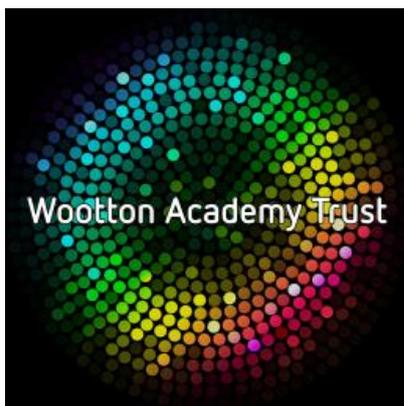


# Wootton Academy Trust



## Complaints Procedure Statement

- a) This policy applies to all schools managed by Wootton Academy Trust
- b) This policy was reviewed by Wootton Academy Trust in 2017
- c) This policy was last reviewed by Wootton Academy Trust in **December 2020**

### 1) Introduction

This is the Complaints Procedure statement agreed by Wootton Academy Trust. A parent or a pupil may raise a concern. 'Parent' includes any person who is not a parent of the pupil but who has parental responsibility for the pupil or who has care of the pupil.

It is natural that occasionally a parent or a pupil may have a personal concern regarding educational issues at an academy managed by Wootton Academy Trust. Often the concern will resolve itself, but if it does not then this statement enables either a parent or a pupil to raise the issue with the academy. The objective is to conduct the process in a fair, impartial, objective and transparent manner. All correspondence, statements and records of complaints will be kept confidential.

All the documents referred to in this statement are published widely, including on Wootton Academy Trust's websites. Copies of the documents can also be obtained from the Wootton Academy Trust Clerk, to whom any questions about this statement or any other document should be addressed. the Wootton Academy Trust Clerk's contact details are at the end of the statement.

The parties are expected to do their best to adhere to the timetable. If for any reason a party is unable to comply with the timetable then they should write to the other party explaining why and saying when they will comply with the timetable.

### 2) Informal concern

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a concern as quickly as possible. Therefore, the parent or pupil should speak to the member of staff concerned at the first opportunity. It may be necessary to make an appointment at a time which is convenient to both the member of staff and the parent or pupil.

It is important to let the member of staff know what the concern is when making an appointment so that if necessary further enquiries can be made prior to the meeting.

If either the member of staff concerned, or the parent or pupil wants another colleague to deal with this concern then they should inform the Clerk to the Trust who will consult with the Executive Principal about referring the matter to another member of staff, e.g. Head of Department or the Deputy Head of School or Deputy Head of College.

The purpose of the meeting is to find a solution or to agree a plan of action to resolve the concern informally. On most occasions this should resolve the concern.

If the meeting does not achieve its objective, then either party may suggest that the Head of School or Head of College should become involved. The parties should inform Executive Principal's Assistant that they wish the Head of School or Head of College to become involved in resolving their concern.

The Head of School or Head of College may wish to make their own enquiries of the parent, staff or pupils before their meeting with the parent or the pupil who raised the concern.

If the Head of School or Head of College is involved, then this process should be concluded within **7** working days from the date of the request for the Head of School or Head of College to be involved.

If the Head of School or Head of College's intervention does not resolve the concern to the satisfaction of the parent or the pupil, then the parent or the pupil has the option to consider making a formal complaint.

### **3) Formal complaint**

A formal complaint must be in writing and addressed to Clerk of Wootton Academy Trust. The parent or pupil may either use the complaint form, or set out the same details in a letter. Copies of relevant documents should also be enclosed with the complaint form or letter.

A formal complaint should be made at the earliest opportunity. Any delay at this stage may hinder enquiries that may need to be made, or prejudice the satisfactory outcome of the complaint.

A formal complaint will be acknowledged within 3 working days. The aim is to send a decision to the parent or pupil within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint.

The Executive Principal may delegate the investigation to a senior colleague. However, the decision will be that of the Executive Principal.

If the complaint is about the Executive Principal, the Clerk of Wootton Academy Trust will forward the complaint form or letter to the Chair of the Wootton Academy Trust Board. The Chair will then delegate the investigation of the complaint to a director of Wootton Academy. The Chair of the WAT Board will have no involvement in the investigation of the complaint at this stage.

