



EBOR ACADEMY TRUST

Policy Numbers

5

Parental Complaints Policy and Procedures

Approved By: Ebor Board of Trustees' ARAC and Standards Committees

Approval Date: September 2026

Review Period: Every 3 Years

Review Date: September 2029

The Trust will be responsible for reviewing this document from time to time to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

Author: *Head of Governance and Compliance*

Date Created/updated: *March 2026*

Version Number: *9*

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Ebor Academy Trust Parental Complaints Policy and Procedures.

1. Rationale

Ebor Academy Trust believes that a strong, healthy relationship between parents and schools is essential for a child's success. Our goal is to resolve issues quickly and positively through clear, mutually respectful communication. We are committed to ensuring that every complaint receives fair, proper consideration and a timely response. We will do all we can to resolve your concerns and to ensure you are happy with the education your child receives in our schools.

2. Aim

This policy is designed to provide a transparent, simple, and non-adversarial framework for resolving parental concerns and complaints. We encourage parents to use the Parentkind "Parent Guide to School Complaints" alongside this policy to help resolve issues constructively. The Trust endeavours to resolve all complaints informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Discussion at an early stage is the best way to resolve concerns and maintain a positive relationship.

3. Availability

This procedure is available on request to pupils and parents/carers of pupils and prospective pupils, of Ebor Academy Trust. While pupils may themselves raise concerns and complaints under this policy and procedure, the school will involve parents/carers should this occur. You may send complaint letters to the school or trust office address below or by email. Copies of the policy are available:

- by writing to the Ebor office: Ebor Academy Trust, The Leyes, Osbaldwick, York YO10 3PR
- on request from the school office;
- or using complaints@ebor.academy email address

4. Legislation And Guidance

This document complies with our funding agreement and Articles of Association and meets the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards (England) Regulations 2014) Part 7 and section 29 of the Education Act 2002.

It is also based on best practice guidance published by the Department for Education (DfE).

5. General Principles

Ebor Academy Trust's Complaints Procedure will:

- a) encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible.
- b) be easily accessible and publicised.
- c) be simple to understand and use.
- d) ensure impartiality.
- e) be non-adversarial.
- f) allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keep all involved informed of the progress.
- g) ensure a full and fair investigation by someone who is independent where this is required.
- h) where possible; respect people's desire for confidentiality.

- i) address all the points at issue which are within scope and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary.
- j) be communicated to all staff likely to be involved in the procedure, with further training provided as appropriate; and
- k) provide information to the school's senior management team and the Ebor Board so that services can be improved.

In addition to the above it is also important that:

- l) At all stages, the nature of the complaint is clarified with the complainant and a copy of the Parental Complaints Policy and Procedures is given to the complainant as soon as practicable.
- m) Those dealing with the complaint ensure the complainant is clear about which stage of the complaints procedure the complaint is currently at, and what further action can be taken.

At each stage in the procedure, Ebor Academy Trust's aim is to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, it will be acknowledged that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, one or more of the following may be offered:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that the academy will try to ensure the event will not re-occur
- 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 if necessary.

6. Timelines

- a. Complaints should ideally be raised within 10 school days and must be raised within **three months** of the incident. We will only consider complaints outside this timeframe in exceptional circumstances.
- b. Academies will not be able to respond to complaints outside of term-time and will consider these complaints on the first school day after the holiday period.
- c. If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on the Trust's ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.
- d. If a complainant commences legal action against the academy in relation to their complaint, the Trust will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to the complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

7. Withdrawal of a Complaint

Should a complainant wish to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

8. Scope

This procedure will be relied upon in respect of all complaints by parents, carers and pupils made against the trust, or academies within the trust. However, some areas have separate statutory procedures and are not dealt with using the complaints procedure:

