



Complaints Policy

1.0 General Principles:

This procedure is intended to allow you to raise a concern or complaint relating to the Academy, or the services that it provides.

An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

To allow for a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the academy/trust as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than 3 months after the event, being complained of, will not be considered.

When complaining you are required to follow the complaints procedure to allow your complaint to be acted upon both fairly and timely.

Copies of the policy and procedures are available from:

The individual websites

A copy of the policy and procedures are also available at each academy reception.

Please ensure you give as much accurate information as possible to allow your complaint to be both investigated and heard.

2.0 Complaints Policy and Procedure

2.1 This policy and procedure is for the benefit of students, and parents/carers of students at the academies. This policy and procedure will be relied upon in respect of **all complaints** by parents/carers and students made against the academy/studio except in respect of;

(a) **child protection allegations** where a separate policy and procedure applies; and

(b) **exclusions** where a separate policy and procedure applies;

(c) **appeals relating to internal assessment decisions for external qualifications** where a separate appeals procedure applies

2.2 The academies expect that most concerns can be resolved informally and will use their best endeavours to resolve any complaints that are made informally, or any concerns that are raised, on that basis.

2.3 If informal procedures fail to resolve the issue, a formal complaint about any matter not involving child protection allegations, internal assessment decisions or a decision to exclude a student, must be given verbally or in writing to the Headteacher and will be dealt with under this Complaints Policy and Procedure.

2.4 Every complaint shall receive fair and proper consideration and a timely response.

2.5 We will do all we can to resolve your concern and to ensure you are happy with the education that your child receives at the academy/studio.

- 2.6 Parents/carers can be assured that all complaints and expressions of concern, whether raised informally or formally, will be treated seriously and confidentially.
- 2.7 Correspondence, statements and records will remain confidential except in so far as is required by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

3.0 Complaints Procedure

- 3.1 Our Complaints Procedure will:
- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
 - be easily accessible and publicised;
 - be simple to understand and use;
 - be impartial;
 - be non-adversarial;
 - allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
 - ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
 - respect people's desire for confidentiality;
 - address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
 - provide information to the academy/studio senior management team so that services can be improved.
- 3.2 The academy will be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. We will take concerns seriously at the earliest stage to reduce the numbers that develop into complaints.
- 3.3 Any complaints made direct to staff at the academy or to the Trust, will be logged and monitored by the Governing Body on a termly basis.

4.0 Raising a concern or complaint

4.1 Informal Stage – Stage 1

Most concerns will be dealt with informally and parents/carers are encouraged to make contact with the person concerned. The formal procedures set out below will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further. It is normally appropriate to communicate directly with the member of staff concerned. This may be by letter, by telephone or in person by appointment.

All appointments must be made via the Academy office. Many concerns can be resolved by simple clarification or the provision of information and it is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved by this informal stage.

In the case of serious concerns it may be appropriate to address them directly to the Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher (or to the Chair of the governing body, if the complaint is about the Headteacher).

Concerns may also be addressed to either the Deputy Chief Executive of the Trust and Chief Executive of the Trust.

If you are uncertain about who to contact, please seek advice from one of the academy offices.

Most complaints are resolved satisfactorily at this stage and are brought to a close. In the case of serious complaints or where a complaint has not been brought to a satisfactory conclusion or if a complaint concerns a member of staff, the complaint moves on to stage 2.

4.2 Formal Stage – stage 2

If your concern or complaint is not resolved at the informal stage you must put the complaint in writing and pass it to the Headteacher, normally via the Academy office, (for the attention of the Chair, if the complaint is about the Headteacher) who will be responsible for ensuring that it is investigated appropriately.

A Complaint Form is provided in the procedures to assist you.

You should include details that might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents.

It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions that you would like the Academy to take to resolve your concern. Without this it is much more difficult to proceed.

Please pass the completed form in a sealed envelope, to the Headteacher or to the Chair of the Governors, as appropriate via the academy office.

The Headteacher [or Chair] may invite you to a meeting to clarify your concerns and to seek an informal resolution. If you accept that invitation you may be accompanied by a friend, if you wish, to assist you in explaining the nature of your concerns.

