POLICY

For

Complaints

Amended

Jan 16 (name change)	**Summer 2018**	**Autumn 2021**	**Sep 2023**	**Dec 2025 (name change)**
Sep 2016	**Spring 2020**	**Jan 2022 (name changes)**	**Sep 2024**	
Summer 2017	**Spring 2021**	**Summer 2022**	**Sep 2025**	

Striving for excellence, caring for all
Within a loving and caring Christian environment.

Abbey Academies Trust Complaints Procedure

Our Academy Vision

We are a community in which everyone is offered the opportunity to fulfil their full potential, to understand themselves and be valued for who they are. Through a stimulating and challenging learning environment, we pursue academic excellence and seek the flourishing of all. This is because we know we are all God's children.

"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can." John Wesley

'Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.' Ephesians 4.2-3

1. We aim to make our school a happy, safe and caring place so that pupils may benefit from the best possible education. All of our staff, both teaching and non-teaching, are dedicated to this aim. If you think we are not living up to your expectations of us we want to know about it so that we may have the opportunity to put things right. We would also like to hear about the things you think we do well. If you have any communication preferences, for example due to a disability or learning difficulties or having English as an additional language, please inform us so we can ensure alternative methods of contact.

Informal Procedure

2. It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Abbey Academies Trust takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as soon as possible.

3. If you do have a concern or a complaint, speak to your child's class teacher. If he/she cannot resolve the matter you should then discuss it with the Assistant Head, Deputy Head, Head of School, Headteacher or CEO/Executive Headteacher. If you are not a parent of a child at the school, then please address your concerns to the Head of School, Headteacher or the CEO/Executive Headteacher. A complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They can also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Formal Procedure

4. Most complaints will normally be resolved at the informal stage but if this is not possible, or your complaint is about the CEO/Executive Headteacher, you should write to Chris Bates, Chair of Trustees, at the school address or via email at AAT.enquiries@abbeyacademies.co.uk who is the Trustee nominated for investigating complaints (in his absence a nominated Trustee will act in his place). A written complaint can also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

5. You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply. Complainants should not approach individual Trustees or

Governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at a later stage of the procedure.

6. The Chair of Trustees, Mr Bates, will normally contact you within two working days to find out more about your concerns and will then investigate your complaint. He will write to you on behalf of the Trust Board with the results of his investigation within 15 working days of the written complaint being received.

7. A written record of all formal complaints will be kept whether they are resolved following the formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing. This will include details of any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint regardless of whether or not it is upheld.

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

Panel Hearing

9. If you are still not satisfied you may appeal to a panel of the Trust Board within 10 working days which will listen to your complaint.
    a. This panel will be made up of trustees and/or governors who have not had any previous involvement with your complaint and there will also be at least one member of the panel who is independent of the management and running of the academy.
    b. You will be able to attend a meeting of the panel to put your case. You may be accompanied at the hearing if you wish.
    c. The CEO/Executive Headteacher and Chair of Trustees will also attend to explain what they have done to investigate and resolve your concerns.
    d. The panel will make findings and recommendations and a copy of those findings and recommendations will be:
        i. Provided to the complainant within 10 working days and, where relevant, the person complained about
        ii. Made available for inspection on the school premises by the CEO/Executive Headteacher

Notes

10. If you have a complaint against Mr Bates, a nominated Trustee will investigate the complaint. Mr Bates will consider complaints against an individual trustee/governor (in his absence a nominated Trustee will act in his place). Complaints against individual trustees/governors or against the entire Trust Board/Local Governing Board should be addressed to the Governance Professional.

11. Where a complaint concerns the Chief Executive Officer or the Abbey Academies Trust MAT, the complainant should notify the Chair of Trustees for the MAT.

12. In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

13. If there is a complaint related to SEND provision within the school, the following procedure will be adopted:

- Parents/carers are encouraged to discuss the problem with the class teacher

- If the problem is not resolved at this stage, the parents/carers would make an appointment to discuss the problem with the SENCo. The class teacher may or may not be present at this meeting. The CEO/Executive Headteacher/ Headteacher / Head of School or other member of the Senior Leadership Team would be present if requested at this meeting, or the matter reported to the CEO/Executive Headteacher/ Headteacher / Head of School, if the problem is unresolved.

- If parents/carers continue to be dissatisfied, then a complaint should be made in writing to the named SEND Trustee/Governor. They also have the right to discuss their problems with a Local Authority representative, with or without members of the school staff present.

