

Complaints Policy



Policy Name	Complaints Policy
Committee	Finance, Audit and Risk
Owner	Executive Principal
Statutory	Yes

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Contents

1. Aims	2
2. Legislation and guidance	2
3. Definitions and scope	3
4. Principles for investigation	3
5. Summary of complaints procedure	4
6. Stage 1: informal resolution	4
7. Stage 2: formal investigation	5
8. Stage 3: local governing board panel hearing	6
9. Stage 4: review by the trust board	8
10. Complaints about the trust or central staff	7
11. Referring complaints on completion of the academy and trust procedures	8
12. Complaints about our fulfilment of early years requirements	8
13. Persistent complaints.....	10
14. Record-keeping and confidentiality	12
15. Learning lessons.....	121
16. Monitoring arrangements.....	13
17. Links with other policies.....	13

1. Aims

Our trust aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at the academy, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Treat complainants with respect
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into academy and trust improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The trust will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.

To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on our website, and on the websites of our academies.

2. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to the [Education \(Independent Academy Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils in our trust.

It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on [creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations](#), and refers to [good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE).

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

In addition, it addresses duties set out in the [Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework](#) with regards to dealing with complaints about the trust's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.

3. Definitions and scope

3.1 The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”.

The trust 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 trust intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Exclusion
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

3.2 Arrangements for handling complaints from parents of children with SEN about an academy's support are within the scope of this policy. Such complaints should first be made to the class teacher, form tutor or special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) depending on the nature of the complaint; they will then be referred to this complaints policy. Our SEN policy and information report includes information about the rights of parents of pupils with disabilities who believe that our trust, or an academy within our trust, has discriminated against their child.

3.3 Complaints about services provided by other providers who use trust premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

3.4 For the avoidance of doubt “working days” refers to term time teaching days and “parents” refer to parents/carers.

3.5 In all cases for time limits, these could be subject to change, but the complainant would be kept informed if this were to be the case.

3.6 For Headteacher read Head of School (Naseby Academy) or Principal (Guilsborough Academy).

4. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

We also intend to address complaints as quickly as possible. To achieve this, realistic and reasonable time limits will be set for each action within each stage.

Where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set, and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline with an explanation for the delay.

The trust expects that complaints will be made as soon as possible after an incident arises, and no later than 3 months afterwards. We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

5. Summary of complaints procedure

We have adopted a 4-stage process for dealing with complaints:

- Stage 1 – informal resolution
- Stage 2 – formal investigation
- Stage 3 – local governing board panel hearing
- Stage 4 – review by the trust board.

6. Stage 1: informal resolution

- 6.1 The trust will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve that matter quickly.
- 6.2 For the purpose of this procedure concerns are defined as having a worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought. The majority of concerns can be dealt with without resorting to the formal stages of the formal complaints procedure (see below). The Trust encourages those that have concerns to raise them with the appropriate person at the academy and to work constructively with that person towards resolving them. The extent to which this was both attempted and followed may be taken into consideration when assessing the reasonableness of a complaint during the formal stages of the procedure.
- 6.3 If a parents/carers, members of the public or other stakeholders have concerns the following procedures should be followed:
- They should discuss their concern as soon as possible with the relevant member of academy staff, and if not satisfied;
 - Discuss their concern with a senior member of staff and, if not satisfied;

If they are unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the appropriate academy office (info@quilsborough.northants.sch.uk or bursar@naseby-ce.northants-ecl.gov.uk).

- 6.4 There is no rigid time-scale for resolving concerns at this stage, given the importance of dialogue through informal discussions, however it is expected that most concerns will be resolved within 10 working days. Should the nature of complexity of the concern mean that more time is required, the member of academy staff will contact the person with the concern within 10 working days informing them of the reason for the delay and confirming a revised date for resolution.
- 6.5 The informal stage may involve:
- A meeting between the complainant and the relevant member of staff or their line manager
 - Provision of additional information or clarification
 - Amendments to provision or practice
 - Provision of additional support or guidance
 - Mediation
 - Conflict resolution
- 6.6 If the issue cannot be resolved as above then the complaint should be formally raised with the Head of School/Principal by completing the complaint form in Appendix 1. A meeting will then be scheduled to discuss the concern.

Stage 2 of the procedure will only be pursued if discussions at Stage 1 have failed to reassure or alleviate the concerns that have been raised.

