



## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

### ***St Augustine of Canterbury Primary School***

**This policy supports the Trinitas Principles as outlined below.**

*We will build a family of schools where strong Christian values are at the centre of everything we do.*

*We will share responsibility for all of the children in all of the schools.*

*We will recruit high quality staff because the quality of Trinitas Academy Trust is determined by the quality of those who work within it.*

*We will value our staff by respecting their professional competence, through robust monitoring, challenge, and support and by rewarding them for their contribution to Trinitas Academy Trust.*

*We will ensure outstanding achievement for children and staff by being strategic, aspirational and not afraid to innovate.*

*We will teach our children through a curriculum that engages and motivates them, celebrates success, meets their individual needs and prepares them for the future.*

*We will provide the best possible learning environment, which is inspiring for both pupils and staff.*

*We will ensure that the systems within the Trust and the organisation of the Trust are coherent, robust and offer best value for money.*

*We will be wholly committed to promoting the Anglican Ethos of the Trust by being distinctive yet inclusive.*

*We will hold true to our values and aspirations, without compromise.*

**Aim: To ensure complaints are dealt with in a fair and timely manner, and in accordance with relevant guidance and legislation.**

**Policy Owner: Principal**

**Audience: all stakeholders**

**Copies are available on the school website**

**Date Agreed by Trustees: June 2017**

**Review Date: June 2019**

### **Introduction**

Trinitas Academy Trust works very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. Our aim is to deal with issues and problems before they become a 'complaint'. However, there is a clear protocol to follow if necessary and the steps to follow and their outcome are outlined in this document.

#### *What is a 'complaint'?*

For the purposes of this document, a 'complaint' is where a parent believes that the school has not followed its own policies and procedures.

Where a parent disagrees with the school's actions, but school policy and procedures have been followed, the parent may still follow this procedure. In this instance, if the complaint is upheld, the most likely outcome will be a review of school policy.

### **The complaints process**

<p><b>Step 1</b> Informal expression of concern made to the school.</p>	<p>In the first instance, the matter should be discussed with the most appropriate member of staff. At St Augustine of Canterbury Primary School this will be the class teacher.</p> <p>In our experience, most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way with apologies where necessary. Members of our senior leadership team may be involved at this stage to offer support.</p>
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<p><b>Step 2</b> Informal discussion with a senior member of staff.</p>	<p>If a parent feels that the matter has not been resolved, parents should request an appointment with a more senior member of staff.</p> <p>At St Augustine of Canterbury Primary School this will be the Vice Principal.</p> <p>In some instances, this may be the Principal, if the school feels this will be more helpful.</p> <p>If necessary, following this meeting, the member of staff will carry out an investigation. They will give you feedback of the outcomes of the investigation.</p>
<p><b>Step 3</b> School Principal</p> <p>The complainant may take their complaint to the Principal within <b>10 school days</b> of the feedback from the senior member of staff.</p>	<p>If the complaint has still not been resolved, complaints at this stage should be written and received within <b>10 school days</b> of the feedback from the senior member of staff (stage 2).</p> <p>The complainant’s letter should be addressed to the Principal and marked “private and confidential”.</p> <p>The letter should state</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The school policy/procedure that has not been followed correctly or has been followed, but unsatisfactorily.</li> <li>- Steps that both the school, and the parent if appropriate, have taken to try to resolve the situation.</li> <li>- Details about why the complainant remains unhappy.</li> <li>- What the complainant wishes to see happen next.</li> </ul> <p>First, the Principal will acknowledge receipt of the letter. If the letter does not contain all the information above, the Principal will request the missing information within 5 school days. Once all relevant information has been received, the Principal will endeavour to carry out a full investigation and arrange to meet with the parent within 10 school days with the outcomes of the investigation. This meeting will be followed up in writing.</p>
<p><b>Step 4</b> Governors</p> <p>The complainant may take their complaint to the school Governors <b>within 30 school days</b> of the Principal’s response.</p>	<p>If the complaint remains unresolved, and all previous stages have been explored, a parent may make representation to the Governors <b>within 30 school days</b>.</p> <p>A letter addressed to the Chair of Governors marked “private and confidential” can be left at the school office.</p> <p>The letter should state</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The school policy/procedure that has not been followed correctly or has been followed, but with an unsatisfactory outcome.</li> <li>- Steps that both the school, and the parent if appropriate, have taken to try to resolve the situation.</li> <li>- Details about why the complainant remains unhappy.</li> <li>- What the complainant wishes to see happen next.</li> </ul> <p>If the Governors consider from the complainant's letter that the complaint warrants further investigation, they may ask the complainant to explain their case in person before a specially appointed panel. However, it is also possible that, following investigation, they may make a decision without needing the complainant to appear. A decision will be provided <b>within 15 school days</b> where possible.</p>
<p><b>Step 5</b> Secretary of State for Education</p>	<p>The complainant may approach the Secretary of State for Education if the complainant is unhappy with the process or outcome. This would normally only be appropriate if the complainant believe that the Governing body has acted illegally or arbitrarily.</p>

