Southwark Diocesan
Board of Education
Multi-Academy Trust

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Part of the 2026/2027 Trust Operating Manual

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1. POLICY DEFINITION, AIM AND STATEMENT

1.1 Department for Education (DfE) guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

1.2 A **concern** may be defined as "an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought"

1.3 A **complaint** may be defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action"

1.4 In most cases, a concern can be resolved through informal means. A complaint will follow formal procedures.

1.5 This Complaints Policy helps underpin the mission statement of the School. Its aim is to ensure that a concern, difficulty or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, fair to those concerned and helps to promote parents' and students' confidence in the School's ability to safeguard and promote welfare. The School will try to resolve every concern, difficulty or complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing the School's systems and procedures in the light of the matters raised.

1.6 The School needs to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. The School recognises that a concern or difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment, which can be damaging to the relationship between the School and the parent and student, and can also have a detrimental effect upon the School's ethos and culture. Parents and students should never feel – or be made to feel – that raising a concern, difficulty or complaint will adversely affect the student's future at the School, or place the student at a disadvantage in any way.

2. APPLICATION

2.1 The School is an academy and is therefore governed by the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended) ("the Regulations"). This Complaints Policy has been formulated to comply with Schedule 1, Part 7 of the Regulations (as well as equality legislation and the rules of natural justice). In the case of any variance between the procedure outlined in this Complaints Policy and the Regulations, the procedure outlined in the Regulations will apply.

2.2 This policy is also based on guidance published by the Department for Education . In addition, it addresses our duties set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework in respect of complaints relating to our fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.

2.3 Anyone can make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply; this includes parents or carers of students at the school, parents or carers of students no longer at the school, and members of the public, and all complaints must be dealt with respectfully and expediently. The School encourages persons other than Parents/Carers who have concerns about the school's operation or site to raise them with the school. They should do so by writing to the Headteacher setting out their concerns and the action sought. Any concerns raised will be investigated and responded to separately to the procedure outlined in this Complaints Policy.

2.4 Please note that separate statutory procedures would apply to issues including child protection, admissions, exclusions, statutory assessments of special educational needs and the content of any resulting statutory plan (though concerns about the provision of SEN support at the school can be raised through this policy), school reorganisation proposals, whistleblowing, staff grievances and conduct dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary process, services by other providers who may use school premises or facilities (who should have their own complaints policy), matters dealt with by regulatory bodies such as the JCQ and Department for Education, as well as National Curriculum content . Where a complaint is made against a member of staff, depending upon the nature and seriousness of the complaint, the matter may be dealt with under separate HR procedures which are strictly confidential, rather than under this Complaints Policy.

2.5 This Complaints Policy distinguishes between a concern or difficulty, which can usually be resolved informally, and a formal complaint which will require further investigation.

3. THE RULES OF NATURAL JUSTICE

3.1 Simply put, the rules of natural justice relate to fairness. The School will ensure that all concerns, difficulties or complaints are dealt with in accordance with the following principles:

(a) All parties will be provided with all information and documentation pertinent to the matters raised;

(b) All parties will be given the opportunity to prepare and present their case and respond to the other parties involved;

(c) All persons investigating and making decisions in relation to the matters raised will be impartial and will do so without bias (or apparent bias) to any party involved;

(d) All decisions made will be made on a balanced and considered assessment of the information before him or her only;

(e) All decisions made will be based upon logical conclusions, and not based on mere speculation or suspicion;

(f) All decisions made will be supported by detailed reasons which will be disclosed to all parties involved

4. EQUALITY ACT 2021

4.1 The School will deal with concerns, difficulties and complaints in accordance with its duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to:

(a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;

(b) Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not, by having regard to the need to:

(i) Remove or minimise disadvantages connected to a relevant protected characteristic;

(ii) Take steps to meet the different needs of those sharing a relevant protected characteristic; and

(iii) Encourage those who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in school life and activities in which participation is disproportionately low.

(c) Foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not, by having regard to the need to:

(i) Tackle prejudice; and

(ii) Promote understanding.

4.2 "Relevant protected characteristics" includes sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity and (in the case of persons who are not students) marriage and civil partnership and age.

4.3 In addition, the School will comply with its duty to make the following reasonable adjustments for persons with a disability:

(a) (Where a provision, criterion or practice places a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared to person who is not disabled, reasonable steps must be taken to avoid that disadvantage;

(b) Where a disabled person would, but for the provision of an auxiliary aid, be placed at a substantial disadvantage compared with a person who is not disabled, reasonable steps must be taken to provide the auxiliary aid.

4.4 An auxiliary aid can be a piece of equipment or a service.

4.5 Meetings will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before recording of meetings or conversations take place. The Department for Education will, unless exceptional circumstances apply, support schools who refuse to accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without informed consent of all parties being recorded.

4.6 If a Complainant or other person involved in the complaints procedure requires an interpreter, a signer or any other assistance at meetings or at a Complaint Panel Hearing, or at any other stage of the complaints process, they should let the School know immediately.

4.7 Further details can be found in the School's Equality and Diversity Policy.

4.8 Parents requiring assistance with making a complaint at any stage of the procedure, for example because of a disability, should contact the person identified in Appendix 2 who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements

5. TERMS USED

5.1 For the purpose of this Complaints Policy, a "parent" includes the natural or adoptive parent of a student, irrespective of whether they are or ever have been married, whether they are separated or divorced, whether the student lives with them, whether the father has parental responsibility for the student or whether they have contact with the student.

5.2 A "parent" will also include a non-parent who has parental responsibility for a student, an adult non-parent with whom the student lives, and an adult who is involved in the day-to-day care of the student (for example, collecting or dropping off the student from school).

