Victoria Academies Trust
Complaints Procedure

Date of last review	July 2026	Review Period	2 year
Date of Next Review	July 2028	AC or Board Approved	Board
Type of Policy	Trust	Signed (chair)	

Who can make a complaint?

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

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. Victoria Academies Trust takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.
If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, the Trust will respect your views. In these cases, the head teacher of the individual school will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, they 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.
The Trust understands however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Victoria Academies Trust will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

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 on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.
If sending a complaint via email, this should be sent to complaints@victrust.org.
A template is included within this document to help with the structure of complaints.
Complaints against school staff (except the head teacher) should be made in the first instance, to the head teacher via the school office**.** Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
Complaints that involve or are about the head teacher should be addressed to the chair of the Academy Council (Local Governing Body) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
Complaints about the Chair of Academy Council, any individual councillor or the whole academy council be addressed to the Clerk to the Academy Council 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 Rob Elkington, Chair of Trustees, via the trust office at Victoria Park Academy. 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 a third-party organisation for example like the Citizens Advice to help you.
In accordance with equality law, the Trust 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.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Victoria Academies Trust recognises that complainants may choose to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools to assist in preparing correspondence or complaints.

The use of AI will not affect the consideration of a complaint provided that:

- the complaint reflects the complainant's genuine concerns and experiences;
- all information submitted is accurate to the best of the complainant's knowledge;
- allegations are supported by evidence where available;
- complaint points are clearly identifiable and capable of reasonable investigation.

The complainant remains responsible for the content of any complaint submitted, regardless of whether AI has been used in its preparation.

Where complaints contain excessive repetition, speculation, irrelevant material, legal commentary not directly relevant to the complaint, or material that is not reasonably capable of investigation, the Trust may request clarification, a summary of complaint points, or resubmission using the Trust's complaint form before commencing or continuing an investigation.

The use of AI does not exempt complainants from complying with the requirements of this complaints procedure.

Complaint Submission Requirements

To assist the Trust in investigating complaints fairly and efficiently, complainants should:

- clearly identify each complaint point;
- provide dates, times and locations where known;
- identify individuals involved where known;
- provide supporting evidence where available;
- state what outcome they are seeking.

Where a complaint is unclear, excessively lengthy, contains multiple unrelated issues, includes significant repetition, or does not identify a clear complaint capable of investigation, the Trust may request clarification before progressing the complaint.

Where clarification is required, complaint timescales may be suspended until sufficient information is received.

Anonymous complaints

The Trust will not normally investigate anonymous complaints.

However, the Headteacher, CEO or Chair of Trustees (as appropriate) may determine that an anonymous complaint warrants investigation where:

- safeguarding concerns are raised;
- there is a potential risk to health and safety;
- there is evidence of potential fraud, misconduct or illegality;
- the matter may pose a significant risk to the Trust, its schools, pupils, staff or reputation.

The decision whether to investigate an anonymous complaint shall be at the sole discretion of the Trust.

Time scales

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. The Trust will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time

The Trust will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Scope of this complaints procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services Victoria Academies Trust and its schools, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools	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	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. 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).
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-disciplineexclusions/exclusions. **complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.* Each school's behaviour policy can be accessed on their own school website)

• Whistleblowing	The Trust has an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. 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 direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school'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.
• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. 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.

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 this happens, the Trust will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action against an Academy in relation to their complaint, ~~we~~ the Trust will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Victoria Academies Trust wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, the Trust will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, the Trust may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that ~~the~~ the Trust will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- 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
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Learning Lessons

The Trust recognises complaints as an important source of organisational learning.

The Trust will periodically review complaints to identify recurring themes, trends and opportunities for improvement.

Where appropriate, complaints may lead to:

- policy review;
- procedural improvements;
- staff training;
- governance review;
- service improvements.

Individual complainants will not normally be informed of wider organisational actions taken as a result of complaints.

The Governance Professional will maintain a central complaints register and provide periodic reports to Trustees and Academy Councils identifying complaint themes, trends and lessons learned. The register will not normally identify individual complainants.

Withdrawal of a complaint

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

Stage 1 – Informal complaints

It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis.
Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher, year group lead, senior leader or head teacher.
Complainants should not approach individual academy councillors (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 Stage 3 of the procedure.
At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the appropriate person is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

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

Stage 2 – Formal complaints

Formal complaints must be made to the head teacher (unless they are about the head teacher), via the school office. This may be done in person or in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form). The head teacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.
Within this response, the head teacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The head teacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The head teacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the head teacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the head teacher will provide a formal written response within 20 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.
If the head teacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.
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 school or trust will take to resolve the complaint.
The head teacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.
If the complaint is about the head teacher, or a member of the Academy Council (local governing body, including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled member of trust staff or governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.
Complaints about the head teacher or member of the Academy Council must be made to the Clerk, via the school office. If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Academy Council or
- the majority of the Academy Council

