



Steel City Schools Partnership

Compliments & Complaints Policy

Date of last review	May 2019
Date of next review	01.09.2020

Compliments and Complaints policy

This policy statement sets out Steel City Schools Partnership's approach to dealing with parental compliments, concerns and complaints. Further details of how we handle them are contained in our procedures document, which you can obtain on request from the Trust / Academy office.

If you're not happy please tell us, if you're happy please tell others!

We are always more than happy to receive compliments from parents or members of the community when we do something well. If you would like to address any such letters or notes to the Principal we would be very grateful. We are also very happy to receive compliments via social media such as our twitter accounts and through Parent View.

We always aim to maintain positive relationships with parents and carers and do our best to address any concerns as soon as they arise. However we are aware that in some instances a parent/carer may wish to make a complaint.

- We value good home/school relations and will, therefore, do everything we can to establish and maintain them. This includes seeking to resolve any concerns or complaints promptly, and to the satisfaction of all concerned.
- We welcome feedback on what parents feel we do well (see appendix D), or not so well, as an Academy / Trust. We will consider carefully all feedback, whether positive or negative, and will review our policies and practices accordingly.
- We will treat all concerns and complaints seriously and courteously and will advise parents and others of the Trust's procedures for dealing with their concerns. In return, we expect parents and other complainants to behave respectfully towards all members of the Trust community. In particular, any disagreement with the Academy / Trust should not be expressed inappropriately or in front of pupils.
- All Trust staff, Directors and Governors will receive a copy of this policy statement and will be familiar with the Trust's procedures for dealing with parental concerns and complaints, to which they will have access as required. The policy is available on request to parents.
- The Trust's procedures will be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary.
- Staff, Directors and governors will receive training in handling parental concerns and complaints as appropriate. This may be on an individual basis, or as a group activity for all staff, or for specific groups, such as the office staff or Governors.
- Whilst we will seek to resolve concerns and complaints to the satisfaction of all parties, it may not be possible to achieve this in every case. We will, therefore,

use our option to close a complaint before all the stages of the Trust's procedures have been exhausted, if this appears to be appropriate.

- The government advocate resolution of parental concerns and complaints at Academy level wherever possible, in the interests of maintaining good home/school relations.

Complaints procedure

Steel City Schools Partnership procedures for dealing with complaints. Our policy complies with The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2010.

The majority of concerns from parents, carers and others are handled under the following general procedures which offers three stages:

- **The Informal stage** aims to resolve the concern through informal contact at the appropriate level in the Academy, for example with a senior member of staff.
- **Stage 1** is the first formal stage when the complaint is made in writing and are considered and responded to by the Principal or chair of governors, who has special responsibility for dealing with complaints.
- **Stage 2** is the next stage once stage 1 has been worked through. It involves a complaints appeal panel of governors. The panel comprises at least three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom must be independent of the management and running of the school. Parents will be allowed to attend the panel and be accompanied if they wish.

How each of these stages operates is explained below:

Informal stage – your initial contact with the Academy

1. Many concerns will be dealt with informally when you make them known to us. The first point of contact should be your child's teacher.
2. Once your concern is made known to us, we will see you, or contact you by telephone or in writing, as soon as possible. If it is necessary, all members of staff know how to refer to the appropriate person with responsibility for your particular issues. He or she will make a clear note of the details and will check later to make sure that the matter has been followed up.
3. Any actions or monitoring of the situation that has been agreed, will be communicated clearly and we will confirm this in writing to you.
4. If necessary we will contact appropriate people who may be able to assist us with our enquiries into your concern.

5. We will normally update you on the progress of our enquiries within ten working days. Once we have responded to your concern, you will have the opportunity of asking for the matter to be considered further.
6. If you are still dissatisfied following this informal approach, your concern will become a formal complaint and we will deal with it at the next stage.

Stage 1 - formal consideration of your complaint

This stage in our procedures deals with written complaints. It applies where you are not happy with the informal approach to dealing with your concern, as outlined above.

1. Normally, your written complaint should be addressed to the Principal. If, however, your complaint concerns the Principal personally, it should be sent to the Academy marked "For the attention of the Chair of Governors".
2. We will acknowledge your complaint in writing as soon as possible after receiving it. This will be within three working days.
3. We will enclose a copy of these procedures with the acknowledgement.
4. Normally we would expect to respond in full within 15 working days but if this is not possible we will write to explain the reason for the delay and let you know when we hope to be able to provide a full response.
5. As part of our consideration of your complaint, we may invite you to a meeting to discuss the complaint and fill in any details required. If you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you to help you explain the reasons for your complaint.
6. The Principal or Chair of Governors may also be accompanied by a suitable person if they wish.
7. Following the meeting, the Principal, investigating officer or Chair of Governors [*designated governor*] will, where necessary, talk to witnesses and take statements from others involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, we will talk to the pupil concerned and, where appropriate, others present at the time of the incident in question.
8. We will normally talk to pupils with a parent or carer present, unless this would delay the investigation of a serious or urgent complaint, or where a pupil has specifically said that he or she would prefer the parent or carer not to be involved. In such circumstances, we will ensure that another member of staff, with whom the pupil feels comfortable, is present.
9. If the complaint is against a member of staff, it will be dealt with under the Trust's internal confidential procedures, as required by law.
10. The Principal or Chair of Governors will keep written/typed, signed and dated records of all meetings and telephone conversations, and other related documentation.
11. Once we have established all the relevant facts, we will send you a written response to your complaint. This will give an explanation of the Principal's or

Chair of Governors' decision and the reasons for it. If follow-up action is needed we will indicate what we are proposing to do. We may invite you to a meeting to discuss the outcome as part of our commitment to building and maintaining good relations with you.