5.3 Any reference to a "student" refers to current students of the School.

5.4 A person making a complaint will be referred to as a "Complainant" throughout this Complaints Policy.

5.5 A "School Day" is any day on which at that school there is a school session.

6. PROCEDURE

6.1 In respect of complaints regarding the School's fulfilment of Early Years requirements, we will investigate all written complaints relating to the School's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirement, and will notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 School Days of receiving the complaint.

6.2 A record of the complaint (including Early Years Foundation Stage complaints) will be held in accordance with the 'retention of records' section below, and will be made available to Ofsted upon request.

6.3 Parents and carers may contact Ofsted if they believe that the School is not meeting its Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, by calling 0300 123 1231, or by emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

6.4 We will notify parents and carers if we become aware that the School is to be inspected by Ofsted, and we will also supply a copy of the inspection report to parents and carers of children attending the setting on a regular basis. A copy will also be available from the School website and from Ofsted's website.

6.5 For all other complaints, subject to the content of this policy, the School's complaints procedure consists of the following three stages:

(a) Stage 1 – Concerns and difficulties, dealt with informally;

(b) Stage 2 – Complaints formally investigated by the Headteacher (or designate);

(c) Stage 3 – Complaint Panel Hearing.

7. TIME LIMITS

7.1 The School aims to resolve concerns, difficulties and complaints in a timely manner. Time limits for each stage of the procedure are set out under each individual stage. For the purposes of this Complaints Policy, a "school day" is defined as a weekday during term time, when the School is open to children. The definition of "school day" excludes weekends, school holidays and bank holidays. For the avoidance of doubt, term dates are published on the School's website, and information about term dates is made available to parents and students periodically.

7.2 We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

7.3 Although every effort will be made by the School to comply with the time limits specified under each stage of the procedure, it may not always be possible to do so, for example due to the complexity or number of matters raised, or due to the unavailability of the Complainant to attend a meeting, if offered. In all cases, where a time limit cannot be complied with,

the School will write to the Complainant within the specified time limit, setting out the reasons why the time limit cannot be complied with, and confirming the new time limit which will apply.

7.4 If the School has made reasonable attempts to accommodate complainants with dates for complaint meetings and they refuse or are unable to attend the School may:

(a) Convene meetings in their absence; and

(b) Reach a conclusion in the interests of drawing the complaint to a close.

8. COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE HEADTEACHER, A GOVERNOR/TRUSTEE, THE LOCAL GOVERNING BODY/TRUST BOARD, A MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE TEAM OR MEMBERS

8.1 There may be occasions when it's necessary or reasonable to deviate from the published complaints procedure. However, in these circumstances we will notify you and provide an explanation as to why.

8.2 If the complaint is about the headteacher or a Governor/Trustee (including either the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled Governor/Trustee will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2 instead.

8.3 Complaints about the headteacher or a Governor must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, and to the Chief Executive Officer (mark.burnett@sdbemat.org) in the case of a Trustee. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

8.4 If a complaint is about a member of the Trust's executive team (for example, the chief financial officer or the chief executive officer), complaints should be made to the Chair of the Board (C/O enquiries@sdbemat.org) and a Trustee will be appointed to deal with the matter under Stage 2. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

8.5 Complaints about the Trust's members will be rare but any such complaints should also be made to the Chair of the Board (C/O enquiries@sdbemat.org) and a Trustee will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

8.6 If the complaint is:

(a) Jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair of the governing body/Trust Board; or

(b) The entire governing body/Trust Board; or

(c) The majority of the governing body/Trust Board,

then, depending on the circumstances, Stage 2 may be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the local governing body or Trust, and Stage 3 may be heard by a panel consisting of 2 trustees and one independent panel member if the complaint is about a governing body or an independent panel if the complaint is about the Trust Board.

8.7 At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator (and at Stage 3, the committee of independent, co-opted governors / trustees) will provide a formal written response.

9. LATE COMPLAINTS

9.1 Where a complaint is submitted more than six months after the incident or event (or where the complaint relates to a series of incidents or events, more than six months from the date of the latest incident or event), the School reserves the right to refuse to investigate the complaint under this Complaints Policy **if it appears reasonable and fair to do so, having regard to the circumstances surrounding the complaint.**

9.2 Where the School decides that a complaint which was submitted late will not be investigated, the School will write to the Complainant notifying them of the decision within **five school days** of the complaint being received.

9.3 If the Complainant is unhappy with the decision not to investigate a complaint which was submitted late, the Complainant may write to the Chair of Local Governors at the School asking for the decision to be reviewed. The Chair of Local Governors will be provided with all documentation relating to the complaint, together with the letter from the School to the

Complainant, and will review the decision not to investigate the complaint. The Chair of Local Governors will not investigate the complaint itself during this review.

9.4 The Chair of Local Governors will write to the Complainant with the outcome of the review within **ten school days** of the date that the letter from the Complainant seeking the review was received, and provide the School with a copy of the letter.

9.5 If the Chair of Local Governors quashes the decision not to investigate the complaint, it will be referred to the School to be dealt with under this Complaints Policy in the usual way.

9.6 If the Chair of Local Governors upholds the decision not to investigate the complaint, the Complainant may refer the concern or complaint to Department for Education using the procedure stated towards the end of this Complaints Policy.

9.7 In exceptional circumstances, the Chair of Local Governors can delegate the responsibility for the review to the Vice-Chair of Local Governors.

10. PERSISTENT OR SERIAL COMPLAINTS

10.1 There may be occasions when, despite a complaint being considered under all stages in this Complaints Policy, the Complainant persists in making the same complaint to the School. There may also be occasions when a Complainant raises unreasonable persistent complaints or raises complaints about matters which do not affect them. There may also be occasions when a complaint is made about a matter which is clearly so trivial that it would be a poor use of the School's resources to deal with it under the formal stages of the procedure.

