



Complaints Procedure 2021

St Laurence School Academy Trust

Date of last review:	Nov 2021	Review period:	2 year
Date of next review:	Sep 2023	Owner:	T Farrer

Background

It is vital for the School to have the right attitude towards complaints.

As a school we believe that 'People are our Treasure' and if that is to be lived out, the manner in which they are handled is an important element in how the School cares for its students and their parents/carers and how the School presents itself to the world at large. Well-founded complaints should be seen as an opportunity to put things right and to improve the School's ways of working.

The purpose of this policy is to set out how complaints will be handled by the School. It describes how anyone* with a complaint can set about having the complaint dealt with and what happens. This policy does not cover staff grievances or disciplinary procedures.

(*this includes individuals who are not parents of current students)

This complaints procedure complies with the [Education \(Independent School Standards \(England\) Regulations 2014](#) Schedule 1, Part 7.

General principles

All complaints are to be dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible. The time taken will vary with the gravity and complexity of the complaint and the urgency with which it needs to be settled. The intention is that all complaints should be settled within a period which is reasonable in all the circumstances.

All complaints will be investigated fully, fairly and carefully and complainants will be kept informed of progress at each stage.

It is expected that complaints should be made in a respectful manner. Any complaints which are abusive or threatening will not be tolerated and so will not be responded to. The school is unable to respond to anonymous complaints.

Stage 1 (informal): Dealing with Initial Concerns

Parents and other stakeholders may wish to ask questions or express an opinion and the school aims to create an environment that supports, welcomes and respects the involvement of others. Concerns raised ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for further procedures.

In most cases the class teacher (for a subject based concern or query) or the tutor (for a more general concern or query, or a matter relating to behaviour or welfare) should be the first point of contact. Staff aim to respond within one working day, if only to give a holding reply pending a fuller response. It may be appropriate for a member of staff to involve the Head of Department or Head of House in making an appropriate response.

If a parent/stakeholder is unsure about how to direct a concern or query, or if it is about a general school issue, they should feel free to raise the issue with the Headteacher or a Deputy Headteacher without this being categorised as a formal complaint.

The more formal complaints procedure described in this policy (see stage 2 below) should be used if the initial attempts to resolve the issue have been unsuccessful and the parent/stakeholder remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

Stage 2 (formal): Procedures for making a formal complaint

Formal complaints should be raised with the Headteacher in writing or, if the complaint is about the Headteacher, with the Chair of Governors. The process and its various stages are set out in the attached Appendix. The complaint will be investigated and the complainant will be written to with an outcome of the findings. There are set timeframes within which this process must be carried out although school holidays and weekends are not counted in the number of days. It is hoped that complaints can be resolved at this stage.

Stage 3: Panel hearing

If the complaint is not resolved after stage 2, complainants have the right to request a panel hearing. This request should be made within 28 working days of being informed of the outcome of the stage 2 investigation. The panel will be appointed by the school and will consist of at least 3 people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school (i.e. not a member of staff or a Governor). The school will allow for a parent / complainant to attend and be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish. Complainant will be given reasonable notice of the panel hearing date and will be given clear information on the process to enable them to attend. The panel meeting should occur within 28 working days of the request for a panel being made in writing.

The panel will make findings and recommendations and a copy of those findings and recommendations will be:

- (i) sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about;
- (ii) available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and the head teacher.

Monitoring

The School maintains a written record of all complaints made and of the relevant procedures and action taken. The **Governors'** Strategy Committee receives a report on complaints and their handling every term (1-6). Otherwise the record will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act requests access to it.

Expectations

The school undertakes to treat complainants with courtesy and dignity and expects that staff will be treated in the same way by complainants. Abusive language and threatening behaviour will not be tolerated and any conversation or meeting where unacceptable behaviour is displayed will be terminated.

What complainants should do if not satisfied

Complainants who are not satisfied that their complaint has been handled properly, in accordance with this procedure, should contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) using the school complaints form, which is available on request or by following this link:

[Contact the Department for Education - Contact type - DFE Online Forms](#)

The ESFA will consider complaints about academies that fall into any of the following three areas:

- a. where there is undue delay or the academy did not comply with its own complaints procedure when considering a complaint.
- b. where the academy is in breach of its funding agreement with the Secretary of State.
- c. where an academy has failed to comply with any other legal obligation.

The ESFA will not overturn an academy's decision about a complaint. However, if they find an academy did not deal with a complaint properly, they will request the complaint is looked at again from the appropriate stage, following a process which meets the requirements set out in the Regulations.

Conclusion

This policy is intended to promote good practice in the handling of complaints within its scope and to assist complainants.