12. The person investigating your complaint may decide that we have done all we can to resolve the complaint, in which case we may use our discretion to close the complaint at this point. Please see the next page for further information about this process.
13. If you are unhappy with the way in which we reached our conclusions you may wish to proceed to stage 2, as described below.

Stage 2 - consideration by a Governors appeal panel

- If the complaint has already been through stage 1 and you are not happy with the outcome as a result of the way in which the complaint has been handled, you can take it further to a Governors appeal panel. This is a formal process, and the ultimate recourse at Academy level.
- The purpose of this arrangement is to give you the chance to present your arguments in front of a panel of Governors who have no prior knowledge of the details of the case and who can, therefore, consider it without prejudice.
- However, the aim of a panel is not to rehear the complaint. It is there to review how the complaint has been investigated and to determine whether this has been conducted fairly. It is there to establish facts and make recommendations which will reassure you that we have taken the complaint seriously.

The Governors appeal panel operates according to the following formal procedures:

1. The Governing body will convene a panel of three Governors and will aim to arrange for the panel meeting to take place within **20 working days**.
2. You will be asked whether you wish to provide any further written documentation in support of your appeal.
3. The Principal or complaint investigator will be asked to prepare a written report for the panel. The panel can request additional information from other sources if necessary.
4. You will be informed, at least **five working days** in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting. We hope you will feel comfortable with the meeting taking place in the Academy but we will do what we can to make alternative arrangements if you prefer.
5. With the letter, you will receive any relevant correspondence or reports regarding stage 1 and you will be asked whether you wish to submit further written evidence to the panel.

6. The letter will explain what will happen at the panel meeting and that you are entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. The choice of person to accompany you is your own, but it is usually best to involve someone in whom you have confidence but who is not directly connected with the Academy. They are there to give you support but also to witness the proceedings and to speak on your behalf if you wish.
7. If it is necessary in the interests of the ratifying the investigative process, the complaint investigator may, with the agreement of the chair of the panel, invite relevant witnesses directly involved in matters raised by you to attend the meeting.
8. The chair of the panel will bear in mind that the formal nature of the meeting can be intimidating for you and will do his or her best to put you at your ease.
9. As a general rule, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants. If either party wishes to do so, the meeting will be adjourned so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence.
10. The chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted. Please understand that any decision to share the minutes with you, the complainant, is a matter for the panel's discretion and you do not have an automatic right to see or receive a copy as the minutes are the property of the Governing Body. Since such minutes usually name individuals, they are understandably of a sensitive and, therefore, confidential nature.
11. Normally the written outcome of the panel meeting, which will be sent to you, should give you all the information you require. If, however, you feel that you would like to have a copy of the minutes it would be helpful if you could indicate this in advance. If the panel is happy for the minutes to be copied to you, the clerk can then be asked maintain confidentiality in the minutes.
12. During the meeting, you can expect there to be opportunities for:
 - The panel to hear you explain your case and your argument for why it should be heard at stage 2;
 - The panel to hear the complaint investigator's case in response;
 - you to raise questions via the chair;
 - you to be questioned by the complaint investigator through the chair;
 - the panel members to be able to question you and the complaint investigator;
 - you and the Principal to make a final statement.
13. In closing the meeting, the chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to you and the Principal **within three school days**. All participants other than the panel and the clerk will then leave.
14. The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:

- reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the case;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken, if necessary;
- recommend, where appropriate, to the Governing Body changes to the Academy / Trust's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again.

15. The clerk will send you and the Principal a letter outlining the decision of the panel. The letter will also explain that you are entitled to have the handling of the complaint reviewed by the Directors of Steel City Schools Partnership. That process is not strictly an appeal however it is an opportunity to seek the view of an official third party and the outcome, including any recommendations, may be helpful to you in seeking resolution of the complaint, through the Secretary of State for Education if necessary.

16. We will keep a copy of all correspondence and notes on file in the Academy's records but separate from pupils' personal records.