10.2 In all of these cases, the School reserves the right to regard the complaint as persistent or serial and to refuse to investigate it under the procedure in this Complaints Policy, **if it appears reasonable and fair to do so, having regard to the circumstances surrounding the complaint.**

10.3 Where the School decides that a complaint is persistent or serial and will not be investigated, the School will write to the Complainant within **five school days** of the complaint being raised to notify them of the decision.

10.4 If the Complainant is unhappy with the decision not to investigate a persistent or serial complaint, they may write to the Chair of Local Governors to ask for the decision to be reviewed. The Chair of Local Governors will be provided with all documentation relating to the current complaint and any previous complaints which were relevant to the decision, together with the letter from the School to the Complainant, and will review the decision not to investigate the complaint. The Chair of Local Governors will **not** investigate the complaint itself during this review.

10.5 The Chair of Local Governors will write to the Complainant with the outcome of the review within **ten school days** of the date that the letter from the Complainant seeking the review was received.

10.6 If the Chair of Local Governors overturns the decision not to investigate the concern or complaint, it will be referred to the School to be dealt with under the procedure in this Complaints Policy in the usual way.

10.7 If the Chair of Local Governors upholds the decision not to investigate the concern or complaint, the Complainant may refer the concern or complaint to the Department for Education using the procedure stated towards the end of this Complaints Policy.

10.8 In exceptional circumstances, the Chair of Local Governors can delegate the responsibility for the review to the Vice-Chair of Local Governors.

10.9 Further to the above, the School may consider ending communication with a complainant if:

(a) It has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns;

(b) The complainant has been given a clear statement of the School's position and the options available;

(c) The complainant contacts the School repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time.

10.10 The case to stop responding is stronger if:

(a) The complainant's letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive;

(b) The complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff;

(c) The School has reason to believe that the complainant is contacting the School with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience.

10.11 Alternatively, the School may suggest that the complainant asks a third party to act on their behalf when communicating with the School, such as the local Citizen's Advice Bureau.

10.12 If the School has decided that it's appropriate to stop responding, it must inform the individual accordingly. Parents and carers will however be provided with the information they are legally entitled to, and the School will at all times act reasonably and consider any new complaint.

10.13 If an individual's behaviour is causing a significant level of disruption, regardless of whether or not they have raised a complaint, academies can implement a tailored communication strategy.

10.14 If an individual persists to the point that may constitute harassment, further action may be considered.

10.15 Attention is drawn to the information included in Appendix 2 which is drawn from the Department for Education's Best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures (March 2021).

11. ANONYMOUS AND CAMPAIGN COMPLAINTS

11.1 The School will not investigate anonymous complaints under the procedure in this Complaints Policy. Anonymous complaints will be referred to the Headteacher who will decide what, if any, action should be taken.

11.2 Where the School is the focus of a campaign and receives a large volume of complaints, all based on the same subject or from complainants unconnected with the School, the School may choose to respond by sending a template response to all complainants or, publish a single response on the School's website.

11.3 If either anonymous or campaign complaints are investigated as above, the School can request a representative be identified and appointed to act on behalf of the group/complainant.

12. DUPLICATE COMPLAINTS

12.1 There may be occasions when, despite a complaint being considered under all stages in this Complaints Policy, we receive a duplicate complaint from:

(a) a spouse

(b) a partner

(c) a grandparent

(d) a child

12.2 If the complaint is about the same subject, we will confirm either that;

(a) the School has already considered this complaint and the local process is complete; or

(b) the School is currently considering this complaint.

12.3 The author of the duplicate complaint will be advised that once the original complaint has completed all stages under this Complaints Policy, they can contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the School's handling of the original complaint.

12.4 Any new aspects to the complaint not previously considered will be investigated and dealt with in accordance with this complaints procedure

13. UK GDPR / DATA PROTECTION ACT 2018 AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

13.1 Complaints sometimes include requests for information or documentation. Such requests will either be a "subject access request" under the UK GDPR / Data Protection Act 2018 (where the information requested relates to an identifiable individual) or a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (where the information is general and not related to an identifiable individual).

13.2 Subject access requests under the UK GDPR / Data Protection Act 2018 must be responded to within one calendar month (although the Trust can extend the timescale for compliance by up to two further calendar months if a request is complex), and requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 must be responded to within twenty working days, however the School will aim to provide this information as soon as practicable (where the request is valid and the Complainant is lawfully entitled to the information or documentation) in accordance with the rules of natural justice.

13.3 Further details can be found in the School's GDPR Policy.

14. RESOLUTION PRINCIPALS

14.1 It is in everyone's interest that concerns, difficulties and complaints are resolved to the satisfaction of all parties at the earliest possible stage. The way in which the concern, difficulty or complaint is dealt with after the matter is first raised by the Complainant can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To that end, members of staff will be periodically made aware of the procedure in this Complaints Policy, so that they will know what to do when a concern or difficulty is raised with them.

14.2 At each stage of the complaints procedure, the investigator will consider how the complaint may be resolved. In considering how a complaint may be resolved, the investigator will give due regard to the seriousness of the complaint. It may be appropriate in order to bring the complaint to a resolution for the investigator to offer:

(a) An explanation;

(b) An apology;

(c) Reassurance that steps have been taken to prevent a recurrence of events which led to the complaint;

(d) Reassurance that the School will undertake a review of its policies and procedures in light of the complaint.

