

Complaints Handling Policy

2026-2027



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Purpose of This Handbook



Purpose of the Handbook

LCE Academy is committed to working in partnership with parents, carers and stakeholders. We recognise that concerns and complaints, when handled well, strengthen trust, improve practice and protect relationships.

This policy sets out a clear, fair and transparent process for raising and resolving complaints. It is underpinned by the school's values of Resilience, Integrity and Respect, and by a commitment to early resolution wherever possible.

The school aims to:

The school aims to ensure that all concerns and complaints are addressed fairly, promptly, and in a way that promotes continuous improvement and accountability.

- **Resolve concerns quickly and proportionately**
- **Ensure complaints are handled impartially and confidentially**
- **Learn from feedback to improve provision**
- **Meet statutory requirements for independent schools**

The policy complies with Part 7 of the Independent School Standards and is reviewed regularly.

Scope Of The Policy

This Complaints Policy outlines the procedures for addressing concerns or complaints raised about any aspect of LCE Academy's provision. It applies to individuals who have a legitimate interest in the school and are seeking a formal route to raise their concerns. The policy is designed to ensure that complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly, and in line with statutory requirements (Independent School Standards Regulations 2014, Part 7, and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025).

- **Parents and carers of current pupils**
- **Individuals or organisations with a legitimate interest in the school**
- **Members of the public raising concerns about school provision**

Important Note

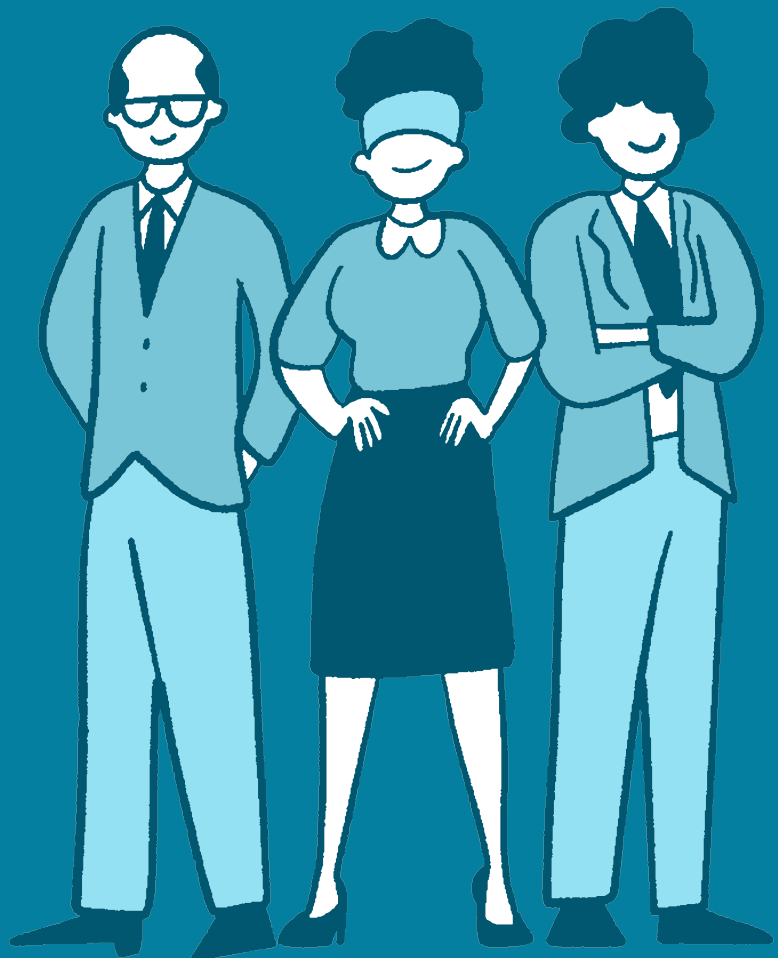


This policy does not apply to:

- Pupil concerns, which are managed through pastoral and safeguarding systems
- Staff grievances or whistleblowing, which are managed under separate HR policies
- Admissions or exclusions appeals, which follow statutory guidance

01

Definitions



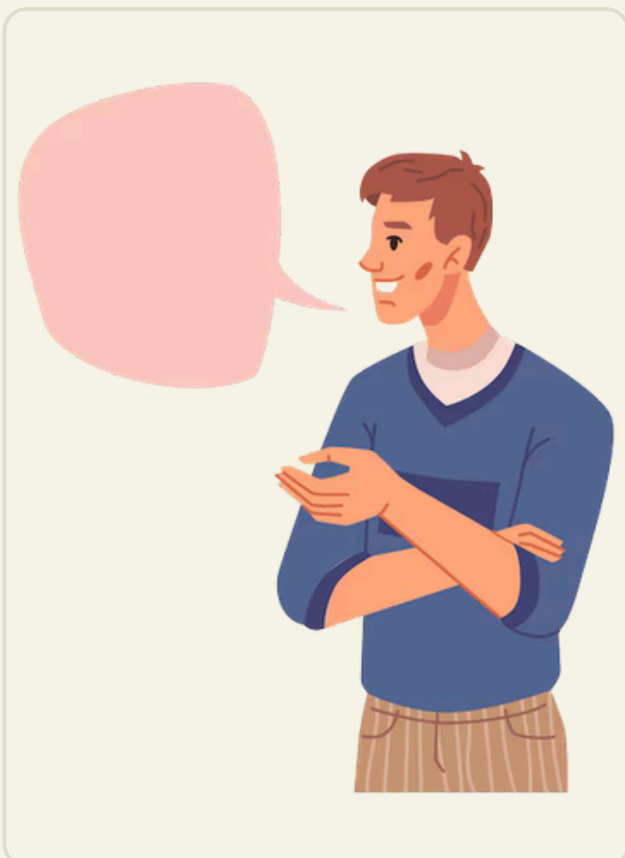


1.1 Concern

A **concern** is an expression of worry or dissatisfaction raised informally.

- Raised verbally or through informal communication.
- Typically resolved through direct discussion with the relevant member of staff.
- Focused on achieving a quick and proportionate resolution.

It is usually addressed at an early stage through discussion and clarification, without the need to initiate the formal complaints procedure.



1.2 Complaint

A **complaint** is a formal expression of dissatisfaction that has not been resolved informally.

- Submitted in writing in accordance with the Complaints Policy.
- Investigated formally with a recorded outcome.
- May progress through staged procedures, including a panel hearing where appropriate.

Unlike a concern, a complaint follows a structured process that may progress through multiple stages, including a formal review by a panel where appropriate.

02

Guiding Principles



2.1 Our Principles

Complaints will be managed in line with the following principles:

- **Fairness** All parties are treated with respect and impartiality
- **Transparency** Procedures and timescales are clear
- **Confidentiality** Information is shared only on a need-to-know basis
- **Proportionality** Issues are addressed at the appropriate level
- **Restorative approach** Where appropriate, dialogue is used to restore trust

2.2 Commitment to Positive Resolution

LCE Academy is committed to resolving concerns in a constructive, timely, and solution-focused manner. The school recognises that complaints, when managed effectively, provide valuable opportunities not only to address individual issues but also to strengthen relationships and improve overall practice. Every concern is approached with professionalism, sensitivity, and a genuine willingness to listen.

By handling matters thoughtfully and consistently, the Academy aims to maintain confidence within the school community and ensure that outcomes are fair, balanced, and proportionate. This commitment reinforces a culture of mutual respect, open communication, and continuous improvement.

03

Stages Of The Complaints Process





3.1 The Process Of Complaints

The complaints process at LCE Academy is carefully designed to address and resolve concerns as early and informally as possible. By encouraging open communication and prompt resolution, the Academy aims to prevent minor issues from escalating and to ensure that the voices of parents, carers, and students are heard. This approach promotes a supportive and responsive school environment, where concerns can be raised without unnecessary formality, while still being taken seriously.

At the same time, the process maintains a strong commitment to fairness and transparency. Each stage of the complaints procedure is clearly defined within the Complaints Policy, providing step-by-step guidance on how complaints are received, investigated, and resolved.



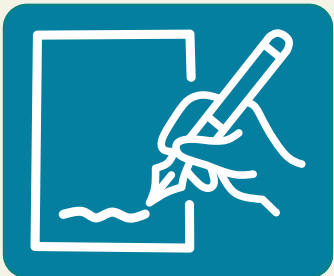
3.2 Stage 1: Informal resolution with the school

Purpose: To resolve issues quickly and locally.

Parents or carers should first raise concerns with the relevant member of staff (for example, class teacher, key adult or pastoral lead).

- Concerns will be acknowledged promptly
- Staff will seek to resolve the matter within five school days
- A brief record may be kept for monitoring purposes

If the concern is not resolved, it may progress to Stage 2.



3.3 Stage 2: Formal Complaint to the Headteacher

Purpose: To investigate and respond formally.

Complaints should be submitted in writing to the Headteacher using the Formal Complaint Form available on the school website, or by email to sam@lifechangingeducation.uk.