Exceptions	Who to contact
SEN Statutory Assessments	Concerns about statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs should be raised with the Local Authority.
Admissions	Please refer to the academy admissions policy and school and LA website for further guidance on admissions appeals and legislation.
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. The school works with the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
Exclusion or suspension of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about suspensions and exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions . <i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i>
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors: Ebor Academy Trust Whistleblowing Policy , which we encourage staff to make use of by contacting the Whistleblowing trustee. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus . Volunteer "staff" who have concerns about a school should complain through the school's complaints' procedure. You may also be able to complain directly to the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
Fraud and Financial Irregularity	The trust wishes to eliminate opportunities for financial irregularity. Complaints involving suspected fraud, corruption, or significant financial irregularity may be handled under the Trust's Whistleblowing Policy. They may also be referred directly to the Department for Education (DfE) via their online contact form or by emailing: allegations.mailbox@education.gov.uk .
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the Trust Grievance and Disciplinary Policy and procedures.
Staff conduct	Parents may complain about staff conduct under this policy and these complaints will be investigated. However, staff conduct will be dealt with under the Trust Grievance and Disciplinary procedures. 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.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints. Please contact them directly.

National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus for complaints about the content of the national curriculum. Complaints about the <u>delivery</u> of the national curriculum can be addressed to the school.
GDPR and Data Protection	If your complaint relates to a data breach or Subject Access Request, please refer to our Data Protection Policy. The school or Trust will acknowledge your GDPR complaint within 30 calendar days and provide a full response as soon as possible after that. Complainants will be informed of their right to escalate unresolved data protection concerns to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Arrangements for handling complaints from parents/carers of children with **Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)** about the school's support are within the scope of this policy. Such complaints should first be made to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENCO) or Headteacher at the school; they will then be referred to this complaints policy. Our SEND Policy and SEND Information Report includes information about the rights of parents/carers of pupils with disabilities who believe that the school has discriminated against their child.

If your complaint relates to an **Early Years Provision** please also refer to Appendix 4, as this is covered by a separate set of guidelines.

Complaints made by people who are not parents, carers or pupils of the school are not covered by these Procedures, and such individuals should write to the school for local concerns or trust office for complaints regarding central Trust services or Trust-wide policy. The formal 3-stage appeal process outlined in this policy specifically fulfills our statutory requirements regarding parents and carers of registered pupils, Ebor Academy Trust welcomes feedback and takes all concerns raised by members of the public seriously. Complaints will be handled respectfully and expediently; however, the investigation response issued by the school or trust staff represents the Trust's final decision on the matter and will close the internal procedure.

9. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The Trust recognises that some parents or carers may find generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT or Google Gemini) helpful as a preparatory planning aid to organise their thoughts or structure a chronological timeline of events.

However, the Trust does not recommend or encourage the use of AI to draft formal complaints. AI-generated text can introduce incorrect legal citations, omit local school context, and make simple issues unnecessarily complex. Please see Appendix 5 for more information.

Minuting Meetings

In line with Ebor's AI Policy, with the consent of all parties, AI tools may be utilised to assist with minute-taking under specific conditions to ensure data security and confidentiality.

10. Procedure

To help the school address your communication as quickly and effectively as possible, we distinguish between three types of contact:

1. **Feedback (Sharing your views):** Observations or suggestions where you wish to make your voice heard. The school welcomes feedback to help improve our services, but this does not require a formal investigation or written response.
2. **Concern (Requiring clarification):** An informal query or worry where you are looking for reassurance or an explanation. We take concerns seriously and aim to resolve them informally through quick, live discussion.
3. **Complaint (Requiring action):** An expression of dissatisfaction with an action taken, or a lack of action, by the school. This is processed through the stages of this policy to achieve a clear resolution.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, the Trust will respect your views. In these cases, the Headteacher/ Head of School will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher/ Head of School will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but this may not always be the case. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

Complainants should, from the earliest stage of their complaint, say what outcome they want and what they think might resolve the issue.

An admission by the trust that the situation could have been handled better is not an admission of negligence.

Academies will not normally investigate anonymous complaints unless it is determined there is a compelling reason to do so.

There may be occasions when it's necessary or reasonable to deviate from the published complaints procedure. This includes not doing something the procedure states will or may do.

Complaints Against Leadership

Please mark all correspondence as Private and Confidential.