14.3 None of the above will constitute an admission of negligence or an acceptance of liability on behalf of the School.

15. OUTCOME PRINCIPALS

15.1 Examples of outcomes include:

(a) There was insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld;

(b) The investigation did not substantiate the matters raised, so the complaint cannot be upheld;

(c) The complaint was substantiated in part or full. A description should be given of the remedial action being taken by the School as a consequence of the complaint. **Details of any disciplinary action or sanctions to be taken against a member of staff are strictly confidential and cannot be disclosed.**

(d) The matter has been fully investigated and, as a consequence, further confidential procedures are being pursued. **Details of any disciplinary action or sanctions to be taken against a member of staff are strictly confidential and cannot be disclosed.**

16. RETENTION OF RECORDS

16.1 A full written record will be maintained centrally at the School of all complaints made under Stage 2 to 3: to include whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing as well as:

(a) a record of the progress of the complaint and the final outcome;

(b) a record of whether the case progressed to a panel hearing; and

(c) a record of the action taken by the school or the trust, regardless of outcome.

16.2 Records of complaints will be destroyed when the student to which they relate reaches the age of twenty four years or, in the case of a student with a statement of special educational needs, until the student reaches the age of thirty years.

17. CONFIDENTIALITY

17.1 All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where access is requested by the Secretary of State, a school inspector, or under another legal authority.

17.2 There may also be occasions where complaints are made or continue to be escalated after a child has left the school. On changing schools, the pupil's educational record is transferred to the new school. Schools can consider holding records of complaints separate to their pupil records (while a complaint is ongoing) so that access to them can be maintained.

17.3 Meetings will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place.

18. PUBLICATION

18.1 This Complaints Policy has been ratified by the Local Governing Body, and will be reviewed annually.

18.2 This policy is published on the School website and is available in hard copy on request. A copy of this Complaints Policy will be provided to a Complainant when a concern, difficulty or complaint is first raised.

18.3 A copy of the policy is available for inspection from the School office during a working day.

18.4 This policy can be made available in large print or other accessible formats if required.

18.5 Information regarding the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure of this policy during the preceding school year is available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, or the Secretary of State. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure of this policy during the 2024 -25 school year was 1

19. STAGE 1: CONCERNS AND DIFFICULTIES

19.1 Concerns:

(a) The School expects that most concerns and difficulties (defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'), where a parent or student seeks intervention, reconsideration or some other action to be taken, can be resolved informally. Examples might include dissatisfaction about an aspect of teaching or pastoral care, allocation of privileges or responsibilities, a timetable clash, an issue with the School's systems or equipment, or a billing error.

19.2 Notification:

The concern or difficulty should be raised as follows:

(a) Education issues – if the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, the Complainant should speak to the Year Leader, Head of Department, Director of Faculty or Deputy Headteacher, as appropriate.

(b) Pastoral care – for concerns relating to matters outside the classroom, the Complainant should speak to the Year Leader, Key Stage Director, or Deputy Headteacher as appropriate.

(c) **Disciplinary matters** – a problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised with the member of staff who imposed it in the first instance. If not resolved, the Complainant should speak to the relevant Head of Department, Year Leader, or Deputy Headteacher.

(d) **Financial and administrative matters** – a query relating to fees, extras or other administrative matters should be raised by the Complainant with the Finance Office or the Bursar/Business Manager.

(e) **An issue with a specific member of staff** – often, the best way to resolve an issue with a specific member of staff is to raise it with that member of staff directly, so that they are given the opportunity to address and resolve the concern or difficulty before it becomes a formal complaint. If the Complainant feels uncomfortable doing this, however, the issue should be raised with the appropriate Head of Department, Year Leader, Director of Faculty or Deputy Headteacher.

19.3 Should a concern or difficulty be raised with a member of staff who feels that they are not the best person to be dealing with it, they will refer it to the Head of Department, Year Leader, Director of Faculty, Deputy Headteacher or other designated member of staff as appropriate.

19.4 If a concern or difficulty is raised with a member of staff who feels that it raises serious issues which should be dealt with as a formal complaint immediately, the member of staff will tell the Complainant that they should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher under Stage 2 of this Complaints Policy. The same applies to those occasions when complainants want to raise their concerns formally. If the Complainant would prefer to complete a form instead of writing a letter, the Complainant can complete the Complaint Form contained in Appendix 1 of this Complaints Policy to submit their complaint formally.

19.5 Unresolved Concerns and Difficulties

The School will aim to resolve a concern or difficulty within fifteen school days of the date that it was raised. Where a concern or difficulty has not been resolved by informal means within this time limit from the date that it was raised, the complainant can submit the matters raised as a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this Complaints Policy.

19.6 Record of Concerns and Difficulties

The member of staff dealing with a concern or difficulty will make a written record of the issues raised, the action taken and, if applicable, the resolution reached, which will be retained in a central record. Further information in relation to the retention of records can be found earlier on in this Complaints Policy.

20. STAGE 2: FORMAL COMPLAINT TO THE HEADTEACHER

20.1 Notification

(a) A concern or difficulty raised under Stage 1 of this Complaints Policy which remains unresolved after fifteen school days, or a serious matter which requires formal investigation from the outset, should be set out in writing by the Complainant and sent to the Headteacher at the School. Should a formal written complaint be received by another member of the School's staff, it will immediately be passed on to the Headteacher.

20.2 The Complainant should clearly set out the matters in dispute, the relevant dates, the full names of the persons involved and what the Complainant believes the School should do to resolve the complaint. Any documentation relied upon by the Complainant should be attached to the formal complaint.

20.3 Acknowledgement

(a) The formal complaint will be acknowledged in writing within five school days of receipt. The acknowledgement letter will confirm the date that the formal complaint was received, the action to be taken and the specified time limit.

20.4 Investigation

(a) The Headteacher will be provided with the records of the Stage 1 informal procedure (if applicable) within five school days of receipt of the formal complaint, and will then proceed to investigate the complaint. This will involve obtaining and considering all documentation held by the School which is relevant to the complaint. If further information is required from the Complainant, this may be requested from them over the telephone or in writing.