The Wootton Academy Trust Clerk will write to the parent or pupil informing them of the name of the person who will carry out the investigation.

The person with responsibility for investigating the complaint may request a further meeting with the parent or pupil. This meeting will be a formal meeting at which another member of staff may be present to take a note. The parent or pupil may be accompanied to the meeting.

The Executive Principal or Director will send a written decision to the parent or pupil.

### **4) Review of the decision**

If a parent or pupil wants to ask for a review of the decision then they must write to the Executive Principal's Assistant within 10 working days of receipt of the decision letter, setting out why they disagree with the decision.

The Chair of the WAT Board will convene an impartial panel - with the power to make findings and recommendations - consisting of three people who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. Two representatives will be governors of the relevant Local Governing Board [i.e. either Wootton Upper School or Kimberley College] or directors of the Trust, and one member will be independent of the management and running of the academy. The independent panel member will be nominated by the Chair from a list of candidates drawn up by the board of Wootton Academy Trust.

If the complaint concerns a governor of the pupil's Academy Local Governing Board, or a director of Wootton Academy Trust then the Chair, Vice-Chair or another director of Wootton Academy Trust will convene the Review Hearing.

Principles of equality and diversity will influence the make-up of the panel.

The chair of the panel will be elected by the members of the Review Hearing.

The Clerk of Wootton Academy Trust will acknowledge the request for a review within 3 working days of receipt, and also inform the parent or pupil of the names of the panel members. The Executive Principal's Assistant will then agree with the parent or pupil a mutually convenient date and time for the Review Hearing.

The parties should cooperate with the intention of holding the Review Hearing within **10** working days of receipt of the written request for a review.

The Review Hearing will be held in private and it will take the form of a discussion led by the chair of the Review Hearing. A note of the Review Hearing will be taken by a person appointed by Wootton Academy Trust.

The manner in which the Review Hearing is conducted is entirely within the discretion of the chair of the Review Hearing acting in accordance with the objectives set out above. It is not expected that there will be any witnesses called to give a statement.

If there are any witnesses, then they should provide written statements. It is preferable that witness statements should be sent to all the parties before the hearing in order to avoid the risk of the Review Hearing being adjourned.

A parent or pupil can be accompanied to the Review Hearing by a person of their choice. However, it is not anticipated that they will be represented at the Review Hearing.

A witness cannot attend the Review Hearing, or the parent or pupil be represented unless the chair of the Review Hearing has previously agreed to this in writing. In no circumstances will there be cross-examination of a witness.

The review panel may make findings or recommendations.

The chair of the Review Hearing will send the written decision, findings of fact and recommendations to the parent or pupil, and where relevant to the person complained about, within 3 working days of the Review Hearing. These findings will be available on the College premises for inspection by the Principal and Proprietor.

The decision of the Review Hearing is final and neither the academy nor Wootton Academy Trust will enter into further correspondence on the subject matter of the complaint.

If a parent or pupil is dissatisfied with the decision of the Review Hearing they should contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency [ESFA] who will consider your complaint on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education.

<https://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/schoolperformance/school-complaints-form>

Correspondence can be by email provided all the parties agree. Otherwise, correspondence will be sent by first class post.

A written record of all complaints will be kept and indicate whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing.

#### **Contact details**

Lynn McKenna  
Wootton Academy Trust Clerk  
c/o Wootton Upper School  
Hall End Road  
Wootton  
Bedford  
MK43 9HT

Telephone 01234 767123

Email: [lynn.mckenna@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:lynn.mckenna@bedford.gov.uk)

<b>ADDITIONAL INFORMATION</b>
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The following is important additional information regarding how Wootton Academy deals with complaints but does not form part of the Complaints Procedure Statement.

#### **Wootton Academy Trust Review**

The board of Wootton Academy Trust will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary.

As well as addressing an individual's complaints, the process of listening to and resolving complaints will contribute to the process of school improvement. When individual complaints are heard, the school may identify underlying issues that need to be addressed. The monitoring and review of complaints by each academy and the board of Wootton Academy Trust will provide a useful tool in evaluating each academy's performance.

#### **Additional documents**

- Complaints Form
- Key Messages Complaints
- School Complaints Act