

**Connect Academy Trust**

# **Compliments, Comments, Concerns & Complaints Policy**



**September 2016**

For Review and Approval by the Board of Connect Academy Trust,  
October 2016

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## **Compliments, Comments, Concerns & Complaints Policy**

If you have a compliment, comment, concern or complaint...

We would like you to let us know.

You are requested to raise directly with the Trust or individual school any issues regarding the Trust or individual school or its staff. All members of staff are familiar with the procedure and are able to assist you.

### **1. Compliments**

We like to hear when we have done a good job so that we can share what we do well with the staff and children to ensure we continually improve.

### **2. Comments**

We welcome suggestions for improving our work.

### **3. Concerns**

A concern is an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought. Please tell us of any concern you have as soon as possible so that we can try to resolve it.

If you are a parent/carer be assured that no matter what you want to talk to us about, our support for you and your child will not be affected in any way.

### **4. Complaints**

A complaint is a concern which has not been satisfactorily resolved. If you feel we have not dealt satisfactorily with your concern, please tell us as soon as possible that you wish to make a formal complaint, as it is difficult for us to investigate properly an incident or problem that happened some time ago.

If at any formal stage of the complaint it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are necessary in order to resolve the issue, the details of this action will remain confidential to the CEO/Headteacher and/or the individual's line manager. As the complainant you are entitled to be informed that action is being taken, but you are not entitled to participate in the proceedings or receive any detail.

We will not usually investigate complaints about issues and incidents that are more than three months old.

We aim to keep to the timeframes outlined for stages 2 and 3 in the attached flowchart but sometimes more complex complaints take longer to investigate. If this is the case we will keep you informed of progress.

If you seek to remain anonymous it may not be possible to take action. However, if an anonymous complaint is received which may need to be treated as a child protection matter it will be dealt with under the appropriate statutory procedure.

This policy does not cover the following types of complaints for which there are statutory or formalised procedures in place:

<b>Procedure dealing with:</b>	<b>Further information available from:</b>
Appeals with respect to admissions	See Trust Admissions Policy or contact the Local Authority's School Admissions Team Telephone: 01752 307481
Appeals with respect to exclusion of pupils	See Trust Behaviour/Exclusions Policy or contact the Local Authority's Inclusion and Attendance Manager Telephone: 01752 307471
Special Educational Needs Statements/Education Health and Care Plans	Local Authority's 0-25 SEND Statutory Assessment Team Telephone: 01752 307409
National Curriculum and Religious Education	Local Authority's Education and Learning team Telephone: 01752 307485
Child Protection Issues	Local Authority's Advice and Assessment team, Children's Social Care Telephone: 01752 308600
Child Protection Investigations against Staff	Local Authority Designated Officer Telephone: 01752 307144
Whistleblowing	The Trust has an internal Whistleblowing Policy for employees and voluntary staff which is available from the Trust office. Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted on 0300 123 3155 or via email at <a href="mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk">whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk</a>
Staff Grievances and Disciplinary procedures	The Trust has internal Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures for employees which are available from the Trust office.
Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information requests	See the Trust's Freedom of Information and Data Protection Policies
Services provided by other external organisations who use the Trust premises or facilities	External providers should have their own complaints procedures and should be contacted direct.

## 5. What To Do First If You Have Any Concerns

Most concerns can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's class teacher, or another member of staff.

If you have a concern that you feel should be looked at by the headteacher you can contact him/her first. It is usually best to discuss your concerns face to face. You may need to make an appointment to do this, and can make one by phoning or going to the reception.

You can take a friend or relation to the appointment with you if you want to.

All staff will make every effort to respond to your concerns informally. They will make sure that they understand what you feel went wrong, and they will explain their own actions to

you. They will ask what you would like the school or academy to do to put things right. Of course, this does not mean that in every case they will come round to your point of view but it will help both you and the school/academy to understand both sides of the issue. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising again.

## 6. **What To Do Next**

If you are dissatisfied with the response to your concern you can make a formal complaint to the Headteacher. This can be done verbally or by completing the attached complaint form.

The Headteacher will investigate the complaint and may interview any members of staff or pupils involved. The Headteacher will ask to meet you for a discussion of your complaint and the outcome of the investigation. Again you may take a friend or relation with you if you wish. You will receive a written response to your complaint.