Closure of complaints

- Very occasionally, the Academy and/or the Trust will feel that it needs, regretfully, to close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied.
- We will do all we can to help to resolve a complaint against the Academy / Trust but sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all of the complainant's wishes. Sometimes it is simply a case of "agreeing to disagree".
- If a complainant persists in making representations to the Academy – to the Principal, designated governor, Chair of Governors or anyone else – or to the local authority, this can be extremely time-consuming and can detract from our responsibility to look after the interests of all the children in our care.
- For this reason, we are entitled to close correspondence (including personal approaches, as well as letters and telephone calls) on a complaint where we feel that we have taken all reasonable action to resolve the complaint and that the complaint has exhausted our official process. The Directors of Steel City Schools Partnership will support us in this position, and especially where the complainant's action is causing distress to staff and/or pupils.
- In exceptional circumstances, closure may occur before a complaint has reached stage 2 of the procedures described in this document. This is because a complaints panel takes considerable time and effort to set up and we must be sure that it is likely to assist the process of investigating the complaint. The Chair of Governors may decide, therefore, that every reasonable action has been undertaken to resolve the complaint and that a complaints review panel would not help to move things forward.

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? Who did you speak to, when and what was the response?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Signature

Date

Official Use:

Date of acknowledgement	
By whom	
Complaint referred to	
Date	

Annexe A

Complaints which are subject to statutory procedures

Some areas of complaint are subject to statutory procedures and there is clear guidance on how such issues should be dealt with. These include:

- ❖ admissions
- ❖ child protection
- ❖ drugs
- ❖ equal opportunities
- ❖ exclusions
- ❖ health and safety
- ❖ National Curriculum
- ❖ religious education and collective worship
- ❖ sex education
- ❖ special educational needs
- ❖ staff capability
- ❖ staff discipline
- ❖ staff grievance
- ❖ racist incidents

The Principal will in most cases determine which if any of these statutory procedures apply.

If one of these statutory procedures needs to be invoked at some point during the investigation of a more general complaint the complaints procedure should be suspended until the statutory procedure has been concluded.

Annexe B

Model complaint closure letter – stage 1

MODEL CLOSURE LETTER FOR FORMAL STAGE 1 – PRINCIPAL

Dear Mr and Mrs X

FORMAL STAGE 1 COMPLAINT ABOUT Y AND ACADEMY Z

Thank you for your letter dated.... From your letter(s) it is clear that you are still unhappy with the situation. As a result I have decided to have the matter investigated as part of formal stage 1 of the school's complaints procedure.

You complain that:

Summary of complaint to be stated. State each point separately

I have completed my investigation and can offer the following response(s) on each of the points you have raised.

1. Concerning your complaint that
2. Concerning your complaint that

It is important that you are clear about what action the school has taken at each stage of the process so far:

Informal stage

State what action was taken in response and the outcome of this.

Formal stage 1

State what investigative action was taken in response and the outcome of this, including any remedial action to be taken if complaint is upheld.

I hope this response answers your concerns. Please let me know if you wish me to clarify any points.

In the meantime, if you are still not satisfied with my reply, there is a further stage of the complaints procedure that you can follow. This formal stage 2 is a review by a panel of Governors who will look at the way in which your complaint has been dealt with. The panel will not, however, rehear the whole case.

To go to the next formal stage 2, you should write to the Chair of Governors within ten days of the receipt of this letter, giving your reasons why you wish to take your complaint further. If you are still not satisfied with the results of the formal stage 2 panel of governors, you can complain to the Directors who will carry out an investigation into the way in which your complaint has been handled.

Yours sincerely

Annexe C

Model complaint closure letter – stage 2

MODEL CLOSURE LETTER FOR FORMAL STAGE 2 - GOVERNORS PANEL

Dear Mrs and Mrs

FORMAL STAGE 2 COMPLAINT ABOUT Y AND ACDEMY Z

The panel met on ...date...to hear your appeal regarding your complaint which can be summarised as follows:

That so and so/the school did/said/did not,...

- **Legal or administrative background**

State any legal or administrative background to the case, including any legislation relevant to the investigation.

- **The investigation**

Set out the key facts about the complaint, the findings and conclusions from the Formal stage 1 investigation, and any continuing concerns.

- **Conclusion**

Set out the findings of the panel

- **Panel decision**

Outcome of the decision

Please let me know if you wish me to clarify any points for you.

In the meantime, if you remain dissatisfied with the way in which your complaint has been dealt with, there is another stage of the complaints procedure that you can write to the Directors of Steel City Schools Partnership to examine the process that we have followed. SCSP will appoint a review officer who will check that:

- reasonable procedures have been followed;
- that you have been treated fairly; and
- that there has been no breach of statutory regulations.

I must remind you that the decision of the panel is final. The Directors of SCSP do not have the power to set aside the decision of the panel. It may only comment on the fairness of the process. To follow this stage, please contact:

The Directors of SCSP
Monteney Primary
Monteney Crescent
Sheffield
S5 9DN

Yours sincerely

Annexe D

Steel City Schools Partnership

Compliments Feedback form

Name of Academy:
Name
Address
Post Code
Daytime telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Name of child(ren) and year at the Academy, if applicable
Your relationship to the Academy: I.e. Parent, carer, neighbour, member of the public, student

Please give details of your compliment including, if appropriate, who you would like thanked:

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