If, despite all stages of this policy being followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied, they are not entitled to reopen the same issue. In such cases the Chair of Governors will inform them in writing that the process has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. (See **Unreasonable complaints** below).

If an anonymous complaint is received, it will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances or serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school might consider it appropriate to contact outside agencies.

### Investigating complaints

The person investigating the complaint will:

- Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved.
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved.
- Meet with the complainant or contact them if further information is required
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- Conduct any interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Complete all necessary notes.

### Resolving complaints

At each stage in the complaint, the school and complainant will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology;
- \*An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- Assurance that the event that was the basis of the complaint will not recur;
- Explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it does not happen again.
- An undertaking to review school policy or procedure in light of the complaint;
- An explanation that there is insufficient evidence and thus the complaint cannot be upheld;
- An explanation that, following investigation, the evidence does not substantiate the concern.

*\*An admission that the school could have handled things better is not the same as an admission of negligence*

**PLEASE NOTE:** Details of any disciplinary procedures that have taken place as a result of the complaint will not be shared.

### **Monitoring and review**

The Trinitas Board of Trustees and each school's Local Governing Body will monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Principal will log all stage 3+ complaints received by the school, and record whether they were resolved. These will be reported as part of the Principal's School Improvement Review Report, which is presented to both Governors and Trustees on a termly basis.

### **Unreasonable complaints**

Where a complainant raises an issue that has already been dealt with via the school's complaints procedure, and that procedure has been exhausted, the school will not reinvestigate the complaint except in exceptional circumstances, for example where new evidence has come to light.

If a complainant persists in raising the same issue, the Principal will write to them explaining that the matter has been dealt with fully in line with the school complaints procedure, and therefore the case is now closed. The complainant will be provided with the contact details of the Department for Education (see the end of this document) if they wish to take the matter further.

Unreasonable complaints include the following scenarios:

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- The complainant refuses to co-operate with the school's relevant procedures.
- The complainant changes the basis of the complaint as the complaint progresses.
- The complainant seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Excessive demands are made on the time of staff and school governors and it is clearly intended to aggravate.
- The complainant acts in a way that is abusive or offensive.

The Principal will use their discretion to choose not to investigate these complaints. Where they decide to take this course of action, they must inform the Chairman of Governors that they have done so, explaining the nature of the complaint and why they have chosen not to investigate it. If the chair deems it appropriate to, they can redirect the Principal to investigate the complaint. The full complaints procedure will commence from stage one on this direction.

If the Chairman upholds the Principal's decision not to look into the complaint and the complainant deems this decision to be so unreasonable that no other rational body in the same position would have made that decision, then the complainant may write to the Department for Education (see the contact details below).

#### **Contact details for external organisations if not satisfied with the outcomes of the complaints procedure in full**

- If you have any queries regarding any aspect of the complaints procedure, please direct these to the Trust's Company Secretary [kmackenzie@trinitasacademytrust.org](mailto:kmackenzie@trinitasacademytrust.org)
- If the complainant feels that the governing body acted 'unreasonably' in the handling of the complaint, they can complain to the Department for Education after the complaints procedure has been exhausted. Please note that unreasonable is used in a legal sense and means acting in a way that no reasonable school or authority would act in the same circumstances. <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>
- Ofsted will also consider complaints about schools.