



Feedback, Concerns & Complaints Policy

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Prime7 Multi Academy Trust - School Complaints Policy

1. Aims

When responding to feedback, concerns and complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect
- Ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full. To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on each school's website within Prime7 Trust.

2. Legislation and guidance

This document is based on good practice backed by Ofsted, DFE, Parentkind, Improving Education Together and Parent Friendly Schools. [Parent Guide to School Complaints.pdf - Google Drive](#)

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to [the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils at the school.

It is also based on guidance published by the Department of Education (DfE) on [creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations](#), and refers to [good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures](#)

This policy complies with Prime7's Funding Agreement and Articles of Association.

In addition, it addresses duties set out in the [Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework](#) with regards to dealing with complaints about the school's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.

3. Feedback, Concerns and Complaints

Feedback – You would like to be heard

- Suggestions about clubs or activities
- Positive feedback about staff
- General comments about communication or events

Concern – You would like an answer

- A child having reported an incident and seeking further clarification
- Questions about behaviour expectations
- Queries about communication or support

Complaint – You would like action

- Allegation that policy has not been followed
- An issue not which is not believed to have been resolved despite communication and/or through discussion
- A concern about staff conduct requiring formal investigation

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may voice feedback, raise a concern or a complaint to the school about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

4. Concerns

It is natural that parents may, occasionally be concerned about an aspect of their child's education or welfare at school. This could include issues concerning the school's approach to aspects of the curriculum, homework, behavioural problems or any other issue.

The school welcomes enquiries from parents about any matter. Teachers and staff will explain the school practices, policies, and how they affect the pupils. The vast majority of concerns will be handled by the class teacher or Headteacher. If in doubt, keep asking until you are completely satisfied as all staff are eager to help.

The usual format is to speak to the child's class teacher in the first instance, or to contact the school office to arrange an appointment to discuss your concern with whoever you wish. At all times the staff will help to resolve a problem. If occasionally parents feel they must state their concern formally, this too is not a problem. The school has defined procedures for handling complaints so don't be embarrassed if you feel an issue warrants more attention.

Parentkind advice suggests the following:

Class Teacher: For homework, friendships, behaviour, day-to-day concerns or issues.

Middle Leader e.g. Assistant Head, Deputy Head, Phase Leader or SENCO: For peer-on-peer issues (bullying), additional support, repeated behaviour issues.

Headteacher: For whole school issues, serious concerns or if earlier steps haven't worked, including safeguarding, school policies, staff conduct, health and safety.

5. The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint's procedure.

The school takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Headteacher, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more

senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the school will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaint's procedure.

6. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

If a concern is escalated beyond Stage 1 to a complaint, the Trust may review whether the complaint meets the following criteria for further investigation.

- The issue has already been investigated
- The school has acted in accordance with policy
- No new evidence has been presented
- The complaint falls within the scope of this policy

This ensures complaints are managed fairly and proportionately.

This review will normally be conducted by the CEO together with the Chair of Trustees or a nominated Trustee. The Complaint Decision Matrix

Question	Yes	No
Is this feedback or concern rather than a complaint?	Record as feedback or concern	Continue review
Is the content of the complaint/concern relevant to this policy	Begin investigation?	Provide clarification? Record accordingly
Has informal resolution been attempted by headteacher and Trust Leadership?	Proceed to evidence review	Return to informal stage
Is there evidence that policy was not followed?	Begin investigation	Provide clarification
Is the complaint repetitive or unreasonable?	Manage as persistent complaint	Continue process

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or Headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual local school representatives to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to (the CEO – Prime7 Multi Academy Trust), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of the Local School Committee, any individual representative or the whole Local School Committee should be addressed to the CEO – Prime7 Multi Academy Trust via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

7. Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or CEO – Prime7 Multi Academy Trust, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

8. Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We

will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

9. Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

10. Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Exclusion
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against the school in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

11. 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 recur

- 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

12. Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Stage 1: informal complaint

The school will take informal complaints seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

The complainant should raise the concern as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff or the Headteacher, either in person or by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the school office.

The school will acknowledge informal complaints within 3 days, investigate and provide a response within 10 days.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

Stage 2: formal complaint

The formal stage involves the complainant putting the complaint to the Headteacher and/or the subject of the complaint:

- In a letter or email
- Over the phone
- In person
- Through a third party acting on their behalf

The complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents. The complainant should also state what they feel would resolve the complaint. There is a template attached to this policy.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the school office.

The Headteacher (or other person appointed by the Headteacher for this purpose) will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 15 days.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and wishes to proceed to the next stage of this procedure, they should request it is referred to the CEO in writing within 5 days.

Stage 3: review panel

Complaints will be escalated to the panel hearing stage if the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint at the second, formal, stage.

The panel will comprise of 3 members. At least 1 panel member must be independent of the management and running of the school. The panel cannot be made up solely of Trustees, as they are not independent of the management and running of the school. A member of Prime7 Multi Academy Trust senior leadership team can also be a panel member.

The panel will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress.

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel; however, the review panel reserves the right to convene at their convenience rather than that of the complainant.

At the review panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the school representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

The panel must then put together its findings and recommendations from the case.

The panel will also provide copies of the minutes of the hearing and the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint, and make a copy available for inspection by the proprietor and Headteacher.

The school will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 10 school working days.

13.Complaints against the Headteacher or a member of the Local School Committee

Complaints made against the Headteacher should be directed to the CEO – Prime7 Multi Academy Trust.

Where a complaint is against the chair of Local School Committee (LSC), any member of the LSC, or the entire LSC, it should be made in writing to the clerk to the LSC in the first instance.

14.Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedure

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the DfE. The DfE will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the school. The DfE will not overturn a school's decision about a complaint. However, it will look into:

- Whether there was undue delay, or the school did not comply with its own complaints procedure
- Whether the school was in breach of its funding agreement with the secretary of state

- Whether the school has failed to comply with any other legal obligation

If the school did not deal with the complaint properly, it will be asked to re-investigate the complaint.

If the school's complaints procedure is found to not meet regulations, the school will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

For more information to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

15.Persistent complaints

Where a complainant tries to re-open the issue with the school after the complaints procedure has been fully exhausted and the school has done everything it reasonably can in response to the complaint, the chair of Trustees (or other appropriate person in the case of a complaint about the chair) will inform the complainant that the matter is closed.

If the complainant subsequently contacts the school again about the same issue, the school can choose not to respond. The normal circumstance in which we will not respond is if:

- The school has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs, *and*
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the school's position and their options (if any), *and*
- The complainant is contacting the school repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time

However, this list is not intended to be exhaustive.

The school will be most likely to choose not to respond if:

- We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience, *and/or*
- The individual's letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive, *and/or*
- The individual makes insulting personal comments about, or threats towards, school staff

Unreasonable behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening may constitute an unreasonably persistent complaint.

Once the school has decided that it is appropriate to stop responding, the complainant will be informed in writing, either by letter or email.

The school will ensure when making this decision that complainants making any new complaint are heard, and that the school acts reasonably.

16.Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

17.Record-keeping

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls. This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law and our privacy notices.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the CEO – Prime7 Multi Academy Trust, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

18.Learning lessons

The senior leadership team of Prime7 MAT will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Headteacher, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

19.Monitoring and review

The Board of Trustees monitor the complaints procedure through the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled correctly.

The Headteacher discusses all complaints received by the school with the chair of the Local School Committee and or the CEO as required and depending on the nature of the complaint.

The Board of Trustees take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process and make any modifications necessary to this policy.

Complaint Form

Your name:

Pupil's name (if relevant):

Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official Use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: