connecteducationtrust.org

CONNECT EDUCATION TRUST

Complaints Policy

Academic Year 2026-2027

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1. Introduction & Scope

Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use the procedure herein to manage and respond to the complaint.

This policy outlines our commitment to preventing, addressing, and resolving complaints.

This policy may not be used for the following:

- Initial requests for a service.
- Requests for information.
- Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests.
- Disagreement with School policy or decisions.
- Matters that would be more appropriately considered by an insurer.
- Cases in court proceedings or investigations by other appropriate bodies (e.g. Police).
- Matters upon which a Court, Tribunal or Appeal body has already ruled.

Alternative places exist for certain specific complaints that will not be considered under this policy:

Exceptions	Who to contact
Statutory assessments of SEN	Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs should be raised with the Local Authority.
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). LADO: 0208 379 2850 https://cp.childrensportal.enfield.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/ladoref#h1 MASH: 0208 379 5555 https://www.enfield.gov.uk/safeguardingenfield/making-a-safeguarding-referral/childrens-multi-agency-safeguarding-hub
Exclusion of children from school	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteers who have concerns may complain through this procedure.

Staff complaints	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under our internal grievance, bullying & harassment or other procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under our internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.
National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

2. Definitions

- A Concern is defined as "an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought". The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.
- A Complaint is defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action". The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

3. Timescales

- Formal Complaints must be raised within 3 months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within 3 months of the last of these incidents.
- We will only consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.
- We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.
- If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, Local Authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.
- If a complainant commences legal action in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

4. Anonymous Complaints

- We will not normally investigate anonymous concerns or complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the concerns or complaints warrants an investigation.

5. False, vexatious or malicious complaints

- All concerns or complaints raised will be taken seriously. Where there is evidence of false, vexatious or malicious concerns or complaints, we reserve the right to act appropriate to the circumstances.
- Whilst there may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a complaint being made, we will not tolerate abusive, offensive or threatening behaviour towards anyone in the school community. In such circumstances we reserve the right to amend or end this process and to contact the police as appropriate to the circumstances.
- We will not normally limit an individual's right to raise concerns or complaints, however, there may be times when the frequency or nature of the complaints require us to amend or end an individual's right to make complaints.
- Whenever possible, we will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before considering their complaints or behaviour to be unreasonable or vexatious.

6. Collective complaints and complaint campaigns

6.1 Multiple similar complaints

- On occasion, we may become the focus of a campaign and receive large volumes of complaints that are all based on the same subject and/or are from complainants unconnected with the school.
- In such exceptional circumstances, we may decide to send a template response to all complainants and/or publish a single response on our website. This will depend upon the nature of the issue and all the prevailing circumstances at the time.
- We reserve the right to determine when complaints should be grouped together based on the circumstances.

6.2 Complaints raised on behalf of multiple complainants

- In cases where a collective complaint is raised on behalf of multiple complainants, all individuals who are part of the complaint must be clearly identified and either provide their explicit consent or be signatories to the complaint submission. This ensures transparency, confirms their agreement to be represented in the matter, and allows for a fair and consistent resolution process.
- We reserve the right to verify the participation of all named employees before proceeding with the complaint investigation. The school reserves the right in this case to address complainants either individually or as a group.

7. Sources of Support

We recognise that raising a complaint can be extremely distressing. We strongly encourage all persons impacted to seek the support they need.

If you are struggling to cope and need someone to talk to, you can contact:

- Samaritans - Contact Us | Samaritans
- LGBT Foundation - How we can help you - LGBT Foundation
- Mind - MIND

8. How to raise a complaint or concern

- A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing, by email or by telephone.
- Concerns or complaints may be raised by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, if they have appropriate consent to do so. In such circumstances we reserve the right to confirm consent exists before we engage with the third-party.
- It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage.
- For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.
- Concerns should be raised with the Class Teacher.
- Complaints should be raised to the Headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as **Private and Confidential.**
- Concerns or Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer, via the Connect email address (contactus@connecteducationtrust.org). The CEO or another appropriate member of staff who is in a position to address it will respond. Please mark them as **Private and Confidential**.
- Concerns or Complaints about Governors should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees, via the Connect email address (contactus@connecteducationtrust.org). Please mark them as **Private and Confidential**.
- You should not approach individual Governors/ Trustees to raise concerns. 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 process.
- If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, please raise your concern to the Headteacher who will refer you to an appropriate staff member to manage your concern.

