

CHANCERY EDUCATION TRUST

COMPLAINTS POLICY

JULY 2025

Next Review Date: July 2026

Staff should make themselves aware of all policies and amendments or updates to policies and adhere to the same, which will be made available on relevant websites and internal data and computer systems.

Chancery Education Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Executive Summary for CET Complaints Policy 2025:

1. Purpose and Scope

The policy ensures fair, impartial, and timely resolution of complaints within Chancery Education Trust (CET) schools.

It applies to parents and carers of pupils registered at CET academies.

It differentiates between:

- Concerns – expressions of worry or doubt seeking reassurance
- Complaints – expressions of dissatisfaction regarding actions taken or not taken

The policy complies with Part 7, Schedule 1 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and applies to complaints about the school or its services.

Certain issues fall under other policies (e.g. safeguarding, exclusions, admissions, SEN, bullying, whistleblowing, staff grievances).

2. Key Principles

The Trust's complaint handling must:

- Encourage informal resolution where possible
- Be simple, impartial, and non-adversarial
- Include clear time limits and communication at each stage
- Guarantee confidentiality and fairness
- Enable independent investigation when appropriate
- Use complaints outcomes to improve services

3. Specific Provisions

- Complaints about the Headteacher, CEO, or Trustees are directed to the Chair of the Trust Board or Complaints Co-ordinator, depending on the subject
- Complaints are logged and stored confidentially by the Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator
- Anonymous complaints are not normally investigated

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- Complaints must be raised within 3 months of the incident
- The procedure may be paused if external investigations (e.g. police, LA, tribunal) are underway
- Unreasonable behaviour by complainants (e.g. harassment, excessive contact, offensive language) may lead to restrictions or termination of communication
- Serious misconduct may result in barring from premises

4. Stages of the Procedure

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

- Raise the issue directly with the relevant staff member (by letter, phone, or meeting)
- Aim to resolve within 7 school working days
- If unresolved, the complainant is directed to Stage 2
- Staff must record and report all concerns to the Complaints Co-ordinator

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

- Submit the Formal Complaint Form (Annex 1) to the CEO (via the Complaints Co-ordinator)
- Acknowledgement within 5 school working days
- Investigation by CEO or designated officer
- Written outcome issued within 20 school working days of meeting (or 5 days if no meeting)
- The response includes actions taken and how to appeal

Stage 3: Appeal Panel

- If dissatisfied, submit a written appeal to the Chair of the Trust Board within 10 school working days
- A panel of at least three members, including one independent person, is convened
- Hearing within 15 school working days where possible
- The complainant may attend with a supporter and present their case
- The panel can:

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- Uphold, dismiss, or partially uphold the complaint
- Recommend actions or policy changes
- Written decision issued within 10 school working days of the hearing, including how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if dissatisfied

5. Post-Procedure and External Review

If local procedures are exhausted, complaints may be referred to the ESFA, which checks compliance with education law and proper procedures (but does not reinvestigate the complaint itself).

Contact:

Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House, 5 Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT
www.education.gov.uk/contactus

6. Monitoring and Review

- The Headteacher/Principal reports termly to the Executive Board on:
 - Number and nature of complaints
 - Outcomes and any appeal panels held
 - Lessons learned or policy updates
- Policy reviewed annually by the CET Board

7. Supporting Annexes

- Annex 1: Formal Complaint Form (Stage 2)
- Annex 2: Complaint Review Request Form (Stage 3)
- Annex 3: Template rejection letter
- Annex 4: Guidance on the remit and conduct of the Complaints Appeal Panel

CHANCERY EDUCATION TRUST

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Chancery Education Trust and the Academy Schools within the Trust are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to resolve a complaint at the earliest possible stage. All staff and Trustees are aware of their responsibility when dealing with a complaint and will follow the guidelines outlined in this policy. Complaints are treated with a high degree of confidentiality and the Schools and Academies within the Trust would expect the complainant to do likewise. Respect and support for the child shall not be affected in anyway.

Under Part 7, Schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, the Academy School is required to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to it and to any community facilities or service that it provides.

We may also, in appropriate circumstances, adjust or modify this procedure where the particular circumstances of the complaint warrant it.

Throughout this policy the term "school working days" refers to the number of days the Academy Schools are open to pupils.

