Chess Valley Trust
A primary learning community

Complaints Policy and Procedure
2025 - 2026

Proposed by: Trust Board
Date from: 01Sept 2025
Review Date: 31st Aug 2026

General

- The Board of the Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust, a multi-academy trust, has approved the following procedure which explains what you should do if you wish to raise a concern or make a complaint about a school within the Trust or about the Trust itself. This procedure is based upon the government's best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures (12 March 2021). Changes made to the procedure will be made in line with government recommendations.
- We aim to consider concerns or complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We try to solve any concern through dialogue and mutual understanding, and, in all cases, we put the interests of the child / young person above all other issues. We try to provide sufficient opportunity for any concern to be fully discussed, and then resolved.
- During any investigations that need to take place the person will be kept informed of progress and, at the end of that process, the outcome will be communicated except where this is confidential, e.g., in the case of a staff disciplinary process. The length of time that it takes to deal with a concern or complaint will vary with the gravity and complexity of the issues and the urgency with which it needs to be settled. Where the timescales in this procedure cannot be adhered to, the person will be kept informed as to why this is the case and given a revised timeline for dealing with the complaint.
- To enable proper investigations, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible.
- In the event that a Complainant believes that the school failed to comply with its own complaint's procedure or that the school's complaints procedure does not comply with statutory requirements the Complainant may inform the Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust.
- If anyone faces communication challenges e.g., hearing difficulties, disability, language barrier or other cross-cultural issues we will always look at ways to overcome these challenges.
- Likewise, if you do not understand any part of this procedure, please do not hesitate to raise your questions at the time of registering your concern or complaint.

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children who are registered at a School within the Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to the School or the Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust 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.

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 and Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust and its schools take their responsibilities seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing an issue with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the Headteacher/Head of School will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if a member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern or complaint, the Headteacher/Head of School will refer you to another staff member. The members of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the issue objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns or complaints formally. In this case, the School/Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaint's procedure.

How to Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing (including electronic mail) or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a Complainant if they have appropriate consent to do so.

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

Complaints that involve, or are about, the Headteacher/Head of School should be addressed to the Chair of the Local Governing Body, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of the Local Governing Body, any individual governor or the whole Local Governing Board should be addressed to the Clerk to the Local Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

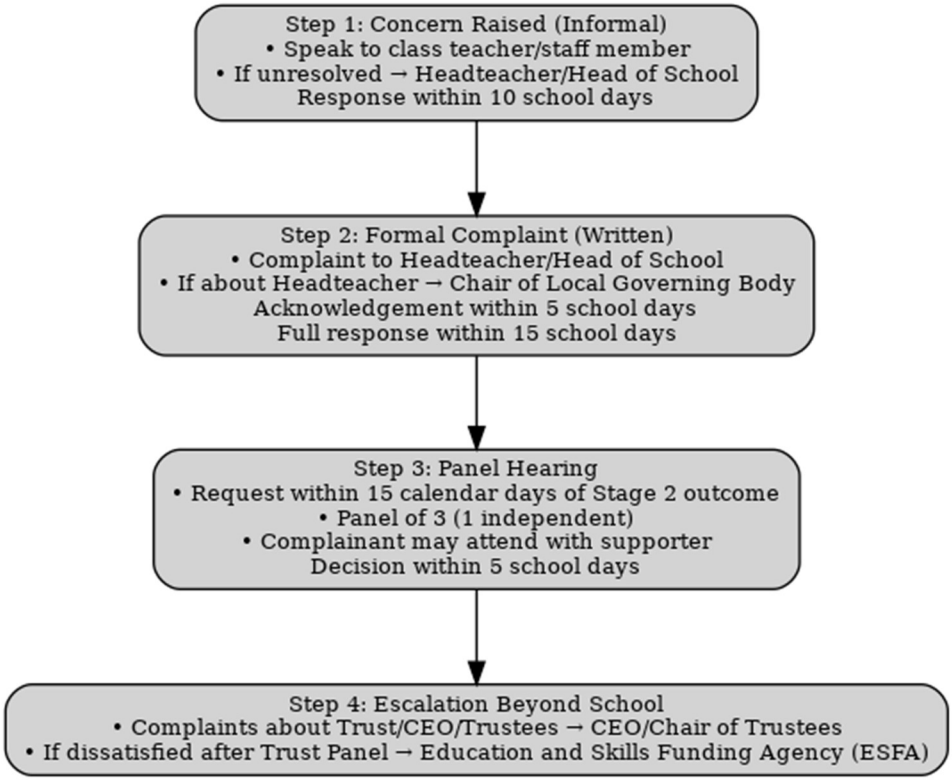
Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or a trustee of the Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust (other than the Chair of Trustees), should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees, via the Trust Clerk. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Trustees should be addressed to the Vice-Chair of Trustees, via the Trust Clerk. 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 staff or Trust Clerk. You can also ask a third-party organisation (for example, the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) 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.

Complaints Procedure Flowchart



Anonymous Complaints
We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher/Head of School, Chair of the Local Governing Body, CEO or Chair of the Trust Board if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

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.

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.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure
This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by the School/Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the local authority.

Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). See https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/child-protection/report-child-protection-concern.aspx https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/care-children-and-families/child-protection-and-safeguarding/
Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEND)	Concerns about statutory assessments of special educational needs should be raised directly with the relevant local authority.
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **Complaints about the application of the behavior policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.*
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff, volunteers, governors, directors of the Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust, service providers and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member because of a complaint. However, the Complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
Suppliers/service providers	Where the complaint concerns a third party used by the school or about services provided by other suppliers who may use school premises or facilities, please complain directly to the third party themselves.
Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests	See the Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust's GDPR Data Protection and GDPR Data Security policies. These policies are available through the Trust or on request from the school.