Headteacher or Governors:

Complaints that are about the Headteacher or governor(s) should be addressed to the Head of Governance at Ebor Academy Trust – complaints@ebor.academy or Ebor Academy Trust, The Leyes, Osbaldwick, York YO10 3PR. A senior member of Trust staff or an external party will be appointed by the Director of Education to act as the Investigating Officer. Complaints against an individual governor will usually be investigated by the Chair of Governors.

Complaints against the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or an Ebor Trustee:

Address these to the Chair of Trustees via the Ebor office.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher/ Head of School)

Address these to the Headteacher/ Head of School via the school office.

Complaints about the Chair of Trustees

Address these to the Head of Governance– see address above. The CEO will nominate a senior member of Trust staff, or an external party to act as the Investigating Officer for these complaints.

Complaints about the Trust as an organisation should be addressed to the Head of Governance who will appoint an investigating officer, who may be external to the trust.

Complainants should not approach individual Governors to raise concerns or complaints. Governors have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 or 3 of the procedure.

Accessibility

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. If you require help, please contact the school office or the Head of Governance.

Complaints will be handled as per the **three stage process** below:

11. STAGE ONE - Informal Resolution

The Trust endeavours to resolve all complaints informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Most queries and concerns can be resolved quickly and informally by the member of staff closest to your child's daily school experience. In the first instance, parents should contact the relevant class teacher who will coordinate a response. Complainants will be provided with a copy of the Complaints Policy promptly and upon request.

Complaints made directly to the Headteacher will usually be referred to the relevant teacher unless the Headteacher deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally. In most cases, complainants will be offered the opportunity to discuss their complaint in person, over the telephone or by virtual means.

Complaints may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

The school will aim to resolve informal concerns within 10 school days.

In the event that school and the parents/carers fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents/carers can proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage Two of this Procedure.

12. STAGE TWO - Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then parents/carers should put their complaint in writing (using the form in Appendix 1 and on our website). For formal complaints, please limit the written submission to **600 words** (one side of A4) to enable us to keep the focus on the key issues. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office.

We will acknowledge receipt within 3 school days. An Investigating Officer will be appointed.

The Investigating Officer will use reasonable endeavours to speak to or meet parents within ten school days of the formal complaint being received, except where the complaint is received in academy holidays, where the Head Teacher will use their reasonable endeavours to speak or meet with parents/carers as soon as possible after the commencement of the new term (usually within ten school days). The Investigating Officer will seek to clarify what would resolve the issue and mediate with the parents/carers.

During the investigation, the Investigating Officer will, if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish. This may include talking to your child. They will keep a written summary record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, once the Investigating Officer is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the investigator will provide a formal investigation report to the trust and the complainant will be issued with a written response to their complaint. The written decision will be provided no later than fifteen school days after the investigating Officer has spoken or met with parents/carers to discuss the matter. The Investigating Officer may also arrange to meet with parents/carers to explain the decision.

If the Investigating Officer 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 an explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

13. STAGE THREE – 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. This stage will involve a Complaints Panel. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure. The Stage 3 Panel is not a full re-investigation of the original complaint. Its role is to check the Stage 2 investigation to ensure it was conducted fairly, in accordance with school policy and that the conclusions reached were sound.

This request for further assessment of the complaint will, for the purposes of this Procedure, be known as an 'appeal'. The Trust will appoint the Complaints Panel.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made in writing to the Head of Governance, Ebor Academy Trust, The Leyes, York YO10 3PR, within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response detailing the outcome of the investigation. The parents/carers should provide details of their complaint(s) which they believe have not been resolved satisfactorily by the Stage Two Procedure, along with the remedies sought in respect of each. The submission should not be more than 400 words. Please find attached a form (Appendix 2) to use for this purpose. A further copy of the form is available from our website. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The date the complaint is received will be recorded and receipt of the Stage 3 complaint acknowledged in writing within five school days. A clerk to the panel will be appointed by the Director of Education.

The clerk will then endeavour to convene a Complaints Panel hearing as soon as possible to consider the matter, normally no later than twenty school days after receipt of parents' written notice that they wish to invoke the Stage Three Procedure. This will be dependent upon the availability of the Panel members.