This procedure is made accessible to the public on the Academy School websites.

Who can make a complaint?

This Complaints Procedure can be used by parents or carers of children that are registered at the Trusts Academy Schools.

Depending on the nature of your complaint, the Complaints Co-ordinator will direct you to the appropriate policy.

Scope of this policy

The difference between a concern and a complaint:

- 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 defined as *"an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action"*.

We take all concerns and complaints raised seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. It is our intention to resolve concerns and complaints raised, at the earliest possible stage.

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Please see below for examples of issues which may be covered under a separate policy. In any event, please contact the Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator via email: office@chanceryeducation.com.

- Admissions (*Admissions Policy*)
- Suspension & Permanent Exclusions (*Suspension & Permanent Exclusion Policy*)
- Curriculum
- SEN and Disabilities (*SEND Policy*)
- Allegations of bullying by pupils (*Anti-bullying Policy*)
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation (*Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy*) - 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);
- Academy School re-organisation proposals
- Whistleblowing (*Whistleblowing Policy*) 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 direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our Trust or one of our Academy Schools should complain through this complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint);
- Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use Academy School's premises or facilities (*Lettings Policy*). These Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly;
- Complaints made about an employee conduct will be dealt with under our Staff Disciplinary Policy. However, if complaints are raised by a parent/carer about employee conduct, they will proceed via this policy alongside any other disciplinary action that may result.

Equally, complaints by employees of the Academy School are usually dealt with via the Staff Grievance procedure.

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 against us 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.

Purpose of this Policy

It is the Academy School's intention that this Complaints Procedure will:

- Encourage resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible
- Be **simple** to understand and use

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- Be impartial
- Be non-adversarial
- Allow **swift** handling with established **time-limits** for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- Ensure a full and **fair** investigation by an independent person where necessary
- Respect people's desire for **confidentiality**
- Address all the points at issue and provide an **effective** response and **appropriate** redress, where necessary
- Provide **information** to the Academy School's senior management team so that services can be improved

SPECIFIC PROVISIONS

Complaints about the Headteacher/Principal or member(s) of the Trust/Local Governing Board or CEO

Complaints against an individual Trustee/Governor of the Trust/Academy School should be made by writing to the Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator who will arrange for the complaint to be heard, usually by the Chair of the Trust/Local Governing Board at Stage 2. Complaints should be marked Private and Confidential.

Complaints made against the Chair of the Trust/Local Governing Board, the entire Governing Board or involving the Chair of the Trust/Local Governing Board should be made in writing to the Trust Office, where the CEO will determine the most appropriate action and which may involve an independent person handling the matter. Complaints should be marked Private and Confidential.

If the subject of the complaint is or involves the Headteacher/Principal or member of the Executive Board, then the matter will be dealt with by the Chair of the Trust Board. The Complaint Form should be handed to the Chair of the Trust Board in the first instance. A single governor may then handle Stage 2. Complaints should be marked Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) should be addressed to the Chair of the Trust, via the Trust Office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

The Trust/Academy School may also, in appropriate circumstances, adjust or modify this procedure where the particular circumstances of the complaint warrant it.

Recording Complaints

Complaints should be made using the complaint form at Annex 1 or clearly set out in writing; however, the Trust/Academy School will allow alternative methods of contact where a complainant uses a different communication preference due to disability or a learning difficulty.

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The Trust/Academy School will maintain a written record of the progress of any formal complaint and the final outcome (including whether they are resolved following a formal procedure or proceeded to a panel hearing) and any action taken by us as a result of the complaint.

This written record will include any formal documentation but may also include informal notes of conversations and records of meetings. Where a concern is raised (and resolved) verbally, members of staff must keep a record of the concern and the steps taken to resolving it. This may be beneficial to the Trust/Academy School should the complaint escalate to Stage 2 or Stage 3.

The Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator will ensure that all records are stored confidentially in a central place within the Trust Office. Such records, including correspondence, statements, meeting notes and telephone records will be stored confidentially and in line with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018. The Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 may request access to these.

Anonymous Complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator, where appropriate, will determine whether an anonymous complaint warrants an investigation.

Timescales for the complaint

You must raise a complaint within 3 months of the incidents or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within 3 months of the most recent incident. Where a complaint relating to matters more than 3 months in the past will normally only be accepted and investigated in exceptional circumstances.

In such cases, we may either involve appropriate external agencies or conduct its own internal review to test whether there is any corroborative evidence, which might trigger a formal investigation.

We will endeavour to abide by timeframes stated under each stage but acknowledges that in some circumstances, this is not always possible due to the complexity of information needed to review a complaint or difficulties regarding individual's availability to deal with the complaint, for example. If it becomes apparent that it is not possible to complete any stage of the complaints procedure within a given timeframe, the individual responsible for handling the complaint will contact the complainant as soon as possible and come to an agreed timeframe that works for all parties involved where possible.

Non-attendance at meetings

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Trust reserves the right to proceed with the meeting in the complainant's absence and/or to reach a conclusion in the interests of drawing the complaint to a close.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first working day following the holiday period.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Unreasonable Conduct by a Complainant

The Trust/Academy School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the Trust/Academy School. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Complainants should limit the number of communications with the Trust/Academy 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.

Complainants (and/or anyone acting on their behalf) may be deemed by the Headteacher/Principal, and/or the Chair of the Trust Board to be unreasonable, if they have behaved in any of the following ways (this list is not exhaustive):

- The complainant makes such frequent contact with the Trust/Academy School that objective consideration of a “live” complaint is hindered
- The complainant makes a string of further complaints about a “live” investigation or changes aspect of the complaint, during the investigation
- The complainant exhausts all stages of the Trust/Academy School’s complaints procedure but continues to pursue the same matter
- The complainant seeks an unrealistic outcome and persists in doing so despite being advised that this is the case.
- The complainant’s communications are:
 - Malicious, abusive or aggressive
 - Use threats, intimidation or violence
 - Use offensive, abusive or discriminatory language
 - Known by them to be false and/or contain falsified information
 - Publish unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers
- The complainant makes insulting personal comments about, or threats towards, staff
- The complainant makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seek to have them replaced

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- The complainant refuses to articulate their complaint or specify their grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- The complainant refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved
- The complainant makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email, by telephone or via social media or messaging medium such as WhatsApp while the complaint is being dealt with

In these examples, “contact” may be in person, in writing, or by telephone or SMS text.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher/Principal or Chair of the Trust Board will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an “unreasonable” marking to their communications.

Where a complainant continues to behave in an unacceptable fashion the Headteacher/Principal or Chair of the Trust Board will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. The Trust/Academy School may decide to deal with such complaints in one or more of the following ways, for example:

- a. Try to agree with the complainant a code of behaviour for the parties involved if the Trust/Academy School is to continue processing the complaint
- b. To require contact to take place with a named officer only
- c. To restrict telephone calls to specified days and times
- d. To restrict contact with the complainant to one form of contact only
- e. To limit the number of times contact can be made per term

If this behaviour continues then the Chair of the Trust Board or Headteacher/Principal may authorise staff to terminate contact with the complainant (except in matters directly related to the education and welfare of their child) and they may discontinue any further investigation being carried out.

The complainant will already have been given a clear statement of the Trust/Academy School’s position and have taken all reasonable steps to address the complainant’s needs. Any further written contact from the complainant will be read and placed on file. Telephone calls relating to the complaint will be terminated and logged on the record. The Trust/Academy School should usually review this position after 6 months.

Barring from the Academy School Premises

If a parent’s behaviour is a cause for concern, the Trust/Academy School can ask them to leave the premises. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the police may be informed.

The Trust/Academy School can notify a parent, in writing, that their implied licence to be on the Academy School premises has been temporarily revoked;

however, the parent will be able to formally express their views on the decision to bar, in writing.

The decision to bar will be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the parent, and will either be confirmed or lifted. If the decision to bar is confirmed, the parent will be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place.



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THE PROCEDURE

Stages of the Procedure

Stage One (Informal): Complaint Heard by Staff Member

Where an individual has a concern regarding a member of staff, it should in most cases be raised with that member of staff directly in the first instance. This may be done by letter, telephone or in person by appointment. This should generally enable a concern to be resolved at the earliest possible stage and avoid any need for it to escalate into a formal complaint. Complaints relating to safeguarding issues must be directed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or the Deputy DSL (DDSL) in their absence.

You should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints.