7. Stage 2: formal investigation

The formal stage involves the complainant putting the complaint into writing, by completing the form in Appendix 1 and submitting copies of any relevant documents.

7.1 Addressing your complaint

Complaints not involving the Head of School, Principal or a member of the local governing board should be directed to the Headteacher. This can be done by:

- Email: principalpa@guilbsborough.northants.sch.uk at Guilbsborough Academy and head@naseby-ce.northants-ecl.gov.uk at Naseby Academy
- Letter addressed to the headteacher, delivered to the academy office.

Complaints involving the Head of School/Principal or a member of the local governing board should be directed to the chair of the local governing board marked confidential. This can be done by:

- Email: governorclerk@guilbsborough.northants.sch.uk for both Guilbsborough Academy and Naseby Academy.
- Letter addressed to the chair of the local governing board, delivered to the academy office.

Complaints involving the chair of the local governing board should be directed to the chair of the board of trustees and marked confidential. This can be done by:

- Email: governorclerk@guilbsborough.northants.sch.uk
- Letter addressed to the chair of the board of trustees at the academy office.

If you are not sure where to address your complaint, contact the appropriate academy office.

Please note that it is anticipated that any complaints received will be followed up by the person in the role identified in this policy. However, there needs to be a balance achieved with expediency and staff availability and in the case of an unexpected, exceptional event another employee or officer of the MAT may do this at the discretion of the Executive Principal. Should the complaint relate to the Executive Principal then that decision will be taken or approved by the Chair of Directors.

7.2 Investigation

The complainant will receive written acknowledgement of their complaint within 5 working days.

The investigating officer (e.g. the headteacher, the chair of the local governing board or other appointed person) will then conduct their own investigation. The investigation may include:

- Reviews of relevant documents
- Interviews with pupils, parents, staff and other involved parties
- Meeting with the complainant
- All involved in investigating (or hearing?) a complaint must have had GMAT board recognised complaints training prior to their involvement.
- All involved in considering, investigating, and hearing a complaint must refer to and follow the MAT complaints policy.
- All those that have access to considering what stage a complaint is currently at need to ensure that the complaints policy is followed, including referring the complaint back to the complainant if they are not following the policy.
- Timely deadlines should be set and kept to when corresponding with a complainant, to minimise unnecessary pressure on staff involved.
- An independent investigation in relation to another Director, a governor or a school leader should be carried out by an independent person nominated by the Chair of Directors (or Deputy if the complaint relates to the Chair). When appointing someone the Chair of Directors will bear in mind that the person needs to be appropriately qualified to carry out the investigation and have relevant sector experience.

- The Chair of Directors (or Deputy if the complaint relates to the Chair) will make sure at each stage of the investigation that they are satisfied with the quality of the investigation and investigator. Recognising that the outcome of an investigation is fundamentally important, for the avoidance of doubt the Chair (or Deputy as the case may be) has the express power to terminate an external investigation should they consider, in their sole discretion reasonably exercised, that the investigation has become unhelpful, and or to appoint a replacement external investigator.
- Complaint hearings should only be held once it is clear to all involved what the complainant is specifically complaining about. This will allow all parties to prepare appropriately, and only relevant people be invited to the meeting.

After considering the available evidence, the investigating officer can decide to:

- Uphold the complaint and direct that certain action be taken to resolve it
- Uphold the complaint in part (in other words find an aspect or aspects of the complaint to be valid, but not the whole complaint) direct for certain action to be taken, or
- dismiss the complaint entirely.

The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 10 working days. Should the nature of complexity of the concern mean that more time is required, the investigator will contact the Complainant within 10 working days informing them of the reason for the delay.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response following the investigation and wishes to proceed to the next stage of this procedure, they should inform the investigating officer in writing within 5 working days and complete the stage 3 complaints form at appendix 2.

In all cases, if a complainant is unable to complete the written complaint form in Appendices 1 and 2 by reason of disability or language difference, they should contact the clerk to governors at the appropriate academy or by email to governorclerk@guilbsborough.northants.sch.uk or the academy office so that any request for alternative arrangements can be considered and bespoke arrangements made within the spirit of the policy for suitable support to be given to assist in the completion of the form.

8. Stage 3: Local governing board panel hearing

The complainant can escalate the complaint to the panel hearing stage if they are not satisfied with the response to the complaint at the second, formal, stage, by submitting the stage 3 complaints form found in appendix 2.

The panel will be appointed by or on behalf of the trust and must consist of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least 1 panel member must be independent of the management and running of the academy.

