



*Status: FINAL
Approval Date: 7th October 2016
Committee: Board of Directors
Review Period: Three Years
Requirement: Mandatory
Delegation: Personnel Committee*

COMPLAINTS POLICY 2016 - 2019

1. Rationale and Aim

Ralph Sadleir School takes all complaints seriously. The aim of this document is to set out how any complaint from any parent, carer, pupils and other is dealt with and to ensure that it is handled in the most appropriate and efficient manner by the Academy Trust.

The School aims to work closely with parents, and we hope that parents who have any concerns or anxieties will in the first instance raise these with the Class Teacher, Subject Teacher, Pupil Progress Co-ordinator, Faculty Leader or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. If they are not sure whom to approach, they are invited to get in touch with the School Office. We find that nearly all concerns or potential complaints can be resolved happily through discussion.

The governors of the School have adopted the complaints procedure for schools recommended by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and may be reviewed as we deem it appropriate or as required by Law or Regulation, or in line with advice received from HCC and the Department of Education (DFE).

This procedure complies with Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, meets the standards set out in the Education (Independent School Standards (England) Regulations 2014, Schedule 1, Part 7 and is endorsed by the Academy Trust Board of Directors.

This policy should be used for:

- Complaints relating to the schooling of your child;
- Complaints about the education and care provided to pupils at the Academy Trust;
- Complaints about the Academy Trust operational arrangements.

This policy should not be used for:

- Complaints by staff relating to grievances about their employment;
- Complaints about the actions of a governor;
- Complaints about the actions of another parent;
- Allegations of abuse;
- Issues between the school and community groups.

This policy is limited to matters which can reasonably be investigated and therefore complaints should be related to matters which have occurred within the last 12 months.

The Complaints Policy can be downloaded from the Academy Trust website www.ralphsadleir.herts.sch.uk or a copy can be obtained from the school office by telephoning 01920 821042 or by email request to admin@ralphsadleir.herts.sch.uk or by written request to Business Manager, Ralph Sadleir School, Station Road, Puckeridge, SG11 1TF.

HOW TO COMMENT OR COMPLAIN

2. We care about what you think

Each day this school makes many decisions and tries hard to do the best for all the children. Your comments - either positive or negative - are helpful for future planning.

You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of this school, though not actually make a complaint - you just want to get something 'off your chest'.

If you are dissatisfied about the way your child is being treated, or any actions or lack of action by us, please feel free to contact us using the details listed above.

3. Our aims

- Your complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.
- Your complaint will be looked into thoroughly and fairly.
- If your complaint is urgent we will deal with it more quickly.
- We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage.
- You will get an apology if we have made a mistake.
- You will be told what we are going to do to put things right.
- You will get a full and clear written reply to formal complaints within **28 school days (5½ weeks)**.

4. How to make a complaint

In the first instance – informal stage

If you have a concern about anything we do, or if you wish to make a complaint, you can do this by telephone, in person or in writing (by letter or email). We hope that most complaints can be settled quickly and informally, either by putting matters right or by giving you an explanation. If there is something you are not happy about, or you don't understand why we are doing something in a particular way, please come in and discuss it with the class/subject teacher or another appropriate member of staff, such as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) if it is about Special Needs.

We know that it can feel uncomfortable to question or challenge something, but if you don't tell us what is worrying you we cannot explain what we are doing or try to put it right. If the

member of staff you speak to in the first instance is unable to attempt to resolve the matter, you should make an appointment with the Headteacher. You should be able to sort out your worries but sometimes this is not possible. In this case there is a next step.

First - formal stage

Request a meeting with the Headteacher who will investigate your complaint and aim to inform you of the outcome **within 10 school days (2 weeks)**.

If your first contact is with individual Governors, they will advise you to take up your concerns with the appropriate member of staff or Headteacher. A Governor should not be made aware of a potential complaint as they may be required to sit on a Panel in the event of a formal hearing (Stage Two) and should be impartial.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should **write to the Chair of Board of Directors**. If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) you might find it helpful to talk to our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) or your child's named Special Needs Officer at the Local Authority. The SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS – formerly Parent Partnership) may also be able to help you.