Members of staff dealing with such concerns should keep a record of the concern and the steps taken to deal with it. This is particularly important where the concern is raised (and resolved) verbally. All supporting documentation provided at this stage must be passed to the Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator to retain centrally.

If an acceptable resolution is not reached, the member of staff should direct the individual to Stage 2 of this procedure. On issuing the Complaints Procedure/Policy if no response from the complainant is provided to the Trust within 10 school working days, the case will be closed.

The Trust/Academy School does recognise that there may be circumstances in which:-

- It would be difficult for a particular complainant to discuss a complaint with a particular member of staff; or
- The member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with the complaint.

In these cases, the complaint should be directed to the Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator who can refer the complainant to another staff member in the first instance (or, in the case of a complaint concerning the Headteacher/Principal or member of the Executive Board, to the Chair of the Trust Board) for informal resolution.

The member of staff will communicate with the complainant to resolve the complaint at the informal stage usually within 7 school working days of receiving the complaint.

The member of staff will ensure that the Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator is kept informed and handed all correspondence to retain centrally.

The Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator will record any actions and outcomes to the Complaint Audit log.

Where a complaint is received, which does not appear to have explored this stage of the procedure (such as where the first approach is made to a Chair of the Trust Board) and which does not indicate that there is good reason (as indicated above) why this has not been done, the usual next step would be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person and advise them about the procedure.

Stage Two (Formal): Complaint Heard by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Other Designated Person

If the individual's concern or complaint is not resolved at the informal stage, a formal complaint should be issued to the Trust/Academy School in the form set out at Annex 1, or in writing including at least all the matters covered in that form.

If the complainant does not complete and submit a formal complaint to the Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator within 10 school working days of the informal stage outcome letter, the case will be closed. On request, the Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator may meet with the complainant to complete the Formal Complaint Form on site. Additionally, the Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator may act as a scribe. The role of the Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator is strictly administrative.

Complaints should be made as soon as possible following the exhaustion of Stage One (where possible). The complainant should include details that 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 the complainant includes a clear statement of the actions that they would like the school to take to resolve the concern.

In the event that the complainant submits the Formal Complaints Form via post or email, the Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator will promptly acknowledge the complaint (usually within 5 school working days) and refer it to the CEO or other designated person to consider and reach the decision upon any action to be taken. Within this response, the CEO will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved, and what outcome the complainant would like to see.

If necessary, the CEO or other designated person may also investigate the complaint or appoint another suitable member of staff to carry out the investigation and may offer to meet with the complainant to discuss the matter, normally within 7 school working days.

If an investigation is necessary, the amount of any investigation required will depend on the nature of the allegations and will vary from case to case and may include meeting with the complainant, the subject of the complaint and/or any witnesses.

During the investigation, the CEO or other designated person (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish; and
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of the investigation and once the CEO or other designated person is satisfied that all the relevant facts have been established, they will inform the complainant of their decision in writing, normally within 20 school working days of meeting with the complainant (if a meeting has been deemed necessary) or within 5 school working days of receipt of the complaint. The CEO will give reasons for their decision. If this deadline cannot be met, the complainant will be provided with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and give a full explanation of the decision made and reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will also include details of actions the Trust's Academy Schools will take to resolve the complaint. It will also outline how the complainant can appeal the decision if they be dissatisfied with the outcome.

The CEO or other designated person will inform the Head of Year, Headteacher/Principal and Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator of the outcome. All supporting documentation must be passed to the Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator to retain centrally within the relevant complainant's file.

The person dealing with the formal complaint must keep a written record of the complaint and any action taken as a result of the formal complaint, which will be kept in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

The Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator will then record any actions and outcomes to the Complaint Audit log.

Stage Three (Formal): Appeal Panel

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, they can escalate their complaint to Stage 3 and should write to the Chair of the Trust Board giving details of the complaint and the reasons why they disagree with the decision at Stage 2, no later than 10 school working days from the date of the decision letter. Requests received outside of this timeframe will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of your complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 10 school working days.

The Chair or a nominated Trustee will convene a Complaints Panel consisting of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

One panel member will be independent of the management and the running of the Trust/Academy School.