If your complaint is about an action of the CEO/Headteacher or a member of the Board of Directors, then you should refer it to the Clerk to the Board of Governors instead of the Headteacher. (Please see 'If You Are Still Unhappy' below).

## 7. **If you are still unhappy**

The complaint will normally be resolved by this stage. However, if you are dissatisfied with the response you may wish to contact the Clerk to the Board of Directors to ask for your complaint to be referred to the Board of Directors Complaints Appeal Panel. You can contact the Clerk at the Trust's address.

The Clerk will arrange a panel meeting at a mutually convenient time. Your complaint will then be heard by a panel of three Directors who have no previous knowledge of the issue and so will be able to give it a fresh assessment. You, and the CEO or Headteacher, will be invited to attend and speak to the panel at a meeting. Again you may take a friend or relation with you if you wish. Please remember that a complaints appeal panel meeting is designed to find a formal resolution and it is therefore not appropriate to bring legal representation with you.

The panel will be as informal as possible and at the start of the meeting the Director chairing the panel will explain what will happen during the meeting. Both you and the Trust will be given an opportunity to put your case to the panel members. Notes will be taken of the meeting.

The panel can make the following decisions:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part,
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part,
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint,
- recommend changes to the Trust's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

Following the meeting the Clerk will issue a letter confirming the panel's decision.

If you are dissatisfied with the academy's internal procedure you can refer your complaint to the Education Funding Agency. Complaints about academies can be sent by going online at

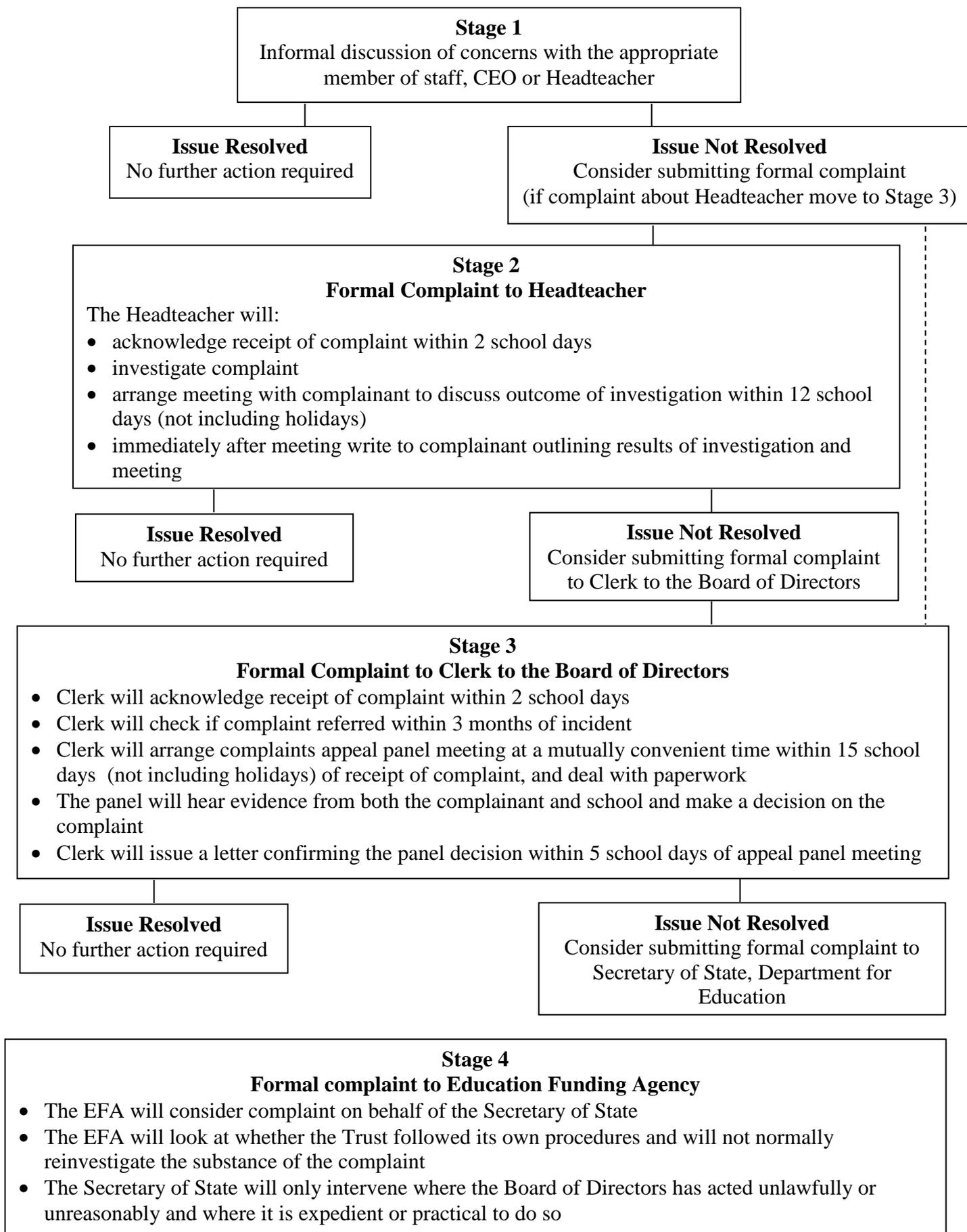
[www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus) or by post to Ministerial and Public Communications Division, Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

