



# COMPLAINTS POLICY

Reviewed: December 2016    Review Frequency:    Bi-annual

Updated: June 2017

# 1. Introduction

This document sets the way in which the Aspire Academies Trust handles concerns and complaints. It is based on the Hertfordshire County Council model procedures.

Each day the Trust and its academies make many decisions and tries hard to do the best for all the children. Your comments - either positive or negative - are helpful to us for future planning. You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of the school which concerns you or you may have a complaint to make. If you are dissatisfied in any way, please feel able to raise your concerns.

This policy may be used by:

- a parent whose child attends or who has recently left an Aspire Academies Trust school
- members of the public
- a Governor, Trustee or Member about a member of Staff
- a member of Staff against an individual Governor, Trustee or Member acting in a personal capacity
- members of the public (not Parents)
- Data Protection and Freedom of Information related matters

This policy is not appropriate to address:

- complaints by Governors about other Governors – contact the Aspire Central Team for guidance
- child protection procedures
- appeals about admissions
- complaints about fixed term or permanent exclusions from school

# 2. Contact details

Bovingdon Primary Academy,  
High Street,  
Bovingdon,  
Herts, HP3 0HL  
T: 01442 406545  
admin@bovingdonacademy.org.uk

Fourth Ave,  
Watford,  
Hertfordshire, WD25 9RH  
T: 01923 674463 F: 01923 674461  
admin@thegroveacademy.org.uk

Hammond Academy,  
Cambrian Way,  
Hemel Hempstead, HP2 5TD

T: 01442 404020  
elizabeth.gibson@hammondacademy.org.uk

Aspire Academies Trust  
High Street,  
Bovingdon,  
Herts, HP3 0HL  
T: 01442 406545

admin@aspireacademies.org.uk

### 3. Our Approach to Complaints

#### **We care about what you think**

Each day this school makes many decisions and tries hard to do the best for all the children. Your comments - either positive or negative - are helpful for future planning. You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of this school, though not actually make a complaint - you just want to get something 'off your chest'. If you are dissatisfied about the way your child is being treated, or any actions or lack of action by us, please feel free to contact us using the details listed above. We ask you to do so in a timely manner so that we can address any of your concerns as quickly as possible; we would not normally consider complaints made 12 months or more after the events.

#### **Our aims**

- Your complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.
- Your complaint will be looked into thoroughly and fairly.
- If your complaint is urgent we will deal with it more quickly.
- We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage.
- You will get an apology if we have made a mistake.
- You will be told what we are going to do to put things right.
- You will get a full and clear written reply to formal complaints within 28 school days (5½ weeks).

### 4. How to make a complaint

#### **a. Informally in the first instance: stage 1**

If there is something you are not happy about, or you don't understand why we are doing something in a particular way, please come in and discuss it with the class teacher or another appropriate member of staff, such as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) if it is about Special Needs. We hope that most complaints can be settled quickly and informally, either by putting matters right or by giving you an explanation.

We know that it can feel uncomfortable to question or challenge something, but if you don't tell us what is worrying you we cannot explain what we are doing or try to put it right. If the member of staff you speak to in the first instance is unable to attempt to resolve the matter, you should make an appointment with the Principal. You should be able to sort out your worries but sometimes this is not possible. In this case there is a next step.

### **b. Formally: stage 2**

Where you are not satisfied with the outcome of the informal stage, you should request a meeting with the Principal of the school relating to your concern, who will investigate your complaint and aim to inform you of the outcome within 10 school days (2 weeks). You may wish to use the complaints form at the end of this document.

If your first contact is with individual Governors, they will advise you to take up your concerns with the appropriate member of staff or the Principal. A Governor should not be made aware of a potential complaint as they may be required to sit on a Panel in the event of a formal hearing (stage 3) and should be impartial.

If your complaint is about the Principal, you should write to the Chair of the Local Advisory Body. If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) you might find it helpful to talk to our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) or your child's named Special Needs Officer at the Local Authority. The SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS – formerly Parent Partnership) may also be able to help you.

### **c. Formally: stage 3**

If you remain dissatisfied following stage 2, and wish to take your complaint further, you will be asked to complete a form or write a letter addressed to the Chair of the Local Advisory Body. In the letter you should:

- Make it clear why you are complaining.
- Say who you have spoken to already.
- Explain what you want to happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair of the Local Advisory Body will arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated under the arrangements approved by the Trust. If the Chair of the Local Advisory Body has been involved in discussions to help settle the disagreement at an earlier stage, s/he should arrange for another Governor to take charge of the investigation. The Governor in charge of investigating the complaint may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. A Governors' Complaint Panel will be appointed for a hearing and will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, and will include one member who is independent of the management and running of the school.