A letter will be sent to the complainant inviting them to attend the hearing, which will provide reasonable notice, and the complainant may be accompanied to the hearing by a friend or family member. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 school working days of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed. The letter will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- confirm the complainant may bring a relative or friend to the meeting to support them;
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 5 school working days before the meeting;

In order for the Panel to prepare for the hearing, the Panel should receive in advance (in particular, but not exclusively):

- A summary of the steps taken at Stage 1
- The formal complaint lodged at Stage 2
- The investigation steps taken by the Trust/Academy School
- The Stage 2 outcome letter
- The complainant's appeal correspondence and any supporting documentation

Any written material will be circulated to all parties before the date of the meeting.

The Panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

In most cases, the Stage 3 Hearing will be attended by:

- The panel (with one Trustee chosen to act as the Panel Chair)
- The complainant
- the complainant's companion
- An appropriate individual to advise the panel
- A Clerk

The complainant has the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias from the appointed panel. This request must be made no later than 5 school working days in advance of the Stage 3 Hearing together

with reasons why they feel this to be the case. This request should be put in writing to the Clerk to the Trust Board.

The Trustees will consider the request, but the final decision as to whether to accept the request for an independent panel is for the trustees to determine. The CEO may attend, if it is considered appropriate, to explain his/her actions and/or decision at Stage 2. However, it will not normally be expected for the subject of the original complaint to attend, nor for witnesses to attend and give evidence in person.

Conduct of the Panel Hearing

At the hearing, the complainant will be given a full and fair opportunity to present the grounds of their complaint and any supporting evidence, together with their reasons for rejecting the decision at Stage 2. It should be made clear what resolution is sought by the complainant and why this is considered appropriate.

No Governor will sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.

The panel's decision will usually be reached on the basis of the documentary evidence available, although the panel may adjourn the hearing if necessary to conduct further investigation. The panel's role is not to re-investigate the case, but to review the steps taken to date.

In order to retain the non-adversarial approach recommended by the DfE, the following principles will apply to the hearing:

- The panel will act independently and impartially;
- The hearing will be as informal as possible and the panel will endeavour to put and keep the complainant at their ease;
- Witnesses will not normally be required to attend to give evidence in person, and the written evidence (as recorded in notes of any investigation interview) will usually be taken as read;
- Should the complainant want a particular witness to attend in person, this request should be justified with reasons and the panel should make the decision as to whether to proceed in this way. In such cases, the witness will only be required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence and can afterwards be excused;
- The focus of the hearing will be on hearing from the complainant. The Headteacher/Principal or CEO if attending, can respond to points raised by the complainant;
- The panel may ask questions at any point;
- The complainant will not be present whilst the panel deliberates; and
- The panel's decision will be confirmed in writing following the hearing.

The welfare of any child/young person is paramount.

The Panel's Decision

The panel will have to consider the issues raised by the complainant and the evidence supporting their complaint.

It will often be the case that the evidence of two or more witnesses' conflict, and in such cases, the panel will have to make a finding of whose evidence to prefer and the reasons why they have reached this decision.

The panel will consider the complainant's appeal and may:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the Trust/Academy School's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur

Dismissal of a complaint may be done where (without limitation):

- There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld
- The concern is not substantiated by the evidence
- The matter has been fully investigated and that appropriate procedures are being followed, which are strictly confidential

Where a complaint is substantiated in part or in full, some details may then be given of action the Trust/Academy School may be taking to review procedures etc. but details of the investigation or of any disciplinary procedures will not be released.

The decision will be confirmed in writing to the complainant as soon as reasonably practicable and usually within 10 school working days of the appeal hearing. The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and give a full explanation of the decision and the reason(s) for it and where appropriate, details of actions we will take to resolve the complaint. It will also give details of how the complainant can contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by us. A copy of the minutes of the meeting will also be enclosed.

A copy of the panel's findings and recommendations will also be provided, where relevant, to the person complained about, where relevant. A copy of the letter will be held centrally and available for inspection by the relevant parties and will form part of the written record which shall be kept in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

The Stage Three Panel Hearing is the last stage of the Trust/Academy School's complaints process.

Once a complaint has been addressed formally via this procedure, the matter will be closed. Should a complainant remain dissatisfied, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, and seek to reopen the same issue, the Chair

of the Trust Board will simply inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. A sample letter is set out at Annex 2.

Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher/Principal will report on the operation of the Complaints Procedure to the Executive Board once a term. This report will include:

- the number of formal complaints that have been made.
- the number that has been satisfactorily dealt with at the point of the original investigation.
- the number of occasions on which the Appeal Panel has met.
- any significant amendments to our policy or practice as a result of the complaints made.
- any issues that have arisen in the operation of the Complaints Procedure.

The Headteacher/Principal's report will respect the confidentiality of the individual.

In the light of the Headteacher/Principal's report, the Executive Board will consider whether or not the complaints procedure should be amended in any way by the Board of Trustees.

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

If a complaint has completed the local procedures and the complainant believes the Trust/Academy School did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they have the right to refer their complaint to the ESFA.

The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by us. They will, however, consider whether we have adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether we have followed Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Further information can be obtained from the ESFA by going online at www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
5 Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

Monitoring and Implementation Policy

Chancery Education Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

The policy is reviewed annually, although the Trust may vary or amend it Complaints Policy. All proposed changes to this policy would be made following the approval from the Committee.

	Name	Date
Policy written by	CET Board/Judicium	September 2025
Review by Committee	CET Board	October 2025
Approved by Committee	CET Board	December 2025
Adopted by Governing Board	CET Board/LGB	February 2026
To be reviewed annually		
Review by	July 2026	

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Annex 1 - Complaint Form

This is a Complaint Form intended to instigate Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure, after attempts to resolve the concern informally under Stage 1 have not provided you with a resolution you consider satisfactory.

Stage 1 should only be omitted in exceptional circumstances (and in such cases the reasons why should be set out below). If the Trust/Academy School does not consider that Stage 1 has been appropriately omitted, it reserves the right to refer your complaint back to that stage.

Please complete and return to the CEO (via the Trust's Complaints Co-ordinator) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:		Pupil's name:	
Address:		Your relationship to the pupil:	
		Daytime telephone number:	
		Evening telephone number:	
Please give concise details of your complaint. Please include, where possible, dates, names of witnesses, etc. as this will enable the Trust/Academy School to properly investigate your complaint.			
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?			
If you have not taken such action, please set out here your reasons.			

Chancery Education Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.	
Signed:	
Dated:	
Official Use	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
By who:	
Complaint referred to:	

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Annex 2 - Complaint Review Request Form

This is a Complaint Review Request Form intended to instigate Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure. If you remain dissatisfied from the outcome of Stage 2 you may request that the Local Governing Board reviews the process followed by the Trust/Academy School in handling the complaint.

Please complete this form and return it to the Trust's Complaints Coordinator, who will acknowledge its receipt and inform you of the next stage in the procedure.

Chancery Education Trust Complaint Review Request Form	
Your name:	
Address:	
Daytime telephone number:	
Evening telephone number:	

Dear Sir/Madam,

I submitted a formal complaint to the Trust/Academy School on and I am dissatisfied by the procedure that has been followed.

My complaint was submitted to and I received a response from on

I have attached copies of my formal complaint and of the response[s] from the Trust/Academy School.

I am dissatisfied with the way in which the procedure was carried out, because:

You may continue on separate paper, or attach additional documents, if you wish.

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.	
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What action do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Signature:	
Dated:	
<u>Official Use</u>	
Date form received:	
Received by:	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
Acknowledgement sent by:	
Request referred to:	
Date:	

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Annex 3 - Example Rejection Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

Following receipt of your communications and careful consideration of the same, I regret that I am unable to deal with this matter under the Trust/Academy School's Complaints Procedure as:

Please select appropriate wording from the following:

- You have not identified any specific actions of which you might complain
- Your concerns are presented as conclusions rather than specific actions of which you complain.
- The concerns that you identify relate to historical actions and any evidence which, might have enabled an objective investigation of your complaint is no longer available.
- The substance of your complaint has been addressed under this procedure already.
- The concerns that you raise do not fall within the scope of this procedure. [I have enclosed a copy of the [NAME] policy.]
- You have not identified any potential sources of evidence, which might allow the matter to be investigated.
- The Trust/Academy School offered to resolve the matter informally and in my judgement you refused unreasonably to take advantage of this.

If you wish my decision to be reviewed then you may write to the Clerk to the Trust Board.

Yours sincerely,

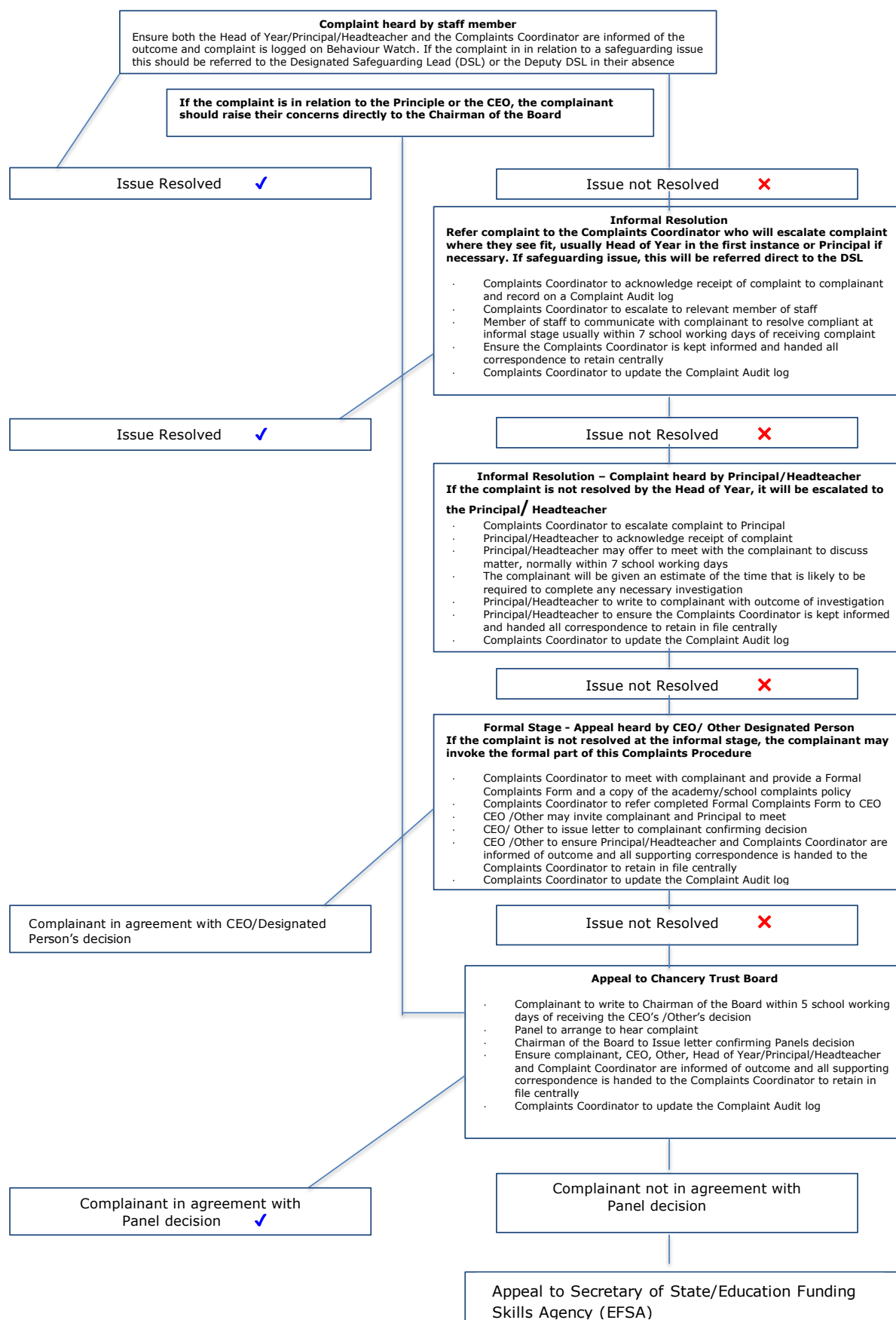
CEO **OR** Chair of the Trust Board

Annex 4 - The Remit of The Complaints Appeal Panel

Any governor sitting on a complaints panel should bear the following in mind:

- a. It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make-up of the panel, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.
- b. The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the Academy School and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations, which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- c. An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.
- d. Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child's parent is the complainant, it would be helpful to give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child needs to attend.
- e. The governors sitting on the panel need to be aware of the complaints procedure.

Chancery Education Complaints Process Flow



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