- We would always aim to resolve any dispute satisfactorily within our school.

14. We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the CEO/Executive Headteacher or Chair of Trustees, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

15. If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

16. Some formal complaints may fail to be resolved by the school to the complainant's satisfaction. In these cases the complainant has the right to appeal to the Department for Education (DfE) through their customer help portal:

    https://customerhelpportal.education.gov.uk/

17. Referrals by the school to the Local Authority regarding the welfare of a child fall outside of these procedures. See attached Appendix for further details.

18. Complaint campaigns involve large volumes of complaints all based on the same subject and from complainants unconnected with the school. In this case a single response will be published on the school's website.

19. Regrettably, there are times when complainants raise issues with or about staff in ways which are unacceptable. Full details of behaviours that are considered unreasonable or unacceptable are given in the attached Appendix.

20. Mrs Jill Bates (Executive Administrator) is Abbey Academies Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator.

Policy Reviewed: September 2025
Next review: September 2026

Appendix

Safeguarding of children

Schools have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of their pupils under section 175 of the Education Act 2002. Where members of staff have a concern about the welfare of a child, they have a duty to make a referral to the appropriate organisation, usually the Local Authority Children's Social Care Services. It is not for the school to investigate or make a judgement about possible abuse or neglect but they must refer any concerns they may have. As such, complaints about safeguarding referrals made in accordance with a statutory duty will not be considered under this procedure.

Unacceptable and unreasonable behaviour of complainants

Staff, trustees and governors are keen to ensure that all genuine complaints are dealt with fairly and promptly and in accordance with our agreed procedures. We would again emphasise that most matters can be resolved by discussing issues with our staff at the informal stages of our procedure.

Regrettably, there are times when complainants raise issues with or about staff in ways which are unacceptable. This can cloud the concern at the heart of the complaint, which may result in the delay or hindrance of a resolution. It can also have an adverse effect on pupils, staff and the effective running of the school. Examples of behaviours that we consider to be unacceptable are as follows:

- Refusing to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- Making 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
- Introducing 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
- Making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and/or harassing individual staff members in a way which appears intended to cause personal distress rather than to find a resolution
- Refusing to cooperate with the complaints procedure as set out in this policy while still wishing their complaint to be resolved
- Refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the consideration proceeds and/or making unjustified complaints about those trying to deal with the complaint
- Pursuing unreasonable outcomes which are disproportionate to the nature of the matters in hand
- Persisting in repetitious complaints when these have been previously determined under the school complaints procedure
- Electronically recording meetings, telephone calls and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other persons involved

A complainant's behaviour may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- Maliciously

- Aggressively
- Using threats, intimidation or violence
- Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- Knowing it to be false
- Using falsified information
- Publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers

Complainants should limit the number of communications with the school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached. In addition, the school expects that any person wishing to raise a concern or complaint will:

- Follow the school complaints procedure
- Treat all members of the school community with courtesy and respect
- Recognise the time constraints that staff operate under and allow them a reasonable amount of time in which to respond/address any issues.

Where a complainant raises a complaint in a manner which the school feels is unreasonable, actions may be taken to remedy this. The actions will be proportionate to the nature of the behaviour and may include:

- An informal approach to inform the person that the behaviour is unacceptable and needs to be modified
- A formal written communication advising the person that the behaviour is unacceptable and appropriate action may be taken in the behaviour is not modified
- A tailored communications strategy such as limiting the method and/or frequency of contact with staff / school personnel
- A refusal to register and process further complaints about the same or similar subject matter where the matter has already been determined, or where complaints are vexatious, or where complaints are personally harassing, or deliberately targeted at one or more members of staff without good cause
- Setting restrictions on the person's access to the school site.

In respect of the last point, it should be noted that parents/carers and members of the wider community do not have an automatic right to enter school grounds and may be barred from entering the school site with immediate effect following any incident where behaviour has been verbally and/or physically aggressive.

In the event of such behaviour, the school will follow the procedures in the 'Violence, threating behaviour and abuse against academy staff or other members of the school community' Policy.

Again, we would emphasise that the CEO/Executive Headteacher and Trustees are committed to ensuring a full and fair consideration of all legitimate complaints and we recognise that the majority of parents/carers and members of the wider community will conduct themselves in accordance with this policy. However, we reserve the right to take any necessary actions under this policy in those rare cases where a person does not.