

School Complaints Policy

Ashmole Trust



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Approved by: Mr Sullivan – Executive Head Teacher **Date:** September 2021

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Ashmole Academy Trust

School Complaints Policy

The Ashmole Academy Trust recognises its accountability to parents/carers and community users, as a Trust we are committed to working in partnership and encourage parents/carers to discuss issues that arise at an early stage to avoid escalation to complaint level. We believe that most issues and concerns can be resolved in this informal way.

The policy is made available to parents/carers, staff and students and will be applied to any complaint registered against the Trust except in respect of:

1. Child protection allegations where a separate procedure applies
2. Exclusions where a separate procedure applies
3. Financial misconduct
4. Appeals relating to internal assessment decisions for external qualifications where a separate procedure applies.

For the purpose of this policy a parent/carer must have a child currently at a school within the Trust to whose experience the complaint relates to. A complaint must be made within 28 school days of the incident to which it refers to. This applies also where a child has left the school roll during the 28 day period.

As a Trust we expect that most concerns can be resolved informally by working in partnership and will use its best endeavors to resolve any complaints in this way. If the informal procedure fails to resolve the issue, a formal complaint about any matter, other than the exceptions detailed above, should be submitted in writing to the Executive Head Teacher/Head Teacher. Every complaint will receive fair and proper consideration and a timely response. Our aim is always to resolve complaints either to the complainants' satisfaction, or with an appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils, parents/carers, staff and the Governors/Trustees of the Trust.

All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially, they will be recorded, monitored and a written record kept.

Procedure

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. The aim is that complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally by working together to address concerns raised.

Complaints are first handled by the class teacher or form tutor concerned. In most cases the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parent/carers' satisfaction. If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult with the head of department or a member of the Leadership Team.

Should the parent/carer feel the teacher or form tutor is unable to resolve the matter they may wish to discuss the concern with the relevant head of department or head of year.

If the parent/carer considered that the concern raised has not been resolved with the classroom teacher or head of department, an informal complaint should be raised with a member of the Leadership Team or Deputy Head Teacher. The concern/complaint may be put in writing to clarify the nature of the complaint. If it is made clear that the correspondence does not yet constitute a formal complaint the Leadership Team member will try to resolve the issue on an informal basis. All informal complaints will receive a written reply within 15 school days following the Leadership Team investigation. In most cases the matter will be resolved at this stage, however, if the parent/carer fails to reach a satisfactory resolution then they may proceed to stage 2, formal resolution. Please note that the parent/carer and school staff may agree that it will take longer than 15 school days to address the concern fully.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parent/carer should put their complaint in writing to the Executive Head Teacher/Head Teacher who will decide, after considering the complaint the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Executive Head Teacher/Head Teacher will speak with the parent/carer to discuss the matter, if this is not possible they will correspond by writing. Further investigation may be deemed appropriate, written records will be kept of all meetings, conversation and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Once the Executive Head Teacher/Head Teacher is satisfied that all relevant facts have been established a decision will be made and the parent/carer will be informed of the decision, in writing, no later than 15 school days after the initial contact and which will also include reasons for the decision.

If parent/carer is still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to stage 3 of the procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

In the very rare case that the complaint has not been resolved by the Executive Head Teacher/Head Teacher the parent/carer may move to use stage 3, they should refer their complaint, in writing, to the Chair of Governors. The parent/carer should detail the nature of the complaint, the reason that they consider the matter has not been resolved and the desired outcome.

Once received the matter will be referred to the complaints panel for consideration. The panel will consist of at least three people not directly involved in the matters. The panel will consist of the Chair of Governors, a Trustee and one other not involved in the management of the Trust. The panel will meet within 30 school days of receipt of the written complaint and all parties will be given 7 days' notice of the hearing. Documentation relating to the complaint will be supplied in advance to all parties and not later than 5 school days prior to the hearing. The panel may request additional information from either or both parties. The parent/carer may be accompanied to the hearing by a friend or relation, but not a legal representative acting in that capacity.

After due consideration of all the facts it considers relevant, the panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations.

The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The complainant will be informed of the outcome of the complaint, in writing, within 5 school days.

The decision of the panel will be final.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the school wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not reoccur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen

again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made

- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

If the complainant believes the 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 can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Ashmole Academy Trust. They will consider whether Ashmole Academy Trust has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.