Stage 2 will be escalated to the CEO of the Trust.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a panel hearing consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint with one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.
A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response.
The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.
Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 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. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.
If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Academy Council or
- the majority of the Academy Council

Then Stage 3 will be heard by the trustees and an independent panel member.
A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, the Trust does not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting.
However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.
Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under (Human Resources) staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend. At least 10 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant 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
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 5 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.
The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure. The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.
The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

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

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

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Victoria Academies Trust, or the individual school as appropriate with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days.
The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the) Department for Education (DfE) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Victoria Academies Trust. 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 Victoria Academies Trust will take to resolve the complaint.
The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher.
A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.
All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Complaints escalated to / about the Trust, CEO or Trustee

If a complaint is escalated to Victoria Academies Trust "the trust" or if a complainant wishes to complain directly about the trust, then the complaint should be sent to the Governance Professional at complaints@victrust.org to be investigated.

The Governance Professional will write to the complainant acknowledging the complaint within **5 school days** of the date that the written request was received. The acknowledgement will confirm that the complaint will now be investigated under Stage 1 of this Complaints Policy and will confirm the date for providing a response to the complainant.

Following the investigation, the CEO will write to the complainant confirming the outcome within **15 school days** of the date that the letter was received. If this time limit cannot be met, the CEO will write to the Complainant within **15 school days** of the date that the letter was received**,** explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised date.

If the complaint concerns the CEO or a Trustee, the complaint should be investigated by the Chair of the Trust Board. If a formal complaint form is received about the Chair, the complaint will be referred to the Vice Chair for investigation

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

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the previous stage, the complainant should write to the Clerk to the Trust Board asking for the complaint to be heard before a Complaint Panel, within 15 school days.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 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. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire trust board or
- the majority of the trust board

Then Stage 3 will be heard by a completely independent committee panel.

The Complaint Panel will consist of three members. None of the three members of the Complaint Panel will have been involved in the incidents or events which led to the complaint, or have been involved in dealing with the complaint in the previous stages, of have any detailed prior knowledge of the complaint. One of the Complaint Panel members will be independent of the management and running of the Academy Trust. This means that the independent Complaint Panel member will not be a Trustee or an employee of the Trust.

A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, the Trust does not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a trust employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend. At least 10 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant 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
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 5 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.
The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure. The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.
The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

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

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

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and Victoria Academies Trust with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 15 school days.
The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Victoria Academies Trust.
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 Victoria Academies Trust will take to resolve the complaint.
The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher.
A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.
All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school / trust did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education (DfE) after you have completed Stage 3 of this procedure.

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn decisions made by us. They may consider whether Victoria Academies Trust have adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed the 2014 legislation: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/schedule/made

You can refer your complaint to the DfE online at:
https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact_the_Department_for_Education

The DfE will only consider your complaint if you can provide evidence that we:

- do not have a complaints procedure
- did not provide a copy of our complaints procedure when requested
- do not have a procedure that complies with statutory regulations
- have not followed our published complaints procedure
- have not allowed our complaints procedure to be completed

The DfE will inform you that they are **not** able to:

- overturn our decision
- re-investigate your original complaint
- review the accuracy of minutes taken or documents provided
- order that compensation is paid
- direct us to discipline/exclude pupils
- force us to discipline/dismiss staff
- instruct us to apologise

Persistent and Unreasonable Complaints

Victoria Academies Trust is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain.

However, the Trust does not expect its staff, governors, trustees or volunteers to tolerate unacceptable behaviour.

The Trust may regard a complaint as unreasonable where a complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of the complaint;
- refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process;
- repeatedly raises the same issues after the complaints procedure has concluded;
- changes the basis of the complaint during an investigation;
- introduces excessive volumes of irrelevant information;
- makes unreasonable demands regarding timescales or outcomes;
- seeks outcomes that are unrealistic or outside the Trust's powers;
- uses abusive, offensive, discriminatory or threatening language;
- knowingly provides false or misleading information;
- publishes inaccurate, misleading or defamatory information relating to the complaint on social media or other public platforms;
- submits excessive volumes of correspondence which hinder the efficient investigation of the complaint.

The Trust may implement reasonable measures to manage such complaints including:

- requiring communication through a single point of contact;
- restricting the frequency of communication;
- requiring complaints to be submitted in writing;
- declining to respond to matters that have already been fully investigated;
- closing correspondence once the complaints procedure has been exhausted.

If the behaviour continues, the investigating officer or other appropriate individual will write to you explaining that your behaviour is unreasonable and ask you to change it. If you excessively contact us, causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a personalised communication plan. This will be reviewed periodically and at least every six months.

The Trust will always consider any new complaint on its own merits.