## 8. **Unacceptable Behaviour**

As a Trust, we are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, providing a high quality service to those who make them. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the Trust. However, there are a small number of people who hinder our work with serial or persistent complaints, for example where the Trust is contacted repeatedly by an individual making the same points, or who asks us to reconsider our position. We consider this unacceptable behaviour and will inform the individual and ask them to change it. If the unacceptable behaviour continues, we will take action to restrict their contact with our Trust staff. In all cases where we decide someone's behaviour is unacceptable, we will write to tell them why, what action we are taking and how long it will last. We will also tell them how they can challenge the decision if they disagree with it. New complaints from people whose behaviour has been unacceptable in the past will be looked at without bias.

We also do not expect our staff to tolerate behaviour that is unacceptable, for example, abusive, offensive or threatening and we will take action to protect our staff from such behaviour, including reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give prior warning of that action. Alternatively we may temporarily bar such an individual from Trust premises. We will write to tell them why they are being barred from the Trust sites, how they can maintain contact with the Trust, and how long it will last. Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so by letter or email to the CEO or Chair of the Board of Directors. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Secretary of State or the Education Funding Agency.

## APPENDIX A - CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS FLOWCHART





**Complaint Form**

This form is designed to help you ask the CEO or Headteacher to investigate your formal complaint, or where your complaint is against the Headteacher to ask the Clerk to the Board of Directors to arrange a Complaints Appeal Panel meeting.

Please complete this form and return it to the Trust CEO or your Headteacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

If you need assistance with completing this form please contact the School Administrator or Parent Support Adviser.

<b>Your name:</b>	
<b>Pupil's name:</b>	
<b>Your relationship to the pupil:</b>	
<b>Your address:</b>	
<b>Your postcode:</b>	
<b>Your telephone number (daytime):</b>	
<b>Your telephone number (evening):</b>	
<b>Your email</b>	
<b>Please give details of your complaint including dates, names of staff and what happened:</b>	

**What have you already done to try and sort out your complaint, including who have you spoken to within the Trust and what did they say?**

**What do you feel would be a satisfactory and reasonable outcome to this complaint?**

**If you have attached any relevant documents to this form please list them below:**

**Your signature:**

**Date:**

**OFFICIAL USE**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**

Data Protection Act – We will hold personal data about you in our files and on computer. We will hold this data securely and only use it to help us to deal with your comment or complaint. You have rights under the Data Protection Act 1998 to have a copy of your personal data. There are exceptions to this right, the main one being where we feel that releasing particular information to you would prevent us from properly investigating your complaint. A fee will normally be charged. Analysis will be restricted to types of complaints and individual complainants will not be identified. The analysis will be reported to the Board of Directors on an annual basis. The reporting will include identifying particular trends of complaints, which may require some change in the Trust's procedures.

Signed .....  
Chief Executive Officer

Date .....

Signed .....  
Chair of Connect Academy Trust

Date .....