20.5 The Headteacher will speak to the persons who were involved in the matters raised by the Complainant. Students will only be spoken to with an independent member of staff present to support them. Where there is an issue about the conduct of a member of staff, that member of staff will be offered the option of having another member of staff present. Other members of staff will be spoken to alone. A written record of the conversation will be made, and the student or member of staff spoken to will be asked to read, sign and date the written record to confirm that it is accurate. In the case of students, the accompanying independent member of staff will also be asked to sign and date the record of the conversation.

20.6 If the Headteacher deems it to be appropriate in relation to the matters raised, the Complainant will be offered a meeting to discuss the issues raised. This may take place at the beginning of the investigation to clarify any matters which are unclear, or after the investigation has taken place with the aim of reaching an amicable resolution.

20.7 Outcome

(a) The Headteacher will write to the Complainant confirming the outcome of the investigation within twenty school days from the date that the complaint was received. The letter will set out the individual matters raised by the Complainant, the findings made by the Headteacher during the course of the investigation, and the conclusion reached.

20.8 The letter will inform the Complainant that, if they are unsatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation, they should write to the Clerk to the Local Governors within **five school days** of receipt of the letter requesting a Complaint Panel Hearing under Stage 3 of this Complaints Policy.

20.9 Where the complaint was received during a school holiday or within twenty days from the end of a term or half term, the Headteacher will endeavour to expedite the investigation wherever possible.

20.10 The Headteacher will make a written record of the issues raised, the action taken and, if applicable, the resolution reached, which will be retained in a central record. Further information in relation to the retention of records can be found earlier on in this Complaints Policy.

20.11 Delegation

(a) In appropriate cases, the Headteacher may delegate the complaint to a member of the Senior Leadership Team to deal with in accordance with the procedure outlined above.

21. STAGE 3: COMPLAINT PANEL HEARING

21.1 Notification

(a) If the Complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the review under Stage 2 of this Complaints Policy, the Complainant may write to the Clerk to the Local Governors requesting a Complaint Panel Hearing. The Complainant should write to the Clerk to the Local Governors within **five school days** of receiving the letter confirming the outcome following Stage 2.

21.2 The Complainant should not repeat the matters raised in their original letter or attach documentation already provided, but should clearly set out how and why the Complainant does not accept the findings made under Stages 1 and 2.

21.3 The Complaint Panel

(a) The Complaint Panel will consist of three persons appointed by or on behalf of the Trust by the Clerk to the Local Governors. None of the three Complaint Panel members will have been involved in the matters which gave rise to the complaint, have been involved in dealing with the complaint previously or have any detailed prior knowledge of the complaint. Two of the Complaint Panel members may (but do not have to) be Governors. The third Complaint Panel member will be independent of the management and running of the School, i.e. they will not be a member of staff or a Governor,

(b) and will not be linked to the School in another way, for example as a parent of a student at the School.

21.4 The Department for Education previously issued the following guidance in relation to the appointment of the independent Complaint Panel member as follows:

Whilst we do not wish to be prescriptive about who schools should appoint as an independent person, our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the police force... Schools will of course have their own views.

21.5 The Department for Education suggest that the independent member should have no association with the trust. However, with the exception of the MAT's trustees, it is satisfied that a governor, from a local governing body at a different school within the MAT, who has no conflict of interest or prior knowledge of the complaint, can be an independent panel member. This is because such person would have no direct involvement with the management and running of the school being complained about.

21.6 Attendance

(a) The Complainant may attend the Complaint Panel Hearing, and may be accompanied by another person. For the avoidance of doubt, the Complainant's supporter will be present for moral support only and will not play any part in the proceedings, unless invited to do so by the Chair of the Complaint Panel, entirely at his or her discretion and for a good reason. The Complaint Panel Hearing is **not** a legal hearing and it is not appropriate for either the Complainant or the School to be legally represented. The aim of the panel hearing should be reconciliation; to put things right that may have gone wrong.

21.7 However, there may be 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.

21.8 Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

21.9 Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

21.10 The School will be represented at the Complaint Panel Hearing by the person who dealt with the complaint under Stage 2, which will usually be the Headteacher. This person will be referred to as the "School's Representative" for the purposes of Stage 3.

21.11 The Complaint Panel Hearing will be minuted by the Clerk to the Complaint Panel, who will usually be the Clerk to the Local Governors.

21.12 Convening the Complaint Panel Hearing

(a) After selecting the Complaint Panel members, the Clerk to the Local Governors will write to the Complainant within **five school days** acknowledging receipt of their request and informing them of the names of the Complaint Panel members. If the Complainant objects to any of the named persons being appointed to the Complaint Panel, they should notify the Clerk to the Local Governors within **three school days** of receipt of the letter. Fair consideration will be given to any bona fide objection to a particular member of the Complaint Panel.

21.13 The Clerk to the Local Governors will liaise with the Complaint Panel, the Complainant and the School's Representative to agree a mutually convenient date for the Complaint Panel Hearing, which will usually take place within **twenty school days** of receipt of the Complainant's request, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

21.14 The Clerk to the Local Governors will write to the Complainant confirming the date of the Complaint Panel Hearing within **five school days** of the date that the acknowledgement letter was sent (or the date that the new Complaint Panel member was selected, if an objection was received and upheld). If the Complaint Panel Hearing will not take place within **twenty school days** of receipt of the Complainant's request, the letter will set out the exceptional circumstances involved.

21.15 Documentation

(a) The Clerk to the Local Governors will forward a copy of all paperwork relating to the complaint (consisting of the record of the Stage 1 informal procedure (if applicable), the original letter of complaint or Complaint Form, any documentation provided by the Complainant with their complaint, all investigation records with the letter of outcome

under Stage 2 with the Complainant's letter requesting a Complaint Panel Hearing and accompanying documents) to the Complainant, the School's Representative and the three Complaint Panel members.

