

Procedures during COVID restrictions

In light of the Department for Education updating the guidance for school complaint policies, please note that should we be in Tier 4 restrictions, or, have restricted access to school due to localised Covid-19 cases, we may not be able to respond to your complaint within our usual timescales or, in accordance with our usual complaints procedure.

If a complaint cannot be responded to until there is access to school, the response times for handling a complaint will commence from the first day access to school is possible.

Please be assured if your complaint can be dealt with remotely, we will endeavour to do so. However, if we cannot it will be processed in the usual way upon our return. Where our policy states we may invite you into the school to meet and discuss the complaint you have raised, please be aware that this meeting will have to take account of the relevant restrictions and social distancing guidance that is in place at that time. It may therefore be that the matter is discussed by exchange of correspondence, over the telephone or via video call as an alternative. This would be done in full consultation with you.

Procedures for Dealing With Complaints

At Weaver Trust we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which students will be helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially. We recognise, however, that sometimes things can go wrong and parents and carers may need to make a complaint or raise concerns they have with the school. This policy tells you what to do if this happens.

Please note that complaints will only be progressed during term time and references to ‘school days’ in this policy are to days when the school is in session.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The majority of issues raised by parents, the community or students, are concerns rather than complaints. We are committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, you may wish or be asked to follow the school’s formal complaints procedure. For the school to be able to investigate a complaint, it needs to be made within three months of the incident/s occurring. If a complaint is older than three months it be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.
- 1.2 The prime aim of Weaver Trust’s policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. Any complaints concerning the conduct of school staff will be handled in accordance with the school’s internal disciplinary procedures such an investigation will remain confidential.
- 1.3 The following matters are excluded from this complaints policy:
 - Admissions
 - Exclusions
 - Child protection and safeguarding investigations
 - School re-organisation proposals
 - Services provided by third party suppliers/contractors who may use the school’s premises

Weaver Trust – Complaints Policy – October 2020

- Employee grievances and disciplinary procedures
- Statutory assessment of special educational needs; and
- Whistleblowing
- Complaints from anyone other than a parent or carer of a pupil on roll at the school.

2. Stages of Complaint

Informal Stage:	A concern is raised informally with a staff member.
Stage 1:	Formal complaint is heard by the Headteacher. The formal procedures are only invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further. In the event the complaint is about the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will deal with stage 1.
Stage 2:	Complaint is heard by Governors' Appeal's Panel, made up of three governors.
Stage 3:	Trust Board consideration and review of process
Stage 4:	<p>In the event that the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure they may refer the matter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency ("ESFA").</p> <p>The ESFA can be contacted on their website using their enquiry form or by writing to the following address:</p> <p>ESFA – Academies Complaint and Customer Insight Unit Cheylesmore House Quinton Road</p>

2.1 Informal Stage – Raising a concern

- 2.1.1 Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. However, it is important for parents / carers to recognise that the school is a busy organisation and that whilst we will do our best, it may not be possible to offer an appointment immediately.
- 2.1.2 On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two. The vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at the informal stage, please write to or call the school within ten school days and state what you would like the school to do. The school will then look at your complaint at the next stage.

2.2 Stage 1 – Complaint heard by Headteacher/Chair of Governors

- 2.2.1 Formal complaints should be put in writing and addressed to the Headteacher, an appropriate member of staff or the Clerk to Governors. You may request a complaints form for this purpose. The complaint will be logged, including the date it was received. The school will normally acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three school days of receiving it. In many cases this response will also report on the action the school has taken to resolve the issue, however, if the issue requires further investigation (e.g. interviewing a number of people) it may take up to five school days. Alternatively, a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further.
- 2.2.2 This meeting will normally take place within ten school days. The aim will be to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. However, if you are not satisfied with the result at Stage 1 please write to or call the Clerk to Governors within ten school days of receiving our response. You will need to tell the school why you are still not satisfied and what you would like the school to do. You can request a complaint form for this which must set out the grounds to escalating your complaint to the next stage.

2.3 Stage 2 – Complaint Escalation – complaint heard by Governors’ Appeals Panel

2.3.1 If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 1, they can escalate the complaint to stage 2 to the Clerk via the school office. The Clerk to Governors will arrange for the Governors’ Complaints Panel. The panel will be made up of three governors who have had no previous involvement in the complaint. The hearing will normally take place within ten school days of the receipt of the written request for Stage 2 investigation. The Governors’ Complaints Panel is to review the outcome of stage 1 and consider if there have been any issues in the investigation of determinations reached. No new allegations will be accepted at stage 2. For the avoidance of doubt, the Panel will confine itself to the allegations raised and determined at stage 1. All parties will be notified of the Panel’s decision in writing within ten school days after the date of the hearing.

2.4 Stage 3 – Review of process by Trust Board

The Trust will consider whether the previous stages have been undertaken compliant to the policy, but will not review the detail included within the complaint. All parties will be notified in writing within ten school days.

2.5 Stage 4 – Further Complaint Escalation - ESFA

2.5.1 In the event that the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or the policy was not compliant with the law, complainants may raise the matter with the ESFA.

The ESFA can be contacted on their website using their enquiry form or by writing to the following address:

ESFA – Academies Complaint and Customer Insight Unit

Cheylesmore House

Quinton Road

Coventry

CV1 2WT

3. NOTE

3.1 Allegations of abuse against a member of the school staff must be reported to the Headteacher immediately. Allegations of abuse against the Headteacher must be reported to the Chair of Governors immediately.

3.2 In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of the Headteacher, the Headteacher and Chair of Governors will be informed of the complaint. The Chair of Governors will arrange for the matter to be investigated. In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of a member of the Local Governing Board, the member will be informed of the complaint.

4. Review

4.1 The Trustee Board will review this policy at least every two years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the School.

Approved by: _____

Chair of Trust

CEO

Date: _____
