



# **Orchard Learning Trust**

## **Complaints Policy and Procedure**

**September 2018**

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to provide parents, carers and other individuals with information about what courses of action are open to them if they have a concern with the school, and how complaints will be dealt with.

Our policy is to deal with concerns, problems or complaints in an effective, fair, consistent and prompt manner. We always hope that concerns and issues that you may have can be addressed informally and encourage regular discussion with your child's class teacher.

We would always hope to be able to address any concerns promptly and informally where possible, however we recognise that occasionally a formal procedure may be needed.

## Principles

We recognise that raising a complaint is a stressful and difficult process, and keep to the following principles to make it as straightforward and fair as possible:

- Any concerns will be dealt with promptly within a reasonable timescale
- Complaints will be investigated carefully prior to a decision being made
- The interests of children will be our first priority
- You will be given full opportunity to explain the nature of your concerns
- You will be given the opportunity to be accompanied should your complaint go to a panel hearing
- Raising any concern or complaint will not adversely affect your child

## Procedure

### 1. Informal discussion

If you are unhappy with any aspect of your child's education, or have concerns relating to the school, we encourage you to speak to your child's class teacher as soon as possible. Our staff are all committed to providing a high standard of education to each child in a supportive environment, and as such will always want to address concerns as quickly as possible.

If you raise a concern in this way with your child's class teacher, other members of staff may become involved if appropriate or relevant.

If this approach has been unsuccessful in dealing with your problem, or if circumstances mean you feel this would be inappropriate, you should raise your concerns formally through the complaints procedure below.

### 2. Raising a formal complaint

#### Letter

If you feel you need to raise a formal complaint you should do so in writing to the Head of School, stating as clearly as possible the nature of your complaint. If you are seeking a particular outcome, specifying this in the letter can be helpful.



### **Acknowledgement**

The Head of School will write to you formally acknowledging your complaint as soon as possible but no later than five working days from receipt of your letter. At this point a reasonable timescale will be identified by when you can expect a formal response. This may depend on the circumstances and the nature of your complaint, but would usually be within no more than ten school days.

### **Investigation**

The Head of School will investigate your complaint. This may involve talking to members of staff and also may involve asking you for additional information in order to help him establish the facts.

### **Decision**

Once the Head of School has investigated thoroughly he will make a decision about your complaint.

He will write to let you know this decision as soon as possible, within the timescale previously discussed, and will also let you know what if any action will be taken as a result.

### **3. Appeal**

You do have the right to appeal the decision that has been made. If you would like to do so you should write to the Chair of Local Governing Body within five working days of receipt of the letter confirming the outcome of the original grievance.

#### **Panel hearing**

Your appeal will then be heard by a panel consisting of two members of the school local governing body and one external independent third party. None of the panel members will have had any involvement in your complaint prior to the hearing.

The hearing will take place no more than ten school days after your appeal has been received by the Chair of Local Governing Body.

You will be invited to attend the hearing if you wish, but you do not have to do so. If you do wish to attend, you can bring someone with you for support and advice.

Having heard your reasons for appealing the original decision and reviewing all the evidence the panel will then make a decision to either uphold the original outcome of the complaint or to revise it.

Following the panel hearing, a copy of the panel's findings and recommendations will be made available to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. A copy of the findings will also be available on the school premises for inspection by the proprietor and the Head of School.

#### **Record of complaints**

A written record of all complaints and the actions taken to resolve those complaints will be kept whether they are resolved by a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.



#### 4. Further appeal

If you are still not satisfied with how your complaint has been handled, you should write to the Chair of the Board of Directors within five working days of receipt of the findings and recommendations from the Chair of Local Governing Body. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Chair of the Board of Directors will respond to the further appeal request with no more than 10 school days.

In certain circumstances the Education Funding Agency will consider complaints. In particular this option is available where either the school has acted in breach of its funding agreement, or where your complaint has not been handled according to an appropriate procedure.

If you feel your complaint comes under either of these categories and you would like to approach the Education Funding Agency, details of how to do so will be provided on request.

**Policy Created:** September 2018

**Policy approved by:**

*On behalf of Senior Management:* Philip Mackay

*On behalf of the Board of Directors:* Ariel Tang

**Policy review date:** September 2020