Attendance at Complaints Panel Hearings

The Complaints Panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school. The independent person will conform to the

relevant guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE) and may be a local governor from a different school within Ebor Academy Trust.

For a complaint concerning the **CEO**, two of the panel members will be drawn from the Trust Board and the third member will be independent. For a complaint concerning the **Trust Board** (Chair or Vice-Chair, other trustee or Trust Board itself), the panel will be entirely independent.

To ensure a fair and objective review of the complaint, the Investigating Officer, rather than the individual subject to the complaint, will normally attend the panel hearing.

The role of the Investigating Officer is to:

- Present the findings of the formal investigation.
- Provide a factual account of the evidence gathered.
- Respond to questions from the panel regarding the process and conclusions.

While the person being complained about may provide a written statement or evidence for the Panel's consideration, they do not typically attend the hearing in person. This structure maintains a professional environment focused on the resolution of the grievance and the Trust's adherence to policy.

Complainants have the right to be accompanied by a friend or relative for support. We do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the panel meeting. The panel is not a form of legal proceedings. However, there may be exceptional 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. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

The Complainant will be informed of the date of the meeting. The aim would be to convene a meeting within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, an alternative date will be provided and the Complainant kept informed.

The Trust will endeavour to provide proposed dates which are mutually agreeable to all parties. If the complainant rejects the proposed dates, without good reason, the Director of Education 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.

The Complaints Panel will appoint a Chair prior to the Panel meeting commencing. Where the Complaints Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. In such cases all parties will be given the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Panel in support of their position, including:

- (a) documents in support of complaint(s),
- (b) chronology and key dates relating to complaint(s), and
- (c) written submission setting out the complaint(s) in more detail.

Evidence will be initially sent to the Clerk, who will then circulate the documentation to all parties, including the Panel members, along with an order of proceedings. All written evidence must be received by the Clerk no later than six working days in advance of the hearing. The Clerk will distribute the written evidence to the relevant parties no later than five working days in advance of the Panel hearing.

The panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. We do not permit electronic recordings of meetings unless required as a reasonable adjustment for a disability. Prior consent from all parties is mandatory for a recording to take place.

Panel findings

After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision, and may make recommendations. The decision reached by the Complaints Panel is final. The panel 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 panel will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.

Where appropriate, the panel will recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The panel will issue an explanation of their findings, decision and recommendations, along with a **copy of the minutes** within 10 school days.

14. Next Steps

If the complainant believes the Academy 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 after they have completed Stage Three. The Complainant will be made aware that the DfE will not usually investigate the substance of the complaint itself, or interfere with the findings of the Complaint Panel, unless the decision made was manifestly unreasonable or not carried out in line with expected complaints procedures and reasonable timelines.

The DfE cannot overturn the decision about a complaint. Their role is to make sure the complaint was handled properly by following a published procedure that complies with part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

The DfE will only consider the complaint if the complainant can provide evidence that the school or trust:

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

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/state-schools>, by telephone on 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Ministerial and Public Communication Division
Department for Education

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

15. Record Keeping

The school will maintain a written record of all formal complaints, including whether they were resolved at Stage 2 or 3. This record will include the action taken by the school, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld, to help us improve our services.

The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls. Records will be available for inspection on the school premises by Ebor Academy and the Head teacher. Where possible, this material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating or reviewing the complaint or on the review panel.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a Subject Access Request (SAR) or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and data handling policies.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole governing board prior to the panel stage of the complaint process.

16. Management of Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

Ebor Academy Trust is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to provide a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our schools. However, we will not tolerate abusive, offensive or aggressive behaviour. We may implement a communication strategy or, in extreme cases, bar individuals from the premises to ensure school safety.