You should make sure that the Governors' Complaint Panel is provided with any written information or evidence you intend to use in a formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. The Chair of the Panel may invite any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. The Chair should tell you who this person is before the meeting. If any member of staff is required by the Local Advisory Body to attend a meeting they will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named in a complaint may also choose to attend a meeting, even if not required to do so by the Governors. They may be represented. If this happens, we will inform you in advance.

When the Panel has fully investigated your complaint, the Chair of the Panel or the Governor in charge of the investigation will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the Local Advisory Body. The Chair of the Local Advisory Body will then write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. Our Local Advisory Body will aim to deal with your complaint within 28 school days (5½ weeks).

## 5. Alternative contacts for specific circumstances

As we are a multi academy trust, there are additional levels of governance who assume responsibility under specific circumstances for **stage 2**. Namely:

- Where the complaint relates to the Executive Principal, a Trustee or a Member, the Chair of the Board of Trustees assumes responsibility.
- Where the complaint relates to a Governor, the Chair of the Local Advisory Body assumes responsibility.
- Where the complaint relates to the Chair of the Local Advisory Body, the Chair of the Board of Trustees assumes responsibility.

## 6. Further recourse

Most complaints are resolved by this process. However, academies operate independently of the Local Authority and as such, the Local Authority is unable to investigate complaints regarding academies even if the complaint relates to Special Educational Needs provision. Parents wishing to escalate a complaint about an academy which has not been satisfactorily resolved through the Trust's complaints procedure should contact the Secretary of State at the Department for Education and request that the complaint be passed to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and the Secretary of State are as follows:

Academies Central Unit (Academy Complaints)  
Education Funding Agency  
Earlsdon Park  
53-55 Butts Road  
Coventry, CV1 3BH  
Email: [academyquestions@efa.education.gov.uk](mailto:academyquestions@efa.education.gov.uk)

The Secretary of State, Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street  
London, SW1P 3BT  
Telephone: 0870 000 2288  
Website: [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)

## 7. Recording Complaints

We will record the progress of any complaint and the final outcome. A brief note of meetings and telephone calls will be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record.

## 8. Local Advisory Body (LAB) Review

The Local Advisory Body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and feed back to the Aspire Central Team where changes are necessary. Where we share complaints information shared with the whole LAB, individuals should not be named.

## 9. Useful contacts

### **Advisory Centre for Education**

Education Advice & Training  
72 Durnsford Road  
London  
N11 2EJ  
Web: [www.ace-ed.org.uk](http://www.ace-ed.org.uk)  
Phone: **0300 0115 142**

### **POhWER**

Hertlands House  
Primett Road  
Stevenage  
SG1 3EE  
Web: [www.pohwer.net](http://www.pohwer.net)  
Phone: **0300 456 2370**

### **Family Lives**

**(Formerly Parentline Plus)**  
15-17 The Broadway  
Hatfield  
Herts, AL9 5HZ  
Web: [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)  
Phone: **0808 800 2222**

### **Children's Legal Centre**

Riverside Office Centre  
Century House North  
North Station Road  
Colchester  
Essex  
CO1 1RE  
Web: [www.childrenslegalcentre.com](http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com)  
Phone: **0345 345 4345**

### **National Youth Advocacy Service**

(NYAS)  
Egerton House  
Tower Road  
Birkenhead  
Wirral  
CH41 1FN  
Web: [www.nyas.net](http://www.nyas.net)  
Phone: **0345 345 4345**

**SENDIASS** (Special Educational Needs & Disability  
Information Advice Support Service – formerly Parent Partnership)  
Registry Office Block  
CHR102  
County Hall  
Hertford  
SG13 8DF  
Web: [www.hertsdirect.org/parentpartnership](http://www.hertsdirect.org/parentpartnership)  
Email: [parent.partnership@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:parent.partnership@hertfordshire.gov.uk)  
Phone: **01992 555847**

## Appendix 1 Informal Complaint Form

Please use this form if you would like to record any contact with members of staff about your concerns.	
Name ( <i>print please</i> )	
Signed	
Date	
Name of member of staff spoken to:	
The information on this form is confidential to you but you may ask for it to be photocopied and a copy kept by the member of staff you spoke to.	

## Appendix 2 Formal Complaint Form

Please return this form to the Chair of Governors (contact details available from the academy office).

**Your Name**

**Address**

**Postcode**

**Telephone No.**

**Day and  
Evening**

*What is it you want to complain about?*

Have you followed Stage 1 and 2 of the Complaints Policy?

YES

NO

When did you do this?

Date:

What happened when you complained in Stage 2?

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What would you like us to do to put things right?

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Signed	
Date	

# Appendix 3

