



Inspirational Futures Trust Complaints Policy

Next Review: May 2019

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| Written by | IFT Executive Team | |
| Reviewed by | | |
| Approved by | | |
| Adopted by academies | By: BFA Crockerne HMA NSETC St Katherine's | |
| Next Review: | Annually | |

Signed: 

Chair of Trust / Local Governing Board

Date: 

Prepared by: Inspirational Futures Trust, Executive Team



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Rationale

All academies must have a complaints procedure. This must meet the standards set out in the Education (Independent School Standards (England) Regulations 2014 Schedule 1, Part 7.

A 'concern' may be defined as '*an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought*'. A complaint may be generally defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or lack of action*'.

Any person, including members of the general public may make a complaint; schools must not limit complaints to parents or carers of children who are registered at the school.

An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances.

In the event that a complaint concerns the well-being or safety of a child, schools have a duty to report this to the Local Authority, and any action taken will be in accordance with the Trust's Safeguarding Policy (which is available on the Inspirational Futures Trust website).

If it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are required to resolve an issue, the complainant will only be informed that action is being taken. The complainant will not be entitled to participate; and the details of the proceedings will remain confidential to the Head of School/Headteacher/Principal and/or the individual's line manager.

In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, the Inspirational Futures Trust requests that complainants do not discuss complaints publically via social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved and it is expected that complainants also observe confidentiality.

To allow for a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than three months after the event being complained of will not be considered. However, this may be extended in exceptional circumstances, such as the level of complexity of information needed to review the complaint, or difficulties regarding individuals' availability. A mutually acceptable timeframe will then be agreed with all involved.

This policy will be made available to parents/members of the public and set out clear timescales for the management of the complaint.

Raising a Concern or Complaint

The complaints procedure will consist three stages:

1. informal (usually a meeting with the complainant)
2. formal (the complaint is put in writing)
3. a panel hearing

If the complaint progresses to the final panel hearing stage, the school must:

1. allow the parent(s) to attend and be accompanied if they wish
2. ensure at least one member of the panel is independent of the management and running of the school

The panel cannot be made up solely of governing board members because they are not independent of the management and running of the school. It is a matter for the school to identify suitably independent individuals who can fulfil the role and responsibility of being the independent member.

The following is an outline of the three stages that can be used to resolve complaints:

- Stage 1 – Informal
- Stage 2 – Complaint is heard by the Head of School/Headteacher/Principal
- Stage 3 – Complaint is heard by the Governing Board's Panel

Stage 1: Informal

Inspirational Futures Trust works to form good relationships within our school communities which enable all parties to feel comfortable with communicating concerns or complaints directly with the member of staff concerned. This may be by letter, telephone or in person by appointment.

We recognise that there is a difference between a concern and a complaint and many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information. It is anticipated that most concerns will be resolved at this informal stage.

In the case of serious concerns, it may be appropriate to address them directly to the Head of School/Headteacher/Principal, or to the Chair of the Governing Board if the complaint is about the Head of School/Headteacher/Principal.

If there is uncertainty about who to contact, advice can be sought from the school office or the Clerk to the Governing Board.

Stage 2: Complaint to the Head of School/Headteacher/Principal (Formal Stage)

If a concern is not resolved at the informal stage and complainants wish to make a formal complaint, the complaint must be put in writing to the Head of School/Headteacher/Principal, who will be responsible for ensuring that it is investigated appropriately.

If a complaint directly concerns the Head of School/Headteacher/Principal (or a Governor), the writing should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Board for the attention of the Chair.

If a complaint concerns the Chair of Governors, the Clerk to the Governors should be contacted where an informal resolution will be sought. If this fails, the complaint will go straight to Stage 3 of the procedure and the Vice Chair or an independent investigator will conduct the proceedings.

A Complaint Form is attached to this policy at Appendix 1.

If for any reason complainants are unable to submit the complaint in writing the school will, on request, offer appropriate help and assistance.

A letter of complaint should include all details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents.

It is very important that a clear statement of the actions that the complainant would like the school to take to resolve the concern are included in the written detail.

The completed form, in a sealed envelope, should be passed to the Head of School / Headteacher / Principal or the Clerk to the Governing Body, as appropriate.

The Head of School/Headteacher/Principal (or Chair of Governors) may invite the complainant to a meeting to clarify concerns and to seek an informal resolution. If the complainant accepts that invitation, they may be accompanied by a friend or family member (not acting in a legal capacity), if they wish, to assist in explaining the nature of their concerns. Brief notes of the meeting will be kept and a copy of any written response will be added to the record.

If it is not possible to resolve the complaint through a meeting with the Head of School/Headteacher /Principal (or Chair of Governors), arrangements will be made for the matter to be fully investigated using the appropriate procedure. In any case, the complainant should learn in writing, within five working days of the school receiving the formal complaint, of how the school intends to proceed.

This notification will include an indication of the anticipated timescales.

Any investigation will begin in accordance with the above-mentioned timeline and when it has been concluded the complainant will be informed in writing of its conclusion.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision or the manner in which the process has been followed, they can request that the Governing Board reviews the process followed by the school in handling the complaint. Any such request must be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Board within ten school working days of receiving the notice of the outcome, and must include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure.

Members of the Reviewing Panel will have no prior knowledge of the content of the complaint, however if the complainant feels that there is likely to be a bias, they have the right to request an Independent Panel. Timescales may be affected whilst members of an Independent Panel are sourced.

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Stage 3: Governing Board Panel Review Process

Any review of the decision and/or process followed by the school will be conducted by a panel of three members of the Governing Board. The Trust will ensure at least *one member of the panel is independent of the management and running of the academy. This will usually take place within ten days of receipt of a request.

The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make direct representations will be considered sympathetically. The Panel will first receive written evidence from the person making the complaint.

The Panel will then invite representatives of the school as appropriate to make a response to the complaint (usually the Head of School/Headteacher/Principal or the Chair of the Governing Board Panel that has considered the matter).

The Panel will also have access to the records kept of the process followed.

The Trust will allow parent(s) to attend and be accompanied if they wish. The complainant and the school representative(s) will be informed in writing of the outcome, usually within five days of the Panel meeting.

The EFA will not overturn the school's decision about a complaint. However, if it finds a school did not deal with a complaint properly it will request the complaint is looked at again and procedures meet the requirements set out in the Regulations.

If the school's complaints procedure does not meet the Regulations, the EFA will ask the school to put this right. The EFA may seek to enforce the decision under the terms of the funding agreement on behalf of the Secretary of State, if appropriate.

1. Where there is undue delay or the school did not comply with its own complaints procedure when considering a complaint
2. Where the school is in breach of its funding agreement with the Secretary of State
3. Where an school has failed to comply with any other legal obligation

If a complaint is sent to the EFA the EFA will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the school. The EFA will consider whether the complaint falls into any of the following three areas:

The EFA has a clear responsibility to ensure academies comply with their funding agreements.

The role of the Education Funding Agency

If the complainant is not satisfied with the decisions of the Governing Board, then they may make representations to the EFA via the schools complaints form.

- Publishing the complaints procedure online.
- Making clear how the school will deal with complaints from people who are not parents of attending pupils.
- If the complaint does proceed to a panel stage, ensuring parents are given reasonable notice of the panel hearing date.
- Being clear what behaviour will be considered as unacceptable from complainants and the action the Trust you will take if a complainant behaves unacceptably.
- Consider if staff likely to be involved in handling a complaint are suitably equipped to do so.
- Provide complainants with written responses where appropriate and if requested.

The Inspirational Futures Trust will ensure their complaints procedures are robust and effective by:

- * The panel will not be made up solely of governing board members because they are not independent of the management and running of the academy. It is a matter for the academy to identify suitably independent individuals who can fulfill the role and responsibility of being the independent member.

The matter will then be closed as far as the school is concerned.

<< ACADEMY NAME >> COMPLAINTS FORM

Please complete and return to the Head of School/Headteacher/Principal/Chair of Governors as appropriate who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

| | |
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| Your name: | |
| Pupil's name (if applicable): | |
| Your relationship to the pupil (if applicable): | |
| Address: | |
| Daytime telephone number*: | |
| Evening telephone number*: | |
| Email address*: | |
| <i>*please indicate preferred contact option</i> | |
| Please give details of your complaint: | |
| | |
| What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? Who did you speak to and what was the response? | |
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| <i>For Official Use Only:</i> | |
| Date acknowledgement sent: | |
| By whom: | |
| Complaint referred to: | |
| Date: | |

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| What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage? | |
| Are you attaching any supporting paperwork? If so, please give details: | |
| If it has been more than three months since the incident, please explain the delay in making your complaint. | |
| Signature: | |
| Date: | |