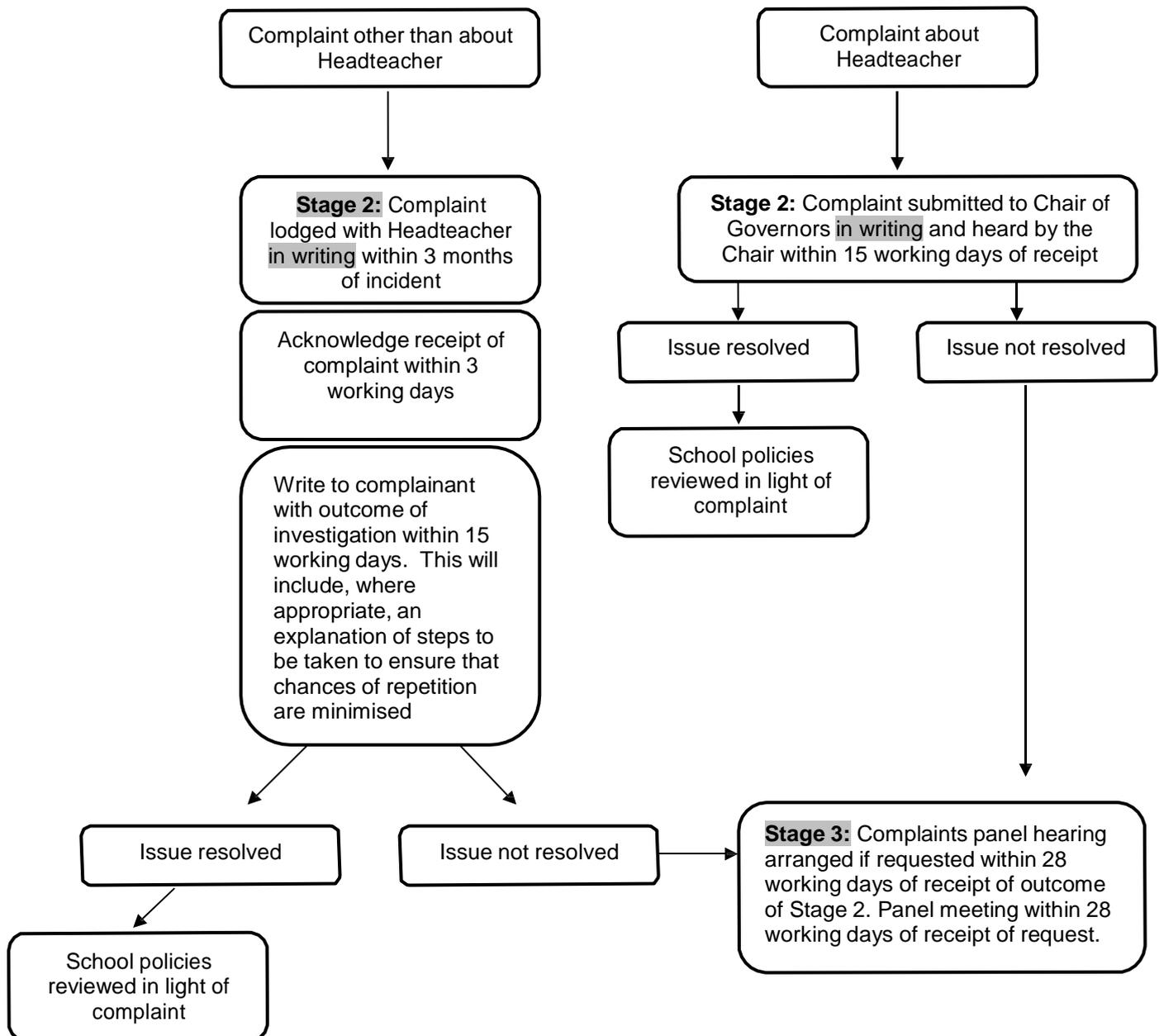
If complainants are in any doubt about where to direct their complaint, they should write to the Chair of Governors, who will then make the necessary arrangements or advise complainants about what steps to take.

COMPLAINTS
PROCEDURES FOR PARENTS AND OTHERS

Handling of complaints

Stage 1 (informal)

- The School will acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible;
- The complainant will be informed as to how the matter will be investigated, by whom and by when the complainant will hear from the School. Confidential matters will be treated carefully and discreetly. The investigation will be thorough and fair and the complainant will be offered redress where appropriate. This may include an apology, an explanation, and details of what will be done to put things right.
- If a complainant is not satisfied by the School’s response they may take the complaint to the Stages 2 and 3 as set out below.



*This refers to a complaint, rather than a concern or query (see above).