Second - formal stage

If you remain dissatisfied following Stage 1 and wish to take your complaint further, you will be asked to complete a form attached or write a letter addressed to the Chair of Governors. In the letter you should:

- Make it clear why you are complaining.
- Say who you have spoken to already.
- Explain what you want to happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair of Governors will arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated under the arrangements approved by the Governing Body. This is likely to involve a Panel of Governors. If the Chair of Governors or another Governor has been involved in discussions to help settle the disagreement at Stage 1, s/he should arrange for another Governor to take charge of the investigation. The Governor in charge of investigating the complaint may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns.

You should make sure that the Governors' Complaint Panel is provided with any written information or evidence you intend to use in a formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. The Chair of the Panel may invite any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. The Chair should tell you who this person is before the meeting. If any member of staff is required by the Governing Body to attend a meeting they will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named in a complaint may also choose to attend a meeting, even if not required to do so by the Governors. They may be represented. If this happens, we will inform you in advance.

When the Panel has fully investigated your complaint, the Chair of the Panel or the Governor in charge of the investigation will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the Governing Body. The Chair of Governors will then write to you confirming

the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. Our Governing Body will aim to deal with your complaint **within 28 school days (5½ weeks)**.

Further recourse

Most complaints are resolved by this process. Should your complaint not be resolved, your further options are as follows:

In the case of complaints about **Special Educational Needs provision**, you may complain further to the Local Authority. This should be done by writing to the Children's Services Complaints Manager.

It should be noted however that if you wish to pursue this route, you must do so within **20 working days (4 weeks)** of receiving the written outcome of the hearing into your complaint. After **20 working days (4 weeks)**, neither the school nor the Local Authority is under any obligation to investigate or progress your complaint any further.

The Education Funding Agency (EFA) support Academy Trusts and will consider complaints about academies that fall into the following three areas:

- Where there is undue delay or the academy did not comply with its own complaints procedure when considering a complaint.
- Where the academy is in breach of its funding agreement with the Secretary of State.
- Where an academy has failed to comply with any other legal obligation.

The EFA will not overturn an academy's decision about a complaint. However, if they find an academy did not deal with a complaint properly, they will require the complaint is looked at again and procedures meet the requirements set out in the Regulations.

5. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years and/or in light of any changes in legislation by the Personnel Committee (a subcommittee of the Local Governing Body) and any changes recommended to the policy will be made to the Board of Directors for approval.

| Governance | Chair Person / Headteacher | Signature | Date |
|--------------------|----------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|
| Board of Directors | Mrs J Tye | | 7 th October 2016 |

The next review will take place prior to October 2019.

Useful contacts

Academies Central Unit (Academy Complaints), Education Funding Agency, Earlsdon Park,
53-55 Butts Road, Coventry, CV1 3BH
Email: academyquestions@efa.education.gov.uk

Advisory Centre for Education

Education Advice & Training
72 Durnsford Road
London
N11 2EJ
Web: www.ace-ed.org.uk
Phone: **0300 0115 142**

POhWER

Hertlands House
Primett Road
Stevenage
SG1 3EE
Web: www.pohwer.net
Phone: **0300 456 2370**

Children's Legal Centre

Riverside Office Centre
Century House North
North Station Road
Colchester
Essex
CO1 1RE
Web: www.childrenslegalcentre.com
Phone: **0345 345 4345**

National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)

Egerton House
Tower Road
Birkenhead
Wirral
CH41 1FN
Web: www.nyas.net
Phone: **0345 345 4345**