The Headteacher, or a delegated senior leader where appropriate, will:

- Acknowledge receipt within five school days
- Carry out a proportionate investigation
- Provide a written response within 15 school days, outlining findings and any actions

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request escalation to Stage 3 within 10 school days of receiving the response.



3.4 Complaint Review Panel

Purpose: Independent review of the handling and outcome. A written request should be submitted to: **The Chair of Proprietors, marked “Private and Confidential”.**

The Chair will convene a Complaints Panel within 20 school days, consisting of:

- **One proprietor**
- **One senior leader not previously involved**
- **One independent member not involved in the management or governance of the school**

The complainant will receive at least five school days’ notice of the hearing and may be accompanied by a friend or representative. The Panel will:

- **Review written evidence**
- **Consider representations from all parties**
- **Reach a decision and recommend actions if required**

The decision will be communicated in writing within 10 school days of the hearing and is final within the school’s procedure.



04

Independence and Fairness





4.1 Advanced Complaints

Where a complaint progresses to a panel hearing, the school ensures that:

- The panel is independent of the matter being considered
- No panel member has prior involvement in the complaint
- The panel includes appropriate representation

This approach ensures that every complaint is considered without bias or preconception, giving all parties a fair opportunity to present their case. By following clear procedures and maintaining independence, the school can make decisions based solely on the facts and evidence presented.

4.2 Learning from Complaints

LCE Academy actively monitors the complaints it receives to identify patterns and areas for improvement. By reviewing complaints regularly, the school can learn from each concern, refine its policies and procedures, and enhance the overall experience for students, parents, and staff.



05

Record Keeping & Confidentiality

5.1 Records Of Complaints

LCE Academy maintains a written record of all complaints. All records are kept securely and confidentially in line with data protection requirements.

Records include:

- Whether the complaint was resolved at the preliminary stage
- The outcome of any formal investigation
- Whether a panel hearing was convened
- Key lessons learned and improvements made

These records help the Academy to review and evaluate its complaints procedures over time, ensuring consistency, accountability, and continuous improvement. They also provide a clear audit trail, allowing the school to respond appropriately to any follow-up queries.



06

Time Limits & Unreasonable Complaints





6.1 Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

The school will not tolerate abusive or unreasonable behaviour. Where a complaint is deemed vexatious, persistent or malicious, the Headteacher may limit contact in line with the Unreasonable Complainants Protocol. Any such action will be proportionate, formally recorded, and communicated clearly to the individual concerned.

6.2 Timelines and Outcomes

Complaints should normally be raised within three months of the incident to ensure that matters can be investigated promptly and fairly. Raising concerns within this timeframe helps to ensure that relevant information is still available, recollections remain clear, and appropriate action can be taken without unnecessary delay.

In exceptional circumstances, the school may consider complaints submitted outside of this period where there is a valid reason for the delay, such as matters involving safeguarding, significant personal difficulty, or where the issue only recently came to light. Any decision to accept a complaint outside the usual timeframe will be made at the discretion of the school, taking into account fairness to all parties involved.

07

Leadership & Governance Oversight





7.1 Oversight and Accountability

The proprietor and governing board provide oversight of complaints handling. This includes:

- Monitoring patterns and themes
- Ensuring procedures are followed
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the complaints process

Effective complaints handling plays a key role in supporting continuous improvement and accountability within the Academy. By carefully reviewing each complaint and identifying recurring patterns or themes, the school can make informed changes to policies, procedures, and practice. Review cycle: Annual, or sooner if statutory guidance changes

08

Safeguarding & Policy Review





8.1 Safeguarding

If a complaint raises safeguarding concerns, it will be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and managed in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. The safety and welfare of pupils will always be the school's primary consideration.



8.2 Policy Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Proprietor Board, or sooner if statutory guidance changes. Any updates are made to ensure continued compliance with current legislation and best practice.



09

External Referral



9.1 External communication

If a complainant remains dissatisfied after completing all stages, they may refer the matter to:

Ofsted

- Piccadilly Gate
- Store Street
- Manchester
- M1 2WD

Telephone: **0300 123 4666**

Email: **enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk**



CONCLUSION

LCE Academy is committed to ensuring that all concerns and complaints are managed fairly, promptly, and transparently. Through clear procedures, defined responsibilities, and regular review, the school seeks to resolve issues constructively while maintaining the trust and confidence of parents, carers, and the wider community.

This policy reflects the Academy's dedication to accountability, continuous improvement, and the highest standards of professional practice. The Academy values open communication and views feedback as an important part of sustaining a positive and supportive school environment.

Contact Information

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Social Media @lifechangingeducation

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