

Complaints Policy

Issue Number: 1.2
Issue Date: 01.09.2014
Review Date: 31.08.2017
Reference: SPTA/CA/LB
Approved By: ELT
Approval Date: 2 September 2014

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1.0 Roles and Responsibilities

This policy and procedure applies to all employees of School Partnership Trust Academies (SPTA). Throughout this document, the term 'Principal' refers to the Principal or Head of Academy and 'Senior Leader' refers to the Senior Department Head within the Core Team.

This policy has been approved by the SPTA Board of Directors. The responsibility for the implementation of this policy rests with the Principal in Academies and with Senior Leaders within Core Improvement Team.

2.0 Suggested Audience

All employees and stakeholders.

As part of their induction or professional development, all relevant staff will participate in training which enables them to apply the principles and procedures defined in this policy.

3.0 Aim

The aim of this policy and accompanying procedure is to achieve a fair, effective and speedy resolution of employee and stakeholder concerns.

4.0 Availability of the Complaints Policy and Procedure

This policy and procedure is available on request via the SPTA website and also via individual Academy websites. If pupils or students raise concerns and complaints under this policy and procedure, the Academy will involve parents/carers. Copies of the Complaints Policy are available from the Principal at each Academy and from:

Corporate Affairs Department,
School Partnership Trust Academies
Unit 2, Carolina Court
Wisconsin Drive, Lakeside
Doncaster,
DN4 5RA.

Tel : 01302 379240

5.0 Outline

This policy and procedure is for the benefit of students and stakeholders. This policy and procedure will be applied to all stakeholder complaints except:

- a) **Child Protection allegations** where a separate policy and procedure applies;
- b) **Exclusions** where a separate policy and procedure applies; and
- c) **Appeals relating to internal assessment decisions for external qualifications** where a separate appeals procedure applies.

SPTA expects that most concerns will be resolved informally and will use its best endeavours to resolve any complaints or concerns that are raised on that basis.

If informal procedures fail to resolve the issue, a formal complaint about any matter not involving child protection allegations, internal assessment decisions or a decision to exclude a student, must be given verbally or in writing :

- to the Principal or EAB Chair for Academy related issues
- to the Corporate Affairs Department using the contact details above for SPTA issues.

SPTA and its Academies will do all they can to resolve all concerns, complaints and expressions of concern, whether raised informally or formally.

Correspondence, statements and records will remain confidential unless disclosure is required in the course of the Academy's inspection or where any other legal obligation prevails.

6.0 Complaints Procedure

SPTA's complaints procedure will:

- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible.
- Be easy to obtain and clearly publicized.
- Be simple to understand and use.
- Be impartial.
- Be non-adversarial.
- Allow swift handling with clear time-limits for action and keep people informed of the progress.
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary.
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality.
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary.
- Provide information to the Academy's Education Advisory Body and Principal so that services can be improved.

SPTA will be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. We will take concerns seriously at the earliest stage to reduce the numbers that develop into complaints.

7.0 Stages in our Complaints Policy

Stage One - Informal Resolution

1. It is hoped that most concerns and complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
2. The main contact person for each complainant will be the appropriate responsible person. The appropriate responsible person will be determined by the relevant Principal, EAB Chair or Executive Leadership Team member. In most cases, the matter should be resolved quickly by this means. If the appropriate responsible person cannot resolve the matter satisfactorily, it may be necessary for him/her to consult other staff.
3. The appropriate responsible person will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. (See Appendix 1). They will inform other relevant colleagues on the day of receiving any concern or complaint. This record will be kept for **one (1) year** after the individual leaves the organisation.
4. SPTA will use its reasonable endeavours to resolve any informal complaint within **ten (10) working days** of it being raised. We will seek to resolve internal complaints as quickly as possible.
5. Should the matter not be resolved, or in the event that the appropriate responsible person and the complainant fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the complainant will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage Two of this Procedure.

Stage Two - Formal Resolution

1. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the complainant should put their complaint in writing to the Principal, EAB Chair or relevant Executive Leadership Team member. Complainants should also outline how they wish their complaint to be resolved.
2. The Principal, EAB Chair or Executive Leadership Team member will normally delegate responsibility for undertaking an investigation of the complaint to an appropriate member of their team unless he/she deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
3. The Principal, EAB Chair or Executive Leadership Team member will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
4. In most cases, the Principal, EAB Chair or Executive Leadership Team member will meet or speak to the complainant concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
5. The Principal, EAB Chair or Executive Leadership Team member will use reasonable endeavours to speak to or meet complainants within **ten (10) working days** of the formal complaint being received. When the complaint is received in Academy holidays, the ten (10) working days will be counted from the start of the following school term.
6. It may be necessary to carry out further investigations.
7. A written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept.
8. Once the Principal, EAB Chair or Executive Leadership Team member is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. Complainants will be informed of this decision in writing and reasons for the decision will be given. This written decision should be provided no later than **ten (10) working days** after speaking to or meeting the complainant. The Principal, EAB Chair or Executive Leadership Team member may also arrange to meet with complainant to explain the decision.
9. A confidential written record of all formal complaints, including records of meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, and the decision reached, will be kept for **one (1) year** after the individual leaves the organisation.
10. If a complainant is dissatisfied with the response to their formal complaint, they have the opportunity to have their complaint considered by a Stage Three Appeal.

