

Trust Education Group Ltd

Complaints Policy

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1. Who Can Make a Complaint

Anyone, including members of the public, may submit a complaint to the Directors of Trust Education Group Ltd regarding our facilities or services. Complaints covered by statutory procedures, such as appeals for school admissions or exclusions, are not included under this policy and follow separate statutory processes. All other complaints will follow the procedures outlined in this policy.

2. The Difference Between a Concern and a Complaint

A **concern** is an expression of worry or doubt about an important issue for which reassurance is sought. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however conveyed, about actions taken, or a failure to act.

Prompt resolution of concerns and complaints is in the best interest of all parties. Many issues can be addressed informally without progressing to the formal complaints procedure. Trust Education Group Ltd takes all concerns seriously and is committed to addressing matters efficiently and effectively.

If a complainant is uncomfortable discussing a concern with a particular staff member, this preference will be respected. In such instances, the Head Teacher will

refer the matter to another staff member who can provide objective and impartial consideration.

3. How to Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint

Concerns or complaints may be submitted in person, in writing, or by telephone. Third parties may submit concerns on behalf of a complainant with appropriate consent.

Concerns can initially be raised with a senior member of staff or the Head Teacher. If unresolved, a formal complaint may then be submitted. Complainants are advised not to approach individual governors, as governors do not have authority to act alone and may be involved in later stages of the process.

Complaints regarding staff (excluding the Head Teacher) should be addressed to the administration manager at Trust Education Group Ltd, marked as Private and Confidential. Complaints concerning the Head Teacher should be directed to the Chair of Governors via the administration manager. Complaints regarding governors or the governing body should be sent to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the administration manager.

Staff complaints are managed under internal grievance procedures. Assistance with completing complaint forms is available from the administration manager or a nominated supporter, and reasonable adjustments will be made in line with equality law to ensure all complainants can access this procedure.

4. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints are generally not investigated unless the Head Teacher, Directors, or Chair of Governors determines otherwise after seeking advice.

5. Timescales

Complaints should be submitted within three months of the incident or the last in a series of incidents. Complaints received outside this timeframe will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

6. Complaints Received Outside of Term Time

Complaints submitted during school holidays will be treated as received on the first school day after the break.

7. Scope of This Complaints Procedure

This procedure applies to all complaints regarding services provided by Trust Education Group Ltd, except those handled under separate statutory procedures, including:

- **Admissions and statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs:** To be raised with Lancashire County Council via their online complaints portal.
- **Child Protection Matters:** Handled under our safeguarding policy and in line with statutory guidance. Serious concerns can also be directed to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) at LADO.Admin@lancashire.gov.uk or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) at 0300 123 7720.
- **Exclusion of Children:** Information on exclusions can be found at www.gov.uk/schools. Complaints about behaviour policy applications are covered by this procedure.
- **Whistleblowing:** Staff may raise concerns under the internal whistleblowing procedure or refer to the Secretary of State for Education via www.education.gov.uk/contactus.
- **Staff Grievances and Conduct:** Handled under internal grievance or disciplinary procedures. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken.
- **Services Provided by Third-Party Providers:** Complaints should be directed to the provider using their own procedures.
- **National Curriculum Content:** Queries can be raised with the Department for Education via www.education.gov.uk/contactus.

External investigations or legal proceedings may affect the ability of Trust Education Group Ltd to adhere to standard timescales. The procedure may be paused while investigations or legal actions are ongoing.

8. Resolving Complaints

Trust Education Group Ltd seeks to resolve complaints in a fair and satisfactory manner. Potential outcomes may include:

- Explanation of events and reasoning
- Admission of shortcomings or areas for improvement
- Assurance of steps to prevent recurrence
- Description of actions taken or planned, with indicative timescales
- Review of relevant school policies
- Apology, where appropriate

The goal is to demonstrate openness, accountability, and to learn from complaints to improve practice.

9. Withdrawal of a Complaint

A complainant wishing to withdraw their complaint must confirm this in writing.

10. Complaints Procedure

Stage 1: Formal Complaint to Director of Education

Formal complaints should be addressed to the Director of Education (Melissa Wainman) (unless the complaint concerns the Director of Education). Complaints may be submitted in person, in writing, or by telephone. Upon receipt, the Director of Education will record the complaint and acknowledge it in writing within five school days.

The Director of Education may delegate investigation duties, but the final decision remains with them. Investigations may include:

- Interviews with relevant parties, allowing accompaniment
- Written records of meetings
- A formal written response within ten school days, including outcomes and actions

Complaints about the Director of Education or governors are investigated by a suitably skilled governor or independent investigator.

Stage 2: Governing Body Complaints Committee

If unsatisfied with Stage 1, the complainant may escalate the matter to a complaints committee of at least three impartial governors. Requests must be made to the Clerk within five school days of Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will arrange the meeting, ensure accessibility, circulate materials in advance, and record the proceedings. The committee may conduct a meeting or review written representations, allowing support for all parties. The committee will:

- Consider evidence impartially
- Uphold or dismiss complaints wholly or partially
- Recommend actions to prevent recurrence
- Provide a written explanation within three school days

Independent governors may be appointed if necessary.

11. Next Steps

If a complainant believes the procedure was not followed or statutory law breached, they may contact the Department for Education after completing Stage 2. The Department does not usually reinvestigate substance but reviews adherence to legislation. Complaints can be referred online, by phone at 0370 000 2288, or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate, Store Street
Manchester, M1 2WD

12. Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant:

- Provide full details early and cooperate
- Respond promptly to requests
- Request support if needed
- Treat all involved with respect
- Maintain confidentiality

Investigator:

- Conduct sensitive interviews
- Review records and analyse information
- Keep detailed notes and maintain secure documentation
- Prepare comprehensive report with findings and recommendations

Director of Education:

- Keep complainant updated
- Liaise with relevant parties
- Maintain records and support accessibility needs
- Ensure confidentiality

Clerk to the Governing Body:

- Ensure legal rights and duties are observed
- Arrange accessible meetings
- Collate and distribute materials
- Record proceedings and notify decisions

Committee Chair:

- Ensure meetings are informal and respectful
- Explain process clearly
- Oversee fair consideration of all issues
- Ensure minutes are accurate and confidential

Committee Members:

- Maintain independence and impartiality
- Focus on resolution and reconciliation
- Ensure children's voices are respected

- Consider appropriate support for all attendees

The welfare of children and young people remains paramount throughout the complaints process.

13. Appendices

Appendix 1: Complaint Form

To be submitted to the Director of Education / Clerk / Designated Governor

- Name:
- Pupil Name (if applicable):
- Relationship to Pupil:
- Address:
- Contact Numbers:
- Details of Complaint:
- Actions to Resolve:
- Attached Paperwork:
- Signature & Date:

For Official Use:

- Date Acknowledgement Sent:
- By Whom:
- Complaint Referred To:
- Date:

Appendix 2: Expanded Roles and Responsibilities

Roles are integrated into the policy (see Section 12) with further emphasis on:

- Independence and impartiality
- Respect for children and families
- Clear communication and documentation
- Accountability and adherence to timescales

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