Vexatious complaints

The DfE defines vexatious complaints as:

- complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
- insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
- insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value

If your behaviour is causing a significant level of disruption, regardless of whether or not you have raised a complaint, we can implement a tailored communication strategy. For example, we can:

- restrict you to a single point of contact via an email address

- limit the number of times you can make contact, such as a fixed number of contacts per term

Different procedures apply to freedom of information (FOI) and data protection (DP) correspondence, as detailed in our Data Protection Policy. All requests for FOI and DP information should be sent via email to our Data Protection Officer: dpo@crocketts.org.uk.

We will act reasonably and consider any new complaint. Anyone has the right to raise a genuine new complaint at any time.

We may also suggest that you ask a third party to act on your behalf, such as the local Citizen's Advice Bureau.

If you persist to the point that may constitute harassment, we will seek legal advice. In some cases, injunctions and other court orders may be requested.

Once we have decided that it's appropriate to stop responding, you will be informed.

Social Media and Public Commentary

The Trust recognises the right of individuals to express opinions publicly.

However, complainants are expected to engage with the complaints process in good faith and avoid publishing confidential, inaccurate, misleading or defamatory information whilst a complaint remains under investigation.

The publication of information on social media or other public platforms may be considered by the Trust when determining whether a complaint is being pursued reasonably and in accordance with this procedure.

Nothing in this section prevents individuals from exercising their legal rights.

Appendix A: Model Concern Form (Stage 1: Informal)

Where appropriate, concerns should normally be submitted using the Stage 1 Concern Form contained at Appendix A. However, this is optional and concerns can still be raised face to face or by telephone.

Please complete and return to the school/ trust office marked for the attention of the Head Teacher, Chair of Academy Council, CEO, Chair of Trustees as appropriate, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken. This can also be emailed to complaints@victrust.org.

Stage 1 concern
Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:** **Email address:**

Please provide details about your concern. Please provide details such as what has happened, when it happened, who was involved, why you are concerned.

Have you spoken to anybody at the school about this matter? If so, please provide details of who you spoke to, when you spoke to them and what was discussed.
Please tell us what action or resolution you would like the school to consider.
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Have you used artificial intelligence (AI) to assist in drafting this complaint?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please note:

The Trust recognises that complainants may use AI tools to assist in preparing correspondence. However, the complainant remains responsible for the content of the complaint and the accuracy of all information provided.

I confirm that the information provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Action taken:

Date:

Appendix B: Model Complaint Form (Stage 2: Formal)

Please complete and email to complaints@victrust.org. or alternatively, return a paper copy to the school/ trust office marked for the attention of the Head Teacher, Chair of Academy Council, CEO, Chair of Trustees as appropriate, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Stage 2 complaint: Complaint panel statement
Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:** **Email address:**

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

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

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Have you used artificial intelligence (AI) to assist in drafting this complaint?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please note:

The Trust recognises that complainants may use AI tools to assist in preparing correspondence. However, the complainant remains responsible for the content of the complaint and the accuracy of all information provided.

Signature:

Date:

Official use
Date acknowledgement sent: **By who:**
Complaint referred to:
Action taken:
Date:

Appendix C: Model Panel Submission Form (Stage 3: Formal) [Optional Form]

In order to assist the panel in the deliberations, please use this form to expand on the points raised in your formal complaint. Please note that whilst further details about the same issues in the complaint can be added, the panel meeting is **not** an opportunity to raise a new complaint. Any new complaints must be raised as separate complaints in line with the complaints policy.

This form is optional, but if you do choose to submit it then please note it will be shared with the panel and Headteacher / Executive Leader / Investigating Officer as part of the meeting pack.

Please complete and email the form to complaints@victrust.org, or return to the school/ trust office marked for the attention of the Head Teacher, Chair of Academy Council, CEO, Chair of Trustees as appropriate, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Stage 3 complaint: Complaint panel statement
Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:** **Email address:**
Please provide a statement to the complaints panel explaining why you are dissatisfied with the response to your formal complaint.

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

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Have you used artificial intelligence (AI) to assist in drafting this complaint?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please note:

The Trust recognises that complainants may use AI tools to assist in preparing correspondence. However, the complainant remains responsible for the content of the complaint and the accuracy of all information provided.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Action taken:
Date:

Appendix D: Roles and Responsibilities

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 school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing 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.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
    - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
    - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint o consideration of records and other relevant information o analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the head teacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The head teacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-ordinator

(this could be the head teacher or CEO / designated complaints governor or trustee or other staff member providing administrative support)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, head teacher, CEO, Chair of Governors, Chair of Trust or the Clerk and to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:

  o sharing third party information o additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

Clerk to the Academy Council / Trust Board

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee 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 school 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 (for example: stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy

- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

  If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Committee Member

Committee 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 committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant

  The Trust recognises that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- many complainants will 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 when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting

  Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

  The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

  If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.