In the rare event that the Academy receives a large volume of complaints, all based on the same subject, from complainants unconnected with the Academy, we will either send a template response to all complainants or publish a single response on the Academy's website.

19. APPENDIX A – CONTACT DETAILS FOR THE SOVEREIGN TRUST

Website: www.thesovereigntrust.uk

Email: admin@thesovereigntrust.uk Tel: 0161 976 1553

Contact Address: The Sovereign Trust, Manor Academy, Manor Avenue, Sale, M33 5JX.

- 19.1 Please contact the CEO for details of the Chair of Directors and Clerk to the Trustees.
- 19.2 Complaints against Academy staff (except the Headteacher) at an Academy in the Trust should be made in the first instance to the Headteacher. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
- 19.3 Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher of an Academy in the Trust should be addressed to the Academy's Chair of Governors, marked Private and Confidential.
- 19.4 Complaints about staff who work across the Trust should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), marked Private and Confidential.
- 19.5 Complaints about the Trust as an organisation should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), marked Private and Confidential.
- 19.6 Complaints about the CEO or a Trustee of the Trust should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees, marked Private and Confidential.
- 19.7 Complaints about the Chair of the Board or an individual on the Trust Board should be addressed to the Vice-Chair of Trustees marked Private and Confidential.

20. APPENDIX B – COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete and return to the Headteacher for Stage 1 or the Clerk for Stages 2 and 3, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken

Your Name:
Pupil's Name (if applicable):
Your relationship to the Pupil:
Address:
Postcode:
Daytime telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Email address:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the Academy about it.
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature:
Date:

Official use
Date acknowledgment sent:
By who:
The complaint referred to:
Action taken:
Date:

21. APPENDIX C: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

21.1 Complainant

The Complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the Academy in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or agree on the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

21.2 Investigator (Stage 1)

The investigator's role is to provide a comprehensive, open, transparent, and fair consideration of the complaint through:

- a sensitive and thorough discussion with the Complainant to establish their perspective and desired outcomes
- interviewing staff and other people relevant to the complaint
- consideration of records and other relevant information
- analysing information
- liaising with the Complainant and the complaints coordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

21.3 Chair of the Trust's Board/Nominated Director (Stage 2)

The Chair of Governors/Nominated Governor's role is to provide an impartial overview of the complaint, investigation, and procedure at Stage 1 by:

- ensuring they understand which elements(s) of the complaint or remain unaddressed for the Complainant
- gathering details about the specific issues involved in the complaint
- reviewing all documentation and correspondence associated with the complaint
- addressing their attention to unresolved aspects of the complaint
- liaising with Complainant and Headteacher/investigator as required for clarification
- investigating conflicting evidence by seeking corroborative evidence establishing desired outcomes
- identifying, if possible, a resolution or way forward.

21.4 Clerk to the Stage 3 Panel Hearing

The Clerk is the contact point for the Complainant and the Panel and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to Academy 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)
- set the date, time, and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the meeting minutes within ten working days of the meeting and notify all Panel decision parties.

21.5 Panel Chair

The Panel's Chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint panel hearing, will ensure that the meeting is conducted in line with the complaints procedure and best practice principles.

Panel members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial and should be seen to be so no governor/trustee may sit on the Panel if they have had prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it,
- they should read all documentation and understand the aims and purpose of the panel meeting, which is to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the Academy and the Complainant. We recognise that the Complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome
- of the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- Complainants may feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
- Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- Extra care needs to be taken if a child/young person is present during all or part of the meeting; the child/young person's welfare is paramount.