Ebor Academy Trust defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints such as, if the complainant:

- a. refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint despite offers of assistance
- b. refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- c. refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- d. insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- e. introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- f. raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- g. makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- h. changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- i. repeatedly makes substantially the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- j. seeks an unrealistic outcome
- k. makes excessive demands on school 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
- l. uses threats to intimidate

- m. uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- n. knowingly provides falsified information
- o. publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.
- p. refuses to articulate a complaint or why escalation is being sought after consideration at the previous stage.
- q. refuses to accept the findings of the investigation where the complaint procedure has been fully and properly considered and completed. The trust will not accept or re-open the same issue.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates 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), and it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher/ Head of School or Chair of Governors / Director of Education will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher/ Head of School /Director of Education will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable. For complainants who excessively contact Ebor Academy Trust causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In circumstances where the formal complaints procedure has been exhausted and no new material information is presented, or where persistent contact is deemed to constitute harassment or a malicious attack on staff character, the Trust reserves the right to seek legal advice and issue a formal notification—which may include a 'cease and desist' letter—to inform the individual that we have ceased engagement and will enter into no further communication regarding the matter.

If a parent poses a risk to, or demonstrates threatening behaviour towards pupils or staff, the Trust will usually warn the parent about their behaviour and the potential consequences of continuing to act in this way. If, despite that warning, the parent persists with threatening and abusive behaviour, the Trust has the right to refuse to allow the parent to attend the panel hearing in person. In such cases, the panel will invite written representations from the complainant or offer alternative methods of communication instead. If the representations contain threats and/or abuse then the Trust may take steps to restrict communication with the parent and decide not to progress with the hearing. Any complaints that are deemed to be malicious, harmful or defamatory of the personal character of an employee of the Trust may also be subject to legal scrutiny and subsequent action.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate subsequent actions in writing.

Complaint campaigns

If we receive a large volume of similar complaints, we may respond by sending a template response or publishing a single statement on our website.

17. Links with other Policies/Procedures

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures

Admissions Policy

Exclusions Policy

Staff grievance procedures

Staff disciplinary procedures

SEN Policy and Information Report

Privacy Notices

Data Protection Policies

Allegations Against Staff

Reporting of low level concerns

Managing Serial and Unreasonable Communications Policy

DfE Best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures and understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility



Appendix 1: Complaint Form for Stage 2

Please complete and return to the school office, for the attention of the Headteacher/ Head of School, Chair of Governors or Ebor Head of Governance who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken. The form can also be emailed to complaints@ebor.academy. Please mark the complaint Private and Confidential.

Your name:
Pupil's name:
Your relationship to the pupil:
School:
Address:
Postcode:
Day time telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Email address:
Please outline, in no more than one page or 600 words, the details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school to try and resolve it.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Please sign here to confirm that you agree for us to disclose relevant information about your complaint to third parties involved such as investigating Officers or panel members Signature:
Date:
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
Date Complaint Policy given out
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

Appendix 2: Complaint form for Stage 3 (Panel Hearing)

Please complete and return to the Head of Governance who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken. The form can be emailed to complaints@ebor.academy. Please mark the complaint Private and Confidential.

Your name:
Pupil's name:
Your relationship to the pupil:
School:
Address: Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number: Email address:

- Please outline, in no more than one page or 400 words, the details of your Stage 2 complaint and the elements you feel have not been resolved satisfactorily by the Stage 2 procedure.

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

Are you attaching any paperwork as evidence for the panel to review before the hearing? If so, please give details. All paperwork must be sent to the Head of Governance at least 6 days before the hearing and will be shared with all participants 5 days prior to the hearing.

Please sign here to confirm that you agree for us to disclose relevant information about your complaint to third parties involved such as the panel members

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

Date Complaint Policy given out

18 *Complaints Policy Revised Sept 2026 (V9 9/2026)*

By who:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

Appendix 3: Roles and Responsibilities

1. Complainant

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

- a. explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- b. cooperate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- c. respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- d. ask for assistance as needed
- e. treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- f. refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

2. Investigating Officer

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

- a. sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
- b. interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
- c. consideration of records and other relevant information
- d. analysing information
- e. liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator will :

- f. conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- g. keep notes of interviews or arrange for a note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- h. ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- i. be mindful of the timescales to respond
- j. prepare a comprehensive report that sets out the facts, determines whether they recommend the complaint be upheld or dismissed, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