It is possible that your complaint will be resolved through a meeting with the Deputy or Headteacher (or Chair). If not arrangements will be made for the matter to be fully investigated, using the appropriate procedure. In any case you should learn in writing, usually within 5 days of the Academy receiving your formal complaint, of how the Academy intends to proceed. This notification should include an indication of the anticipated timescale.

Any investigation will begin as soon as possible and when it has been concluded, you will be informed in writing of its conclusion. Please note at this stage we can only investigate all the information known at that time.

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, you may request that the governing body reviews the process followed by the Academy in handling the complaint. Any such request must be made in writing to the clerk to the governing body, within 10 Academy days of receiving notice of the outcome, and include a statement specifying any perceived failures to follow the procedure. The

procedure described below will be followed. A Review Request form is provided for your convenience in the procedures.

4.3 Review Process/Panel Hearing – Stage 3

If parents/carers seek to invoke Stage Three following failure to reach an earlier resolution and where dissatisfied with the Headteacher's decision in respect of their formal complaint, the parents/carers may, in writing addressed to Clerk to the Trust Board, Venn Academy Trust, c/o Thorpepark Academy, Laxthorpe, Orchard Park Estate, Hull, HU6 9EG, request that their complaint be further considered by an independent Complaints Panel set up for this purpose.

This request for further assessment of the complaint will, for the purposes of this procedure, be known as an 'appeal'.

Any review of the process followed by the Academy will be conducted by a panel of 3 members of the governing body or Trust Board. This will usually take place within 10 Academy days of receipt of your request.

The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations should be considered sympathetically.

The panel will first receive written evidence from the complainant.

The panel will then invite representatives of the Academy (usually the Headteacher or the Chair of the governing body panel that has considered the matter) as appropriate to make a response to the complaint.

The panel may also have access to the records kept of the process followed.

You, and the Academy representative(s) will be informed in writing of the outcome, usually within 5 Academy days of the panel meeting.

The Panel's findings will be sent by the Clerk in writing to the parents/ carers, the Headteacher, the Governors, the Trust and, where relevant, the person complained of. The letter will state any reasons for the decision reached and recommendations made by the Complaints Panel.

The academy will keep a record of all appeals, decisions and recommendations of the Complaints Panel, which record will be kept for one (1) year after the student leaves the academy.

If you believe that the Governing Body has acted illegally or arbitrarily in handling the complaint, then you may make representations to one of the Directors of our Trust, Venn Academy Trust.

You may also take your complaint to the Chair of the Trust Board who will take up the complaint on your behalf.

Information (including a copy of the procedures) can be obtained from any academy office.

5.0 Complaints against the Headteacher

5.1 Informal

An employee who wishes to make an informal complaint against the Headteacher with a view to resolving an issue may use any of the following approaches:

- Approach an Assistant Headteacher or another member of the leadership team
- Contacting the trade union representative who may contact the Headteacher representative or the Headteacher directly.
- Approaching the Chair of Governors or Trust - The Chair of Governors may delegate the matter to a Trust Director/Governor with the particular skills to enable him or her to provide assistance in this type of problem. Whoever undertakes this role cannot subsequently be a member of the Discipline and Complaints Committee or the Appeals Committee dealing with the matter.

5.2 Where the situation cannot be resolved through mutual discussion, consideration should be given to the use of mediation.

5.3 It must be noted that this is the Informal part of the process and that any person the employee chooses to contact to assist in resolving the problem must deal with the matter on a confidential basis.

5.4 Formal

The employee may contact the Chair of Governors and/or Trust to raise a complaint against the Headteacher. The complainant must put the details in writing outlining their specific complaint to the Chair of Governors/Clerk to Governors. The same steps outlined within the Complaints Procedure will apply.

5.5 Only an external investigating officer or one or more Governors/Trust Directors may carry out an investigation into complaints against the Headteacher.

6.0 Complaints made by the Headteacher

6.1 A Headteacher may raise a complaint against a member of staff on the grounds of bullying, harassment or discrimination. A Headteacher may raise a complaint against the Governing Body/Trust Board but not against an individual Governor unless s/he is exercising a delegated power or function or one conferred by law.

7.0 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

7.1 The Trust Board will review this policy at least every three years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the Trust and its academies.

Adopted by Venn Academy Trust Board on 4th July 2016

Chair of Venn Academy Trust Board on 4th July 2016

Venn Academy Trust Board Trustee on 4th July 2016

Next Review Date in 2017 summer term