21.16 The names of individuals other than the Complainant, the Complainant's family, members of the School's staff and Governors, will be redacted and replaced with a letter relevant to that particular individual (for example "Jane Brown" will be replaced with "A" throughout, "John Jones" will be replaced with B throughout) unless they have provided their written consent for their name to be disclosed.

21.17 If the Complainant wishes the Complaint Panel to consider any additional information, they should forward this documentation to the Clerk to the Local Governors to arrive at least five school days before the Complaint Panel Hearing, to enable the Clerk to the Local Governors to forward it to the School's Representative and the Complaint Panel members. Documentation may be submitted after this deadline with the permission of the Chair of the Complaint Panel acting in his or her sole discretion.

21.18 Witnesses

(a) The Chair of the Complaint Panel will decide, at his or her absolute discretion, which witnesses will be permitted to attend the Complaint Panel Hearing to give a verbal statement rather than relying on a written statement or record of meeting which have been signed by the witness.

21.19 If the Complainant wishes to rely on the account of a witness, they should ask the witness to write down, sign and date their account and forward it to the Clerk to the Local Governors **at least five school days** before the Complaint Panel Hearing, to enable the Clerk to the Local Governors to forward it to the School's Representative and the Complaint Panel members.

21.20 Witnesses under the age of eighteen other than the Complainant's own family will only be allowed to attend the Complaint Panel Hearing at the discretion of the Chair of the Complaint Panel, and then only if they are accompanied by one of their parents or carers. Any written accounts provided by the Complainant relating to witnesses under the age of eighteen must be signed and dated by the witness **and** one of the witness' parents or carers.

21.21 Members of staff of the School involved in the matters which gave rise to the complaint will usually have provided a signed written account or have signed a note of a meeting during the previous stages, which will be forwarded to all parties with the other complaint documentation in the usual way. Members of staff will not usually be required to attend the Complaint Panel Hearing to give a verbal statement unless their conduct is relevant or their account is contentious and the rules of natural justice dictate that the Complainant should be allowed to ask that member of staff questions.

21.22 Procedure at the Complaint Panel Hearing

The Complaint Panel Hearing will be conducted as follows:

(a) The Clerk to the Complaint Panel will greet the Complainant, the Complainant's supporter and the School's Representative and welcome them into the room where the Complaint Panel has convened (any witnesses will remain outside of the room until they are called in to give their account);

(b) Questions may be restricted depending on the relevance/purpose of them, and whether they have been addressed in the documentation;

(c) All parties must comply with the School's Code of Conduct and a breach of this during the hearing may result in the hearing being adjourned and rescheduled if necessary;

(d) The Complainant will be invited by the Complaint Panel to give an account of their complaint;

(e) The School's Representative will be invited to ask the Complainant questions, if any;

(f) The Complaint Panel will ask the Complainant questions, if any;

(g) At the discretion of the Chair of the Complaint Panel, the Complainant's first witness will be invited into the room to give an account of what they saw or know;

(h) The School's Representative will be invited to ask the Complainant's witness questions, if any;

(i) The Complaint Panel will ask the Complainant's witness questions, if any;

(j) The Complainant's witness will be asked to leave the room;

(k) If the Complainant has any further relevant witnesses, at the discretion of the Chair of the Complaint Panel, they will be invited into the room individually to provide their accounts and be questioned as outlined above;

(l) The School's Representative will be invited by the Complaint Panel to respond to the complaint and make representations on behalf of the School;

(m) The Complainant will be invited to ask the School's Representative questions, if any;

(n) The Complaint Panel will ask the School's Representative questions, if any;

(o) At the discretion of the Chair of the Complaint Panel, the School's relevant first witness will be invited into the room to give an account or what they saw or know;

(p) The Complainant will be invited to ask the School's witness questions, if any;

(q) The Complaint Panel will ask the School's witness questions, if any;

(r) The School's witness will be asked to leave the room;

(s) If the School has any further relevant witnesses, at the discretion of the Chair of the Complaint Panel, they will be invited into the room individually to provide their accounts and be questioned, as outlined above;

(t) The Complainant will be invited by the Complaint Panel to summarise their complaint;

(u) The School's Representative will be invited by the Complaint Panel to summarise their response to the complaint and the School's stance;

(v) The Complaint Panel Hearing will conclude and the Complainant and the School's Representative will be asked to leave.

(w) The Chair of the Panel may, at their discretion, adjourn the Hearing if they consider it appropriate to do so. This may include an adjournment for the parties to take legal advice on a specific issue arising.

(x) A Hearing before the Panel is a private proceeding. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in or arising from the proceeding shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media.

21.23 The Complaint Panel's Decision

(a) The Complaint Panel will convene in private, either immediately after the Complaint Panel Hearing or on a subsequent date, and will consider all of the documentation and everything that they have heard at the Complainant Panel Hearing and make:

(i) **Findings of Fact** The Complaint Panel will decide which facts are established to be true, on a balance of probabilities (i.e. more likely than not). If a fact is not deemed relevant, the Complaint Panel will not consider it further. The Complaint Panel will make a written record of the facts that have been established, those which have not been established and those which are not relevant, with their reasons for making these findings.

(ii) **Recommendations (where appropriate)** The Complaint Panel will consider the facts which they have established and will make recommendations based upon them where appropriate. These recommendations may be aimed at achieving reconciliation between the parties (for example, a written apology), improving procedures or preventing a recurrence in the future. The Complaint Panel will keep a written record of their recommendations, with reasons..

(b) It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents.

21.24 Notification of the Complaint Panel's Decision

The Clerk to the Local Governors will write within **ten school days** of the Complaint Panel Hearing to the:

(a) Complainant;

(b) the School's Representative;

(c) Any person complained about;

21.25 The letter will identify each of the issues complained about, summarise how the Complaint Panel Hearing proceeded, and confirm each of the Complaint Panel's findings of fact and recommendations, if any, with reasons. The letter will also confirm that, if the Complainant believes that this Complaints Policy does not comply with the Regulations, or that the School has not followed the procedure outlined in this Complaints Policy, the Complainant may refer their complaint to the Department for Education for further consideration. Copies of Complaint Panel hearing minutes will also be provided to the complainant upon request.

21.26 The Clerk to the Local Governors will also ensure that a copy of the Complaint Panel's findings and recommendations are made available on the School's premises for inspection by the Trust, the Local Governing Body and the Principal.

21.27 Factors for the Complaint Panel to Consider

(a) It is important that the Complaint Panel Hearing is independent and impartial, and that it is seen to be so. No person may sit on the Complaint Panel if they have had a prior involvement in the matters which gave rise to the complaint, in dealing with the complaint in the previous stages, or have a prior detailed knowledge of the complaint;

(b) The aim of the Complaint Panel Hearing, which must be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the School and the Complainant. However, it has to be recognised that the Complainant may not be satisfied with the outcome if the Complaint Panel does not find wholly in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the Complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously;

(c) An effective Complaint Panel will acknowledge that many Complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The Chair of the Complaint Panel will ensure that the Complaint Panel Hearing is as welcoming as possible, while ensuring that it is procedurally fair to all parties. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not substantially adversarial;

(d) Extra care needs to be taken when the Complainant is a child, or there are child witnesses present. Care should be taken to ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The Complaint Panel should be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of the adults present. Where the child's parent is the Complainant, it would be helpful to give the parent the opportunity to suggest which parts of the hearing, if any, the child should attend, with the Chair retaining discretion;

(e) The Complaint Panel should ensure that they are familiar with the complaints procedure in advance of the Complaint Panel Hearing.

21.28 The Chair of the Complaint Panel will play a key part at the Complaint Panel Hearing, ensuring that:

(a) The remit of the Complaint Panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of making representations without undue interruption;

(b) All of the issues raised in the complaint are addressed;

(c) Key findings of fact are made, on a balance of probabilities ;

(d) Each party treats the other with respect and courtesy;

(e) The Complaint Panel is open minded and acts independently of the School;

(f) No member of the Complaint Panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings;

(g) Each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;

(h) All written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises during the course of the Complaint Panel Hearing, it would be useful to give all parties the opportunity to consider and comment on it.

22. MANAGEMENT OF COMPLAINTS TO THE TRUST

22.1 Where the School-based complaints procedures has been completed and a complainant does not feel that his or her complaint has been dealt with by the Academy to his or her satisfaction, they may contact the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education Multi-Academy Trust (SDBE MAT) in writing to request a review of the complaint investigation.

22.2 Generally, the SDBE MAT will only consider complaints that fall into one of the following two areas:

(a) The School did not comply with its own complaints procedure when considering a complaint or the School complaints procedure does not comply with statutory requirements.

(i) The SDBE MAT cannot review or overturn an School's decisions about complaints but will look at whether the School considered the complaint appropriately. The SDBE MAT will generally only do this after a complaint has been through the School's own procedure but may investigate sooner if there is evidence of undue delay by the School concerned. If the SDBE MAT finds that a School did not deal with a complaint appropriately, it will request that the complaint is reconsidered. Similarly, if the School's complaints procedure does not meet statutory requirements, the SDBE MAT will ensure that this is addressed.

(b) The School has failed to comply with a duty imposed under its funding agreement with the Secretary of State.

(i) The SDBE MAT will seek to resolve any concerns regarding potential or actual breaches of the funding agreement by a School. The SDBE MAT will also consider evidence that an School has failed to comply with any other legal obligation to which it is subject.

22.3 Investigations will not usually take place 2 months or more after a decision or action taken by an School unless the complainant has good reason for the delay in making a complaint.

22.4 The SDBE MAT reserve the right not to investigate complaints considered to be vexatious or malicious or where the SDBE MAT is satisfied with the action that an School has already taken or proposes to take to resolve the complaint.

22.5 Procedures For Dealing with A Complaint:

(a) Written complaints will be acknowledged in writing within **15 school days**. The complainant will be given the name of the Investigating Officer at the SDBE MAT.

22.6 The complainant will be asked to submit a written summary of the complaint.

22.7 The School will be asked to provide:

(a) a copy of its complaints procedure and details of any other relevant policies or procedures;

(b) an explanation of how each stage of its complaints procedure has been followed;

(c) a response to the summary of the complaint, together with relevant documents and copies of correspondence with the complainant.

22.8 The School will be asked to respond within **20 school days**, notifying the Investigating Officer if there is any confidential information which may not be shared with the complainant, such as data belonging to individuals not involved in the complaint.

22.9 The Investigating Officer will respond in writing to the complainant, usually within **25 school days**. However, whilst every effort will be made to complete investigations promptly, in some cases, requiring detailed investigations, it will take longer to produce a written response. Where this is the case, the complainant will be advised of any revised timescale for production of the written response.

22.10 Where appropriate the SDBE MAT may direct a School to review its decision on the complaint submitted to it or change its procedures for reaching a decision, if they are not compliant with statutory requirements

23. COMPLAINTS ABOUT SEND PROVISION

23.1 Complaints about SEN provision in our school should be made to the Headteacher in the first instance. If not resolved at this point, they can then be referred at Stage 1 of this complaints policy.

24. REFERRAL TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

24.1 Once a complaint has been through all the stages of this Complaints Policy, that is the end of the internal procedures. If the Complainant believes that this Complaints Policy does not comply with the Regulations, or that the School has not followed the procedure in this Complaints Policy, the Complainant can refer the complaint to the Department for Education for consideration.

24.2 The Complainant can find further information about referring a complaint to the Department for Education by pasting this page into an Internet browser:

https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe

24.3 The Complainant should be aware that the Education and Skills Funding Agency will not usually investigate the complaint itself, or interfere with the findings of the Complaint Panel, unless the decision made was manifestly unreasonable.

APPENDIX 1 – FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete and return to the School who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<table>
<tr><td>Your Name:</td><td>Student's Name:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Your Relationship to Student:</td><td>Student's DOB and Form:</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Address and Postcode:</td><td>Daytime Telephone Number:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Evening Telephone Number:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Full details of complaint (including the names of all persons involved and the dates of incidents referred to):</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (for example, who did you speak to and what was the response)?</td></tr>
</table>

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.	
Signature:	**Date:**
For Official Use:	
Date Acknowledgement Sent:	
Name of Person Complaint Referred To:	
Signature:	*Date:*

APPENDIX 2 - UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

1. The School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a highquality service to those who complain. It will not normally limit the contact complainants have with it. However, it does not expect its staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

2. The School encourages complainants to use caution if Artificial Intelligence (AI) is used to generate complaint letters or communications with the school. While appropriate use of AI can be beneficial in making the complaints process more accessible in some circumstances, there are risks with doing so. Such communications can result in voluminous or repetitive correspondence and / or irrelevant legal references which can unhelpfully escalate issues and divert school time and resources instead of allowing us to work with you collaboratively to resolve your concerns.

3. If AI is used, complainants are asked to reflect on whether the content of the correspondence is appropriate before sending it to the school.

4. We also ask complainants to refrain from labelling correspondence as 'letters before action' (or similar terminology) and / or sending correspondence which requests a response within a specified timeframe with a threat of legal proceedings. Whilst complainants are entitled to take legal advice should they wish to do so, the Department for Education encourages schools and parents / carers to engage with the complaints policy to resolve concerns, which inevitably becomes more difficult where threats of legal action are made. Courts also expect parties to explore alternatives to legal action and legal proceedings should only be taken as a matter of last resort. The school reserves the right to apply to strike out legal claims which have no merit and to seek a costs order where appropriate.

5. Complainants are requested not to copy in third party individuals and / or organisations to a complaint as this can complicate matters and will not lead to a quicker resolution. Similarly, complainants are encouraged not to publish complaints on social media as doing so is unlikely to lead to a resolution. A complaint should be specific to the complainant's child: the School expects complainants to afford it the opportunity to work with collaboratively to address specific concerns in an appropriate manner.

6. The School adopts the Department for Education definition of unreasonable complainants as those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the School, hinder consideration of their or other people's complaints. Unreasonable complaints are taken seriously by the School as they put a strain on valuable resources and hinder the progress of proper investigations.

7. The School may judge that a complaint is unreasonable by assessing a number of factors, including those that are outlined below.

(a) A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

   (i) refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;

   (ii) refuses to operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;

   (iii) refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;

   (iv) insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;

   (v) introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;

   (vi) makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;

   (vii) changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;

(viii) repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);

(ix) refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the School's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed;

(x) seeks an unrealistic outcome;

(xi) makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

(b) A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

(i) maliciously;

(ii) aggressively;

(iii) using threats, intimidation or violence;

(iv) using abusive, offensive, insulting, hostile, mocking, unnecessarily personal or discriminatory language;

(v) knowing it to be false;

(vi) using falsified information;

(vii) publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as on social media websites and newspapers.

(c) A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if it is manifestly unjustified, inappropriate, or an improper use of formal procedure. In assessing this, the School shall have regard to all the circumstances of the case and the nature of the complaint itself rather than the nature of the complainant. In assessing all of the circumstances of the case the School will consider a range of factors including:

(i) whether a complaint has reasonable foundation;

(ii) the history and context of the complaint (and any evidence where relevant);

(iii) whether the time and cost of investigating the complaint is proportionate to the issue(s) complained of;

(iv) whether an investigation of the complaint is likely to cause a disproportionate or unjustified level of disruption, irritation or distress;

(v) unexplained delay in raising a complaint or issue;

(vi) if the purpose of the complaint is to obtain an outcome which is unavailable via the complaints procedure, such as a claim for compensation, damages or a refund of fees paid;

(vii) any evidence of a complaint being brought for an improper purpose.

(d) Wherever possible, the Head will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before dismissing a complaint as unreasonable. The Head will normally only do so after consultation with the Chair of Governors.

(e) If the behaviour continues, the School will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it.

(f) For complainants who excessively contact the School causing a significant level of disruption, the School may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after 3 months.

(g) In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence the School will immediately inform the police and communicate its actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school.

(h) If the Complainant is unhappy with the decision not to investigate a persistent or serial complaint, they may write to the Chair of Local Governors to ask for the decision to be reviewed. The Chair of Local Governors will be provided with all documentation relating to the current complaint and any previous complaints which were relevant to the decision, together with the letter from the School to the Complainant and will review the decision not to investigate the complaint. The Chair of Local Governors will not investigate the complaint itself during this review.

(i) The Chair of Local Governors will write to the Complainant with the outcome of the review within 10 school days of the date that the letter from the Complainant seeking the review was received.

(ii) If the Chair of Local Governors overturns the decision not to investigate the concern or complaint, it will be referred to the School to be dealt with under the procedure in this Complaints Policy in the usual way.

(iii) If the Chair of Local Governors upholds the decision not to investigate the concern or complaint, the Complainant may refer the concern or complaint to the Department for Education.