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 this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a Complainant commences legal action against the School/Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the School/Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust 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 about 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/Trust policies considering the complaint.
- an apology

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Guidance for the Complainant

The Complainant should:

- Explain their complaint in full as swiftly as possible.
- Co-operate fully with the school to try and resolve the complaint.
- Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings.
- Agree the details of their complaint and their desired outcomes in a timely way if clarification is requested.
- Ask for assistance if or when needed.
- Treat everybody involved in their complaint and the complaints process with dignity and respect.
- Refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.
- Refrain from making allegations and threats.

If the Complainant fails or refuses to follow the above, the School/Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust may have to suspend its consideration of their complaint, either temporarily or permanently, depending on the nature of the Complainant's behaviour and how this affects the school's handling of the complaint. In such circumstances, the School/Trust also reserve the right to invoke the section of this Procedure regarding Serial and Persistent Complaints.

Stage 1 – Informal Complaints

It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis.

Concerns about the School should be raised with either the class teacher or the Headteacher/Head of School. The class teacher or the Headteacher/Head of School will record the date the concern is received, and an appropriate member of staff will be allocated to investigate the concern.

As part of the investigation by the appropriate member of staff, if any meetings are held with parents/carers then these will be minuted by another member of staff not involved in the investigation and shared with all parties afterwards as a true record of the discussions.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 of the procedure.

It is not appropriate to publicise any concerns you may have on social media. Please write or speak to someone at the school rather than using any other means.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will endeavour to provide an informal written response **within 10 working days** of the date of receipt of the complaint. Should the nature or complexity of the concern mean that more time is required, the school will write to the Complainant **within 10 working days** informing them of the reason for the delay and confirming a revised date for resolution.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaints

Most concerns are resolved informally, however, if you remain dissatisfied you can take the matter further by submitting a formal complaint.

Formal complaints (in relation to the school) must be made to the Headteacher/Head of School (unless they are about the Headteacher/Head of School), via the school office. This may be done in person or in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form).

The Headteacher/Head of School will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) **within 5 school days**.

Within this response, the Headteacher/Head of School will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the Complainant would like to see. The Headteacher/Head of School can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The Headteacher/Head of School may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the Headteacher/Head of School (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
- review any relevant documentation and information.
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher/Head of School will provide a formal written response **within 15 school days** of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Headteacher/Head of School is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the Complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of the actions the School/Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

The Headteacher/Head of School will advise the Complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher/Head of School, or a member of the Local Governing Body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

Complaints about the Headteacher/Head of School or member of the Local Governing Body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- The entire Local Governing Body or
- The majority of the Local Governing Body

then Stage 2 will be escalated to the CEO of the Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If the Complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a panel hearing consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (including one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school) to make a final decision about it on behalf of the Local Governing Board. This is the final stage of the complaint's procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, **within 15 calendar days** (i.e. including weekends and public holidays) of issue to the Complainant of the Stage 2 response. Within **5 calendar days** after the request, the Complainant must send to the Clerk a summary of the complaint, why the Complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2 and the outcome they are seeking. Requests and summaries received outside of this time frame will be considered only if exceptional circumstances apply. The Clerk will record the date(s) the complaint (and summary) is received and acknowledge receipt in writing (either by letter or email) **within 5 school days**.

The Clerk will write to the Complainant to inform them of the date of the Hearing. They will aim to convene a Hearing **within 25 school days** of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the Complainant informed.

If the Complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the Hearing. It will then proceed in the Complainant's absence based on written submissions from all parties.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Local Governing Body or
- the majority of the Local Governing Body

then Stage 3 will be heard by the trustees and an independent panel member.

The Complaint Panel will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a Hearing or by way of written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the Complainant's needs. The Hearing may take place with both parties present and attending separately at different times. Once again, this will depend on the circumstances of the complaint.

The Complainant may bring someone along to the meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. However, neither party may bring a legal representative to the Panel meeting (as it is not a court of law and cross-questioning is not permitted). The Panel may grant exceptions to this, on occasions when it considers that legal representation is appropriate – for instance, a school employee called as a witness in a complaint meeting may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation. All questioning throughout the Hearing is conducted by the Panel.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaint procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under (Human Resources) staff disciplinary policies and procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

The school will be represented at the Complaint Panel Hearing by the person who investigated the complaint under the most recent stage of the procedure. This will usually be the Headteacher/Head of School, however it may on occasions be the Chair of Local Governing Body, the Vice-Chair of the Local Governing Body or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. If the Complainant has complained about the way in which the complaint was investigated by that person (rather than simply disagreeing with the outcome of the complaint) then the school will not be represented by that person at the Complaint Panel Hearing, and the school will nominate another person to represent the school.

At least **5 school days** before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the Complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the Complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the Panel at least **5 school days** before the meeting. Late evidence will not be accepted.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least **5 school days** before the date of the meeting. The Panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The Panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a Complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Any request to audio or video records the Hearing and whether this was consented to or not by all parties' present should be documented in the detailed notes of the Hearing. The final decision as to what reasonable adjustments will be made, if any, rests with the chair of the panel.

The chair of the Complaint Panel, in consultation with the Clerk as appropriate, may determine any aspect of the procedure for the Complaint Panel or Hearing that is not set out in this Complaint Procedure. The Panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented.

The Panel can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- make a finding of No Judgement if there is insufficient evidence to reach a definitive conclusion