9. Process for addressing concerns

- We believe that many issues can be resolved informally at the concern stage, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint procedure. We would encourage you to raise a concern initially where it is reasonably possible. Concerns can be raised in person, in writing, by email or by telephone to the school.
- We will determine an appropriate member of staff to address your concern.
- We take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. The staff member dealing with a concern will engage with you, and seek to resolve your concern as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- Informal dispute resolution does not follow a fixed process, as the approach will depend on the specific nature of the complaint raised. We will adopt practical and context-appropriate practices at this stage to determine the necessary actions, aiming to achieve a fair and constructive outcome for all parties involved.
- The staff member addressing the concern will respond to you either verbally or in writing as the matter warrants.

- If the concern remains unresolved, you may still make a formal complaint.
- If you are not satisfied with the response to your concern, you may escalate your concern to the formal complaint process.
- We understand that there are occasions when you may wish to raise a formal complaint without going through the informal concern process. Whilst we encourage you to raise an informal concern initially, we recognise that this is not always appropriate, and you may raise a formal complaint if you feel unable to address your concerns through the informal concern process.

10. Complaint Process

- At each stage in the **process,** we will aim to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge findings and resolutions with regards to the complaint.
- If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint at any stage, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

10.1 Stage 1

- Generally, where a matter relates to a pupil, it is expected that the concern will first be raised with the pupil's Class Teacher or another appropriate member of staff who is in a position to address it, before a request is made to escalate the complaint to Stage 2.
- At this stage the complainant may communicate their concern in person, in writing, by email or by telephone to the school.
- If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome at this stage, they may proceed to Stage 2 of the complaints procedure.
- The school is not required to make a written record of matters that are readily resolved informally, nor is it obliged to provide a written response to the complainant in relation to such complaints.

10.2 Stage 2

- Stage 2 complaints must be made to the Headteacher. Complaints should be sent via the school office.
- The Stage 2 complaint must be submitted using our Complaint Form (Appendix A), unless you are unable to do so. Where there is a reasonable reason that you cannot complete this form, and require an alternative method, please inform the school.
- Upon receipt of a formal complaint, we will appoint an appropriate person to manage the formal process. In this process, this person is known as the 'Complaint Manager'.
- The Headteacher will normally be the Complaint Manager in this process.
- Where there is a conflict of interest, or the Headteacher is absent, or the complaint is about the Headteacher or Governors/Trustees, or there is another reasonable reason why the Headteacher cannot manage this matter, an appropriate person will be appointed to act as the Complaint Manager.
- The Complaint Manager will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) without unreasonable delay.
- The Complaint Manager may elect to arrange a meeting with the complainant to obtain further details and understand the nature of the complaint.
- The Complaint Manager will carry out an investigation if required to resolve the complaint.

- The Complaint Manager may elect to appoint an investigator not involved previously in this process, or they may choose to investigate this themselves where appropriate.
- The timing and nature of any investigation will differ depending on the nature and content of the complaint but will be without unreasonable delay. It is at the discretion of the Complaint Manager to decide what is appropriate in each case.
- At the end of the investigation process, the decision of the Complaint Manager, detailing the findings, will be sent in writing to the complainant. The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions to be taken to resolve the complaint.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the process at Stage 2, then they may move to Stage 3 of the process. The complainant must make clear why the complaint has been escalated and/or what specific outcome they require.

10.3 Stage 3

- A request to escalate to Stage 3 should be submitted using our Complaint Escalation Form (Appendix B) to the Complaints Manager, via the school office, unless you are unable to do so. Where there is a reasonable reason that you cannot complete this form, and require an alternative method, please inform the school.
- This must be submitted within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.
- We will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) as soon as possible.
- Stage 3 of the process consists of a review by the Governors' Complaints Panel (GCP). The GCP will consist of at least three Governors with no prior involvement in the complaint. If there are fewer than three Governors available, we will source any additional, independent Governors or Trustees to make up the panel.
- The panel will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider information or evidence unrelated to the initial complaint.
- New evidence will only be considered if relevant and there is a reasonable reason this was not included as part of Stage 2 formal process.
- No additional evidence may be submitted to the GCP after receipt of the Complaint Notification Form requesting to escalate the complaint has been submitted. However, if the GCP, upon reviewing the evidence already provided, finds that it is unclear why the complaint has been escalated or what specific outcome the complainant is seeking, the complainant may be asked to provide further written clarification.
- The GCP will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs. Where the GCP meeting is to be held in person, it will be convened at an appropriate venue. Unless otherwise agreed, the date, time and venue for the meeting will be confirmed to all parties at least 10 school days in advance of the meeting. Failure to reach consensus on an agreed date could result in a delay or withdrawal.
- If the Complainant does not confirm attendance or fails to attend on the day without compelling reasons, the Complaint Panel will not proceed and the complainant will lose their right to the complaint being heard. Any further attempt to re-open the matter will be considered as falling under a persistent complaint.
- The complainant may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend but not legal representation. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend. The complainant should confirm the name of their support person to the GCP at least 5 school days in advance of the meeting.
- The complainant's companion is there for the purpose of supporting the complainant. They will not normally be invited to address the panel although this may be agreed in advance by the GCP where there