Stage Three – Appeal

1. If a complainant is dissatisfied with the Principal, EAB Chair or Executive Leadership Team member's decision in respect of their formal complaint, they may request that their complaint be further considered by a Stage Three Appeal. This request must be made in writing addressed to the Principal for Academy related issues or to the relevant Executive Leadership Team member for SPTA issues.
2. Complainants must lodge their appeal in writing and within **ten (10)** working days of the date of the Stage Two decision. Complainants should provide details of the complaint made and the reasons why they believe the complaint has not been resolved by the Stage Two Procedure. Complainants should also outline how they wish their complaint to be resolved.
3. The Stage Three appeal is only obliged to consider the complaint(s) lodged in the 'initial submission' although they may use their discretion to consider other relevant and related matters that may subsequently arise.
When a request to move to Stage Three of this process is received by the Principal, EAB Chair or Executive Leadership Team member, a stage three appeal will be arranged as soon as possible to consider the matter. This will normally be no later than **twenty (20)** school days after receipt of the request. However, timing will depend upon the availability of the stage three appeal members.
4. For Academy related complaints, the Stage Three Appeal will consist of two Education Advisory Body members who have not previously been involved with the complaint and one person independent of the management and running of the school. The process used for selecting an independent person will conform to relevant guidance issued by the Department for Education, (DfE). For SPTA complaints, the Stage Three Appeal will consist of the Chief Executive and a member of the Executive Leadership Team, who has not previously been involved with the complaint. The Academy will inform parents/carers, in writing, that they can attend the panel hearing and if they wish be accompanied.
5. At the conclusion of the Stage Three hearing, a decision on the response to the complaint will be taken. Complainants will be informed of this decision, the reasons for it and any recommendations made, in writing. This written decision should be provided no later than **ten (10) working days** after the Stage Three Appeal.
6. The Stage Three Appeal's findings will be sent to:
 - the complainant
 - the Education Advisory Body
 - the SPTA Board of Directors via governance@schoolpartnershiptrust.org.uk
 - where relevant, the person complained about.

A secure and confidential record of all complaints, decisions and findings will be kept for **one (1) year** after the individual leaves the organisation. All records will be made available for inspection and indicate whether the complaint was resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing.

Stage Four - Appeal (Academy complaints only)

1. For Academy related complaints only, following completion of the stage three appeal, complainants may refer their complaint to SPTA.
2. Complainants must refer their complaint to SPTA in writing and within **ten (10)** working days of receipt of the findings of the Stage Three Hearing. Complainants must provide details of the complaint made and the reasons why they believe the complaint have been unresolved by the Stage Three Procedure, along with the solutions suggested to resolve the complaint.
3. The Stage Four Panel will consider whether the Academy has complied with the complaints procedure. The Panel will be made up of the Chief Executive of SPTA and one other member of the Board of Directors. The Panel will be arranged as soon as possible to consider the matter, normally no later than **twenty (20)** school days after receipt of the request, dependent upon the availability of the Stage Four Panel members.
4. At the conclusion of the Stage Four Panel, a decision on the response to the complaint will be taken. Complainants will be informed of this decision, the reasons for it and any recommendations made, in writing. This written decision should be provided no later than **ten (10)** working days after the Stage Four Panel meeting.
5. The Stage Four Panel's findings will be sent in writing to:
 - the complainant
 - the Education Advisory Body
 - the Academy Principal
 - where relevant, the person complained about.

8.0 Department for Education

We hope that we will be able to resolve any complaint concerning SPTA or its Academies using this complaints procedure. If you feel this is not the case, you can complain to the Education Funding Agency, which handles complaints about Academies and Free schools. The following link provides guidance on their procedure for dealing with complaints about academies and links to the EFA complaints form.

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/e/procedure%20for%20complaints%20about%20acads%20-%20version%20sept%202013.pdf>.

9.0 Monitoring and Review

SPTA's Executive Leadership Team will review this policy at least every three years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. A summary report of complaints made under the policy will be provided to the Education Advisory Body for Academy related complaints and to the SPTA Board of Directors for SPTA related complaints on an annual basis. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout SPTA and our Academies.

Appendix 1 SPTA Complaint Form

Please complete and return to (insert name of Appropriate Responsible Person) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Complainant name:

Pupil/ Student's name (if applicable) :

Your relationship to the pupil/student if applicable):

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

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

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

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix 2 – Complaints Flowchart



