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# *Coast Academies Complaints Procedure*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Terms and references within the policy:

- Board of Trustees (Governing Body): Have the overview and responsibility for all schools within the trust
- Any references to letters or writing should also be taken to include the use of email as an acceptable method of communication efficiently.

This policy has been based on the advice provided by the ESFA. (The Education Skills and Funding Agency)

## POLICY

Coast Academies aim to deal with all worries and complaints in a positive and supportive manner. We welcome questions, comments and suggestions for improvement.

The stages below offer clear guidance for the complaints procedure.

### STAGE 1: INITIAL CONTACT WITH THE SCHOOL

Many concerns will be dealt with informally when you first make them known to the school. In most cases we would expect the class teacher to be the first point of contact, either by telephone, email, letter or in person. In some cases, this initial contact may be followed by meeting with a more senior member of staff.

If a parent/carer wishes to meet with the class teacher, we respectfully ask them to make an appointment to discuss the situation. This ensures that:

- We allocate sufficient time to listen carefully to your complaint
- Lessons can start on time and are uninterrupted

If possible, we prefer all concerns/complaints to be dealt with as quickly as possible and to everyone's satisfaction. It is preferable for concerns to be handled without the need for formal procedures. We pride ourselves on honest and genuine relationships within our school communities; such values extend to all relationships with children, parents and members of our wider community.

However, we do appreciate that there may be times when more formal procedures are required and if you are still dissatisfied, your concern will become a formal complaint by following the procedures below.

## STAGE 2: FORMAL CONSIDERATION OF YOUR COMPLAINT

You will be asked to confirm the complaint in writing (email) to a senior leader at the school on the form provided in appendix A. If the complaint is about the head of school or headteacher you should confirm in writing/email to the CEO of Coast Academies. You must state clearly that you are requesting the complaint be dealt with under the formal procedure. Please include any previous correspondence. Your complaint will be acknowledged in writing (email) within 24 hours

As part of the school's consideration of your complaint, you may be invited to a meeting to discuss the complaint and to discuss any further details including any thoughts you may have about a suitable resolution. If you wish, you can ask someone to accompany you, to help you explain the reasons for your complaint. We would expect all parties present to maintain mutual respect and good manners throughout.

The senior leader or CEO will carry out a full investigation of all matters relating to your complaint. They may delegate this task to an appropriate member of staff or in some cases commission an independent investigation. Where necessary the investigation might include talking to witnesses and take statements from others involved.

Once the school has established all the relevant facts, you will receive a written response to your complaint. This will give a full explanation of the response and any resulting action.

Expected time scales:

- School should acknowledge formal complaint within 24 hours
- School should provide formal response within 10 working days\*
- Complainant should escalate to next stage within 10 working days or the complaint will be deemed to have been closed

\* Should an external investigation be instigated a longer time frame will need to be agreed by all those involved.

## STAGE 3: GOVERNANCE REVIEW

If your concern has already been through Stage 1 and 2 and you are not happy with the outcome, the next step is to pass your original complaint and the report you have received to the Governing Body indicating which matters are still unresolved. Please note that no new complaint may be included. Please contact the Chair of the

Board. Details below

The aim of the Governing Body review is to ensure that a thorough and proper investigation was carried out. The Governing Body will ensure that governors/trustees who have not been involved in the complaint carry out the review.

If a decision is made that a complaint had not been investigated properly, the governors will request that the complaint is re-investigated by a different person.

Expected Time Scales:

- Governing Body should acknowledge the Stage 3 request within 3 working days.
- Governing Body should provide the outcome of their review within 10 working days.
- Complainant should escalate to next stage within 10 working days of the or the complaint will be deemed to have been closed.

#### STAGE 4: COMPLAINTS REVIEW PANEL

If your concern has already been through Stage 1, 2 and 3 and you are not happy with the outcome, the next step is to request that a Review Panel is convened. Please indicate which matters are still unresolved and note that no new complaint may be included.

The Governing Body has a responsibility to convene an appropriate panel to review the complaint. In line with DfE recommendations, the review panel will include independent representation by persons who are not involved in the running or the management of the school.

The aim of the complaints review panel is to ensure that a thorough and proper investigation was carried out. School representatives and the complainant will be invited to attend. If it was felt that a complaint had not been looked at properly, the panel would request that the complaint is re-investigated and that the DfE procedures are followed.

Generally, no evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into

the meeting by any of the participants.

The clerk will send a written statement to all attendees outlining the decision of the panel.

**Expected Time Scales:** The panel hearing will be organised to allow appropriate time for the complainant to be notified and to accommodate any reasonable requests relating to the time and date. Notification will be provided in written form and this may include email.

### STAGE 5: COMPLAINTS TO THE ESFA

The Governing Body's decision will usually be final; however, if you wish to pursue the matter further, you can take your complaint to the ESFA using their online [Complaint Form](#).

The ESFA will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the academy. They will consider complaints about academies that fall into any of the following three areas:

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

They 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 reviewed again and procedures meet the requirements set out in the Regulations.

If Coast Academies' complaints procedure does not meet the Regulations, they will ask the academy to put this right. They may seek to enforce the decision under the terms of the funding agreement on behalf of the Secretary of State, if appropriate.

### **Contacts**

Ken Kies CEO and Executive Headteacher: [kkies@coastacademies.org.uk](mailto:kkies@coastacademies.org.uk)

David Lockyer Chair of the Board of Trustees: [dlockyer@coastacademies.org.uk](mailto:dlockyer@coastacademies.org.uk)

**APPENDIX A**

Formal Complaint Form for Stage 2 Complaints. Please copy and paste this into an email or download from the Coast Academies website.

<b>Stage 2 Formal Complaint Form</b>	
Name and class of child:	
Complainant name and relationship to child:	
Date of complaint:	
Contact numbers and email	
Details of the complaint	
Any actions already taken to resolve this issue?	
What actions do you feel would resolve this problem at this stage?	
Signature (Form sent by email is classified as the signature):	

<i>Office use only</i>	
<i>Date received:</i>	
<i>Complaint passed to:</i>	



*Please return this form to the school office.*