are exceptional circumstances, such as a reasonable adjustment to support a disability or to support interpretation for those whose first language is not English.

- Prior to the meeting, the GCP will decide who will act as the Chair of the meeting.
- Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting.
- The panel will not accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.
- The meeting 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. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.
- In respect to the review of the complaint by the GCP, via either a meeting or written submissions, the panel will consider the complaint, along with all the presented evidence, and make the following determinations:

Findings of Fact	The Governors' 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 Governors' Complaint Panel will not consider it further.
Recommendations	The Governors' Complaint Panel will consider the facts they have established and will make recommendations based upon those findings.

- A written decision will be provided by the Chair of the GCP to the complainant and to the school, as appropriate to the circumstances, within 10 school days of the meeting, or, in exceptional circumstances, as soon as is reasonably practicable. The letter will include details of any actions taken to investigate the complaint and a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. The letter will be sent to the complainant via the school office.

10.4 After Stage 3

- The decision of the GCP represents the end of the school's complaint procedure.
- If a complainant attempts to reopen an issue, or a closely related issue, that has already been addressed under this Complaints Policy and Procedures, the Chief Executive Officer may write (by email or letter) to inform the complainant that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is closed. The correspondence will also state that continued contact on the same or a closely related issue may be considered vexatious, and that the Trust will not respond to any further correspondence on this matter.
- An exception to this applies when a complainant raises concerns about how a school is addressing a child's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. In such cases, if a complainant is dissatisfied with the GCP's decision, they may escalate the complaint to the Local Authority.
- If the complainant believes the school and GCP did not handle the complaint in accordance with this complaints procedure, or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education (DfE) after completion of Stage 3 of this procedure.
- The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the school. They will consider whether the school has adhered to education legislation and any policies connected with the complaint.

- The complainant can refer the complaint to the DfE online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus by telephone on 03700 000 2288, or by writing to:

  Department for Education
  Piccadilly Gate
  Store Street
  Manchester M1 2WD

Stage 2 - Complaint Notification Form

Please complete and return to the person specified in this policy.

Your name:	
School name:	
Pupil's name (if relevant):	
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):	
Address and Postcode	
Contact Details	**Phone:** **Email:**
1. Full Details of Your Complaint: *(This section is for providing a clear and formal account of the issue you wish to raise.)* Please give a detailed description of your complaint. Where appropriate, include the nature of the complaint, specific incidents (including dates and times), the names of any witnesses, details of any supporting evidence, and any actions you have already taken to try to resolve the matter.	
Your response:	
2. Desired Resolution: *(This section is for explaining what you believe would address the matter appropriately.)* Please state the **actions** or **outcomes** that you consider would resolve the issue at this stage.	
Your response:	

3. Supporting Documentation: *(This section is for listing any documents submitted in support of the complaint.)* Please provide details of any supporting documents or evidence enclosed with this form.	
Your response:	
Signature	
Date	
Official Use Only	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
Acknowledgement sent by (Name, status):	
Complaint referred to:	

Stage 3 - Complaint Notification Form

Please complete and return to the person specified in this policy.

Your name:	
School name:	
Contact Details	**Phone:** **Email:**

1. Summary of Why You Disagree with the Stage 2 Outcome:

(This section is about your overall reasons for not accepting the Stage 2 conclusion.)

Please describe clearly what aspects of the Stage 2 findings or outcome you disagree with and why. Do not repeat the details of your original complaint.

Your response:

2. Concerns About the Stage 2 Investigation Process or Evidence:

(This section is about specific errors/shortcomings in how the Stage 2 investigation was carried out.)

Your response:

3. What Outcome/Resolution Are You Seeking?

Please explain what you would like the Stage 3 review to achieve.

Your response:

Signature:	
Date:	
Official Use Only	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
Acknowledgement sent by (name, status):	
Complaint referred to:	