3. Complaints Co-ordinator (this could be the Headteacher/ Head of School / Head of Governance or other staff member providing administrative support)

The co-ordinator is the contact point for the complainant they will :

- a. ensure complaints are investigated and managed by the most appropriate person.
- b. ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any rights 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)
- c. ensure the complaints process is adhered to by all parties
- d. set the date, time and venue of meetings, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible if required
- e. collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 2 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the stage 3 meeting within an agreed timescale
- f. ensure that stage 3 panel members have no prior involvement in the case to ensure impartiality
- g. ensure proceedings are recorded by a note taker
- h. ensure summary minutes of meetings are circulated
- i. notify all parties of the panel's decision.

4. Panel Chair

The Panel's chair, who is nominated in advance of the commencement of the Stage 3 complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- a. 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
- b. 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
- c. the remit of the panel is explained to the complainant
- d. 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.
- e. 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
- f. both the Complainant and the academy/individual 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
- g. the issues are addressed
- h. key findings of fact are made
- i. the panel is open-minded and acts independently
- j. no member of the panel has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- k. the meeting is minuted.

5. Panel Member

Panel members will be aware that:

- a. the meeting must be independent and impartial, and will be seen to be so
- b. Members may not sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.

- c. the aim of the meeting will be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.
- d. many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- e. extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting, the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

We recognise 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.

If the child/young person is the complainant, the panel will 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 panel will give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent will 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 panel considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

Appendix 4: Early Years Provision Procedure

All written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements will be investigated, and the complainant will be notified of the outcome within 28 days of the school receiving the complaint. The school will keep a record of the complaint in line with the record-keeping and confidentiality clauses set out in the main procedure above, and will make the record available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers can notify Ofsted if they believe that the school is not meeting Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, by calling 0300 123 4234 or 0300 123 4666, or by emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. An online contact form is also available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted#org-contacts>.

The school will notify parents and carers should it become aware that the Academy is to be inspected by Ofsted. The school will also make a copy of the inspection report available to parents and carers of children attending the setting on a regular basis.

Appendix 5: Guidance on the use of AI tools

While the Trust does not recommend using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to write or draft formal complaints, we are pleased to receive complaints written in a parent's own voice. However, we understand that some parents find these tools helpful during the initial planning stages to structure their thinking.

If you choose to use AI to help prepare your submission, you must adhere to the following parameters to ensure your complaint can be progressed efficiently:

1. **Strictly Observe Word Limits:** Formal Stage 2 complaints are limited to a maximum of 600 words (one side of A4) and Stage 3 requests are limited to 400 words. AI writing tools tend to produce generic, repetitive, and overly lengthy text. Submissions exceeding these limits may be returned for editing.
2. **Focus on Local Facts, Not Generic Legislation:** AI programs frequently "hallucinate" or cite incorrect, outdated, or non-applicable laws and regulations. The school cannot resolve complaints based on generalised legal essays; investigations must focus strictly on the specific facts of what occurred.
3. **Submit in Your Own Voice:** School relationships are built on partnership, and personal communication is the most effective way to reach a positive resolution.
4. **Protect Your Privacy:** Never input personal data, names, or sensitive details about your child, your family, or school staff into public AI tools.

Example prompts for using AI more effectively:

The following example prompts illustrate how AI tools can be used safely and effectively to prepare a concern or complaint. In each case you should replace the instructions in brackets with your own details taking care not to include any personal data or names.

Example 1: Organising your thoughts

"I want to raise a concern with my child's school about:" [describe the issue in general terms e.g. how an issue was handled].

"The key things that happened are: " [list the main events in the order they happened, using descriptions such as "my child did..."; "the class teacher said... etc].

"Can you help me organise these into a clear, chronological short summary that I can use when speaking/writing to the school?"

Example 2 structuring a written complaint

"I need to write a formal complaint to my child's school. The issue is: [describe the issue].

I have already tried to resolve this informally by: [describe what you did]. The key facts are [list the facts]. I need to keep the word count to 400/600 words.