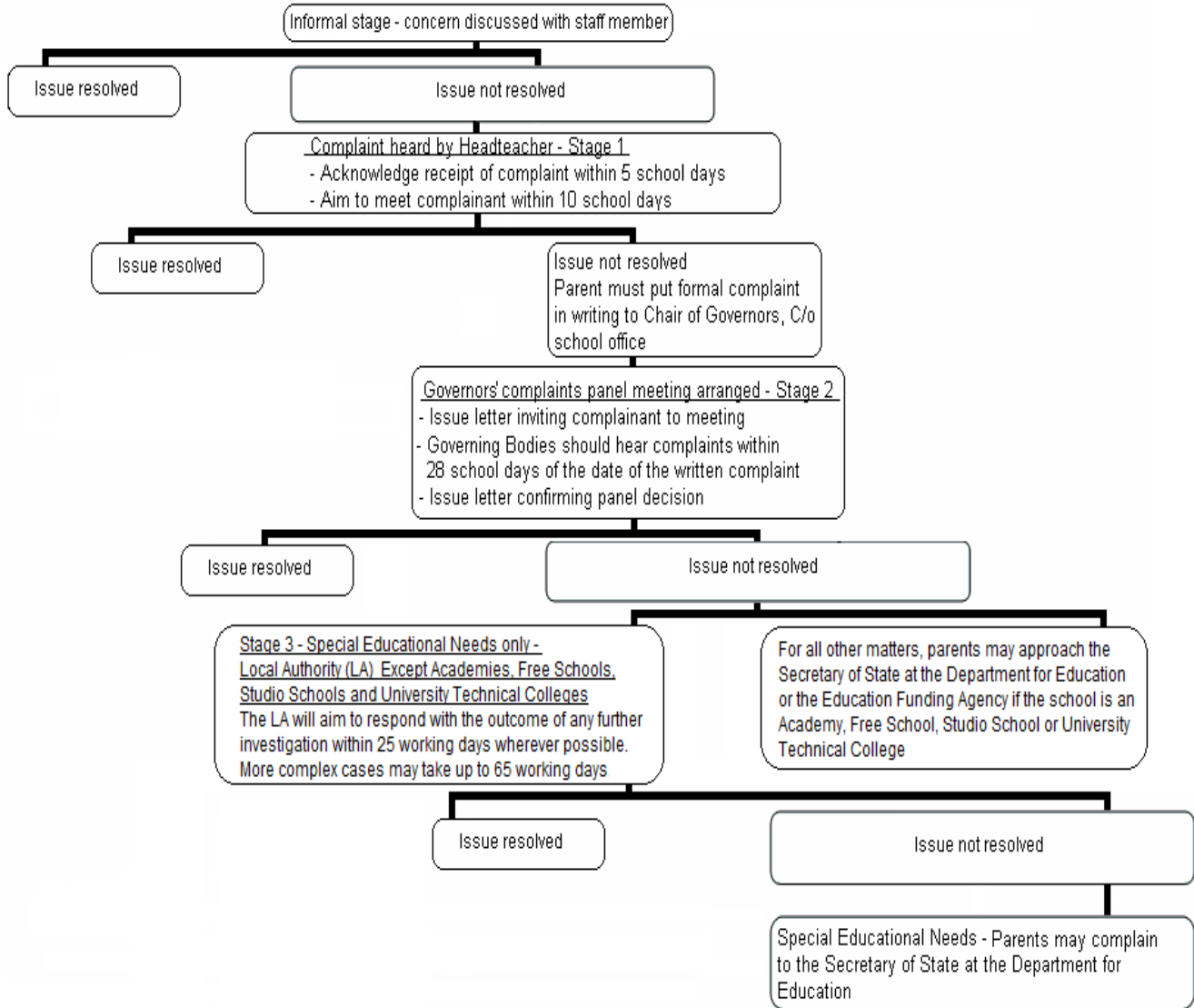
SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs & Disability Information Advice Support Service –
formerly Parent Partnership)

Registry Office Block
CHR102
County Hall
Hertford
SG13 8DF
Web: www.hertsdirect.org/parentpartnership
Email: parent.partnership@hertfordshire.gov.uk
Phone: **01992 555847**

Family Lives (Formerly Parentline Plus)

15-17 The Broadway
Hatfield
Hertfordshire
AL9 5HZ
Web: www.familylives.org.uk
Phone: **0808 800 2222**

Dealing with Complaints



Annex A

Formal Complaint Form

| | | |
|----------------------|----------------|--|
| Name | | |
| Address | | |
| Postcode | | |
| Email address | | |
| Telephone No. | Day | |
| | Evening | |
| | Mobile | |

| | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------|
| What is it you want to complain about? | | |
| | | |
| Have you raised your issue with the Class Teacher (informal stage)? If so, when did you do this? | YES (Include Date) | NO |
| Have you complained to the Headteacher (Stage1)? | YES | NO |
| When did you do this? | Date: | |
| What happened when you complained to the Headteacher? | | |
| | | |