For the avoidance of doubt, a Local Governor of a GMAT Academy may be the independent Complaint Panel member, as long as they are not an employee of the Trust, and they are sufficiently removed from the management and running of the Trust to be considered truly independent.

The panel cannot be made up solely of local governing board members to that academy, as they are not independent of the management and running of the academy.

The panel will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress (see section entitled 'Record Keeping' below). The local governing board is responsible for ensuring that the panel is properly minuted.

The complainant must be notified of the date, time and location of the review panel at least 5 working days in advance. However, the review panel reserves the right to convene at their convenience rather than that of the complainant.

The panel **may** decide to invite the following to attend the review meeting:

- the complainant
- the headteacher (or chair of the governing board as appropriate) who investigated the complaint and made the decision at stage 1
- relevant persons involved the complaint
- persons whom, in the view of the panel, can provide relevant advice and information relating to the subject of the complaint and the review process at stage 2.

At the review panel hearing, the complainant, and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written submissions prior to the meeting. All documentation must be received by all parties at least 5 days before the meeting.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the panel hearing. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if an academy employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaint's procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At the hearing, everyone will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence. The procedure for the conduct of a panel hearing can be found at Appendix 3.

The panel, the complainant and the academy representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and academy representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave, and evidence will then be considered.

The panel must then put together its findings and recommendations from the case.

The panel reviewing the complaint can decide to:

- uphold the complaint and direct that certain action be taken to resolve it,
- uphold the complaint in part (in other words find an aspect or aspects of the complaint to be valid, but not the whole complaint) and direct for certain action to be taken, or
- dismiss the complaint entirely.

The panel will also provide a copy of the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint, and make a copy available for inspection by the trust and headteacher.

The panel will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 5 working days.

9. Stage 4: review by the trust board

Where the academy-based complaints procedure has been completed, and the complainant does not feel their complaint has been addressed to their satisfaction, they may contact the trust in writing within 10 working days of receipt of the outcome letter from stage 3 to request a review of the complaint investigation.

They can do this by:

- Email: governorclerk@guiltsborough.northants.sch.uk and addressed to the chair of the board of trustees
- Letter addressed to the chair of the board of trustees at the academy office

The written request should include stage 2 and 3 complaint forms, the complaint outcome letter and a summary of why they feel the complaints procedure has not been followed, along with any other relevant dates, times and evidence.

The trust will only investigate complaints where:

- The academy did not comply with the complaint's procedure
- The academy or trust's complaints procedure does not comply with statutory requirements
- The academy has failed to comply with a duty imposed under its funding agreement

The trust cannot overturn decisions on complaints made during the academy's complaints procedure. However, it can assess whether the academy considered the complaint appropriately.

If it is found that the academy did not address a complaint appropriately, or that statutory requirements were not met, the trust will require the complaint to be reconsidered within 15 working days. This also applies where adjustments must be made to the complaints procedure to bring it in line with statutory requirements.

9.1 Investigation

Where a complaint is raised with the trust, the trust's investigating officer will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 5 working days.

The academy will be asked to provide the following within 10 working days:

- Details of other relevant policies and procedures
- An explanation of how each stage of the complaint's procedure has been followed
- A response to the complaint, including relevant documents and correspondence

The investigating officer will then provide a written response to the complaint within 10 working days.

10. Complaints about the trust or central staff

We use a 3-step process for addressing complaints made about the trust as a whole, or against central staff:

- Stage 1 – informal resolution
- Stage 2 – formal investigation
- Stage 3 – trust board panel hearing

Stage 1: Informal resolution

We make every effort to address any concerns or complaints early through informal measures.

The complainant should raise any concerns as soon as possible with the relevant member of the trust's central team, or the Executive Principal.

If the concern regards the Executive Principal, the complainant should contact the chair of the board of trustees.

If the complainant is unsure who to contact, or needs to contact the chair of the board of trustees, they should contact the trust office:

- Email: governorclerk@guilborough.northants.sch.uk
- Telephone: The admin clerk on 01604 740641
- Letter addressed to the chair of the board of trustees at the academy office

The process for responding to and investigating an informal complaint about the trust or central staff is the same as that set out in section 6.

Stage 2: Formal investigation

If the complaint is not resolved satisfactorily at the informal stage, the complainant must submit a formal complaint in writing using the form in Appendix 1.

The complainant will receive written acknowledgement of their complaint within 5 working days.

The investigating officer (e.g. Executive Principal, Chair of Trustees or other appointed person) will then conduct an investigation, in line with the process set out in section 7 above, providing a written response to the complainant within 10 working days.

Stage 3: Trust board panel hearing

Complaints will be escalated to the panel hearing stage if the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint at the second, formal, stage.

A panel will be appointed by the trust and will consist of 3 members of the board not involved in investigating the complaint in the formal stage. At least 1 panel member must be independent of the management and running of the trust.

The complainant must be notified of the date, time, and location of the review panel at least 5 working days in advance. However, the review panel reserves the right to convene at their convenience rather than that of the complainant. The procedure for the conduct of a panel meeting can be found at Appendix 3. All papers must be made available at least 5 days before the meeting.

The complainant and representatives from the trust, as appropriate, will be present at the panel hearing. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish.

The board will ensure that the hearing is properly minuted.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the trust representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and trust representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave, and evidence will then be considered.

The panel must then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide a copy of the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint, and make a copy available for inspection by the trust.

The panel will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 5 working days.

11. Referring complaints on completion of the academy and trust procedures

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the academy or trust complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the ESFA. The ESFA will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly. The ESFA will not overturn the academy or trust's decision about a complaint. However, it will look into:

- Whether there was undue delay, or the academy or trust did not comply with its own complaints procedure
- Whether the trust was in breach of its funding agreement with the secretary of state
- Whether the trust has failed to comply with any other legal obligation.

If the complaint was not dealt with properly, the academy or trust will be asked to re-investigate the complaint. If the complaints procedure is found not to meet regulations, the trust will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

12. Complaints about our fulfilment of early years requirements

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the trust's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, and notify the complainant of the outcome with 28 days of receiving the complaint. Academies will keep a record of the complaint (see section entitled 'Record Keeping' below) and make this available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers can notify Ofsted if they believe that an academy is not meeting Early Years Foundation Stage requirements by:

- Calling 0300 123 4234 or 0300 123 4666
- Emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- Using the online contact form available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted#org-contacts>

Academies will notify parents and carers if they become aware that they are to be inspected by Ofsted. Academies will also supply a copy of the inspection report to parents and carers of children attending the setting on a regular basis.

13. Persistent complaints

Where a complainant tries to re-open the issue with the academy or trust after the complaints procedure has been fully exhausted and the academy or trust has done everything it reasonably can in response to the complaint, the chair of the local governing board or the chair of the board of trustees will inform the complainant that the matter is closed.

If the complainant subsequently contacts the academy or trust again about the same issue, the academy or trust can choose not to respond. The normal circumstance in which the academy or trust will not respond is if:

- The academy or trust has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs, *and*

- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the academy or trust's position and their options (if any), *and*
- The complainant is contacting the academy or trust repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time.

However, this list is not intended to be exhaustive.

The academy or trust will be most likely to choose not to respond if:

- There is reason to believe the individual is contacting the academy with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience, and/or
- The individual's letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive, and/or
- The individual makes insulting personal comments about, or threats towards, academy or trust staff.

Unreasonable behaviour which is abusive, offensive, or threatening may constitute an unreasonably persistent complaint.

Once the academy or trust has decided that it is appropriate to stop responding, the complainant will be informed in writing, either by letter or email.

The academy or trust will ensure when making this decision that complainants making any new complaint are heard, and that the academy and trust act reasonably.

Unreasonably persistent complaints

The Trust is accountable for the proper use of public money and must ensure that money is spent wisely. In doing so it must strive to achieve value for both complainants and the wider public.

The Trust is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high-quality service to those who make them. As part of this service, it does not normally limit the contact complainants have with the academy. However, there are a small number of complainants who, because of their frequent contact with the academy, hinder consideration of their or other people's, complaints. Such complainants are referred to as 'unreasonably persistent complainants' and, exceptionally, steps may be taken to limit their contact with the academy.

These are some of the actions and behaviours of unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants which academies often find problematic. It is by no means an exhaustive list.

- Refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint, despite offers of assistance with this from the academy's staff.
- Refusing to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Refusing to accept that issues are not within the remit of a complaints procedure despite having been provided with information about the procedure's scope.
- Insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Making what appear to be groundless complaints about the staff dealing with the complaints and seeking to have them replaced.
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds and/or denying statements he or she made at an earlier stage.
- Introducing new information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on or raising large numbers of detailed questions which are particularly time consuming and costly to respond to and insisting they are all fully answered.
- Electronically recording meetings and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other persons involved.
- Adopting a 'scattergun' approach: pursuing a complaint or complaints with the academy and, at the same time, with a Member of Parliament/a councilor/the Authorities' independent auditor/the Local Authority/local police/solicitors/the Ombudsman/OFSTED.
- Making unnecessarily excessive demands on the time and resources of staff whilst a complaint is being looked into by for example excessive telephoning or sending emails to numerous academy staff, writing lengthy complex letters every few days and expecting immediate responses.
- Submitting repeat complaints, after complaints processes have been completed, essentially about the same issues, with additions/variations which the complainant insists make these 'new' complaints which should be put through the full complaint's procedure.
- Refusing to accept the decision or repeatedly arguing the point and complaining about the decision.

The decision to restrict a persistent/unreasonable complainant's access to the academy will be taken by the Head of School / Principal and will normally follow a prior warning to the complainant. Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate. The options we are most likely to consider are:

- requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only);
- requiring contact to take place with a named member of staff;
- restricting telephone calls to specified days and times; and/or
- asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about their future contacts with the academy.

In all cases where a GMAT academy decides to treat someone as an unreasonably persistent complainant, the academy will write to tell the complainant why we believe his or her behaviour falls into that category, what action the academy is taking and the duration of that action. The academy will also tell them how they can challenge the decision if they disagree with it. If the academy decides to carry on treating someone as an unreasonably persistent complainant and is still investigating their complaint six months later, it will carry out a review and decide if restrictions will continue.

Where a complainant whose case is closed persists in communicating about the same issue, this will be treated as a serial complaint in respect of the issue concerned.

New complaints from people who have previously been identified as unreasonably persistent complainants will be treated on their merits.

14. Record-keeping and confidentiality

The academy will record the progress of all complaints, including information about:

- Actions taken at all stages
- The stage at which the complaint was resolved
- The final outcome.

The records will also include copies of letters and email, and notes related to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and stored securely in the academy office and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

In the case of complaints about the trust or central staff, these records will be managed by the admin clerk to the board of trustees and will be stored securely in the trust's offices under restricted access.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a academy inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept for 6 years.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole local governing board of the academy (or the entire trust board) in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the local governing board is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the academy will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the local governing board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

15. Learning lessons

The local governing board will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the headteacher where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the academy can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

The Executive Principal and trust board will receive regular reports on the types of complaints received in each academy in order to support the development of appropriate support structures, and to inform any improvements to procedures or practice.

16. Monitoring arrangements

The local governing board will monitor the effectiveness of the academy complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly.

The local governing board will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in the section entitled 'Learning lessons'.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the academy's different support staff, depending on who the complaint is about.

The Executive Principal will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure trust-wide.

This policy will be reviewed by Executive Principal every 3 years.

At each review, the policy will be approved by the trust board.

17. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Exclusions policy
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- SEN policy and information report.

Appendix 1: Stage 2 Complaint Form

For complaints regarding an individual academy in Guilsborough Multi Academy Trust not including the Principal or Head of School: Please complete and return to the *Principal PA* principalpa@guilsborough.northants.sch.uk for Guilsborough Academy and head@naseby-ce.northants-ecl.gov.uk

For complaints regarding the Principal or Head of School: Please complete and return to the *Clerk to Governors* governorclerk@guilsborough.northants.sch.uk for Guilsborough Academy and for Naseby Academy and address to the Chair of Governors marked confidential.

For complaints regarding Guilsborough Multi Academy Trust: Please complete and return to governorclerk@guilsborough.northants.sch.uk and address to the Chair of the Trustees marked confidential.

The complaints co-ordinator or clerk will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:	Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Pupil's name (if relevant):	Academy attended:
Parental Address: Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number: Email:	
Who or what is your complaint about?	
Please give details of your complaint, including what contact you have had about it and what actions have been taken so far.	



The reason why this was not a satisfactory resolution for you

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?



Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:	
Date:	
Official use	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
By who:	
Complaint referred to:	
Date:	



Appendix 2: Stage 3 Complaint Form, please include your stage 2 complaint form when submitting your complaint and include only new information on this form.

For complaints regarding an individual academy in Guilsborough Multi Academy Trust not including the Principal or Head of School: Please complete and return to the *Principal PA* principalpa@guilsborough.northants.sch.uk for Guilsborough Academy and head@naseby-ce.northants-ecl.gov.uk

For complaints regarding the Principal or Head of School: Please complete and return to the *Clerk to Governors* governorclerk@guilsborough.northants.sch.uk for Guilsborough Academy and governorclerk@nasebyacademy.com for Naseby Academy and address to the Chair of Governors.

For complaints regarding Guilsborough Multi Academy Trust: Please complete and return to governorclerk@guilsborough.northants.sch.uk and address to the Chair of the Trustees.

The complaints co-ordinator or clerk will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:	Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Pupil's name (if relevant):	Academy attended:
Parental Address: Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number: Email:	
Who or what is your complaint about?	
Please give details of your complaint, including what contact you have had about it and what actions have been taken so far.	

The reason why this was not a satisfactory resolution to you

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

Appendix 3 - Procedure for the Conduct of a Panel Hearing

1. The chair of the panel should invite all parties (except any witnesses) into the room, introduce them and explain the role of each person.
2. The chair should explain to all present that the purpose of the hearing is to review the complaint and try to resolve it and achieve reconciliation between the academy and the complainant. However, it may only be possible to establish the facts of a situation and make recommendations about future action.
3. The chair should then ascertain whether the proposed procedure is acceptable. If so, the meeting will proceed along the following lines:
 - a) The complainant describes his/her complaint and may call witnesses.
 - b) The Principal may seek clarification from the complainant and any witnesses.
 - c) The governors' panel or its advisers may seek clarification from the complainant and any witnesses.
 - d) The Principal will respond to the complaint and may call witnesses.
 - e) The complainant may seek clarification from the Principal and any witnesses.

- f) The governors' panel (including any advisers) may seek clarification from the Principal and any witnesses.
 - g) The Principal will be given the opportunity to sum up.
 - h) The complainant will be given the opportunity to sum up.
 - i) Both parties will leave the room to allow the panel to deliberate but any advisers may remain to offer technical and procedural advice.
4. The panel should make a decision or judgement on:
the validity of the complaint; appropriate action to be taken by the academy and/or parent and where appropriate, recommendations on changes to the academy's systems or procedures to ensure similar problems do not arise in the future.
 5. The decision or judgement will be confirmed in writing within 5 working days.

NB If there is more than one complainant this procedure should be followed for each one in turn, unless the complainants agree to the complaint being heard with all present in one sitting.

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the academy in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
 - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
 - consideration of records and other relevant information
 - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the Head of School/Principal or complaints panel that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The Head of School/Principal or complaints panel will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Appendix 4: Unacceptable Behaviour

GMAT recognises that it has a statutory duty to ensure that complaints raised about its academies are taken seriously and dealt with in accordance with this policy. However, GMAT also has a duty to ensure the safety and welfare of its pupils, parents and, in particular, its staff.

GMAT does not expect any of its staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour by complainants which is, for example, abusive, offensive, or threatening, and it will take action to protect staff from that behaviour. This applies to unacceptable behaviour on any part of the academy premises, including the grounds. If a Head of School/Principal considers that a complainant's behaviour is unacceptable the complainant will be told why their behaviour is deemed to be unreasonable and will be asked to change it. If the unacceptable behaviour continues, the Head of School/Principal will take action to restrict the complainant's contact with the academy.

The following are some of the actions and behaviours of unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants. It is by no means an exhaustive list.

- foul and abusive language towards staff, other parents and pupils.
- behaviour that staff consider to be harassing and intimidating, including in person, over the telephone, or any other type of communication.
- Undermining academy policies by actively encouraging pupils to ignore staff requests;
- Making unnecessarily excessive demands on the time and resources of staff, by for example excessive telephoning or sending emails to numerous staff, writing lengthy complex letters every few days and expecting immediate responses.

The decision to restrict access to academy will be taken by the Head of School/Principal of the academy in question. Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate. The options most likely to be considered are:

- requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only).
- requiring contact to take place with a named member of staff.
- restricting telephone calls to specified days and times.
- and/or Asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about their conduct.

In all cases the complainant will be contacted in writing to explain why the academy believes his or her behaviour is unacceptable, what action is being taken and the duration of that action. Where a complainant continues to behave in a way which is unacceptable, the academy may decide to terminate contact with that complainant and discontinue any investigation into their complaint.

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of the academy staff or other stakeholders, alternative courses of action will be considered/taken such as reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, the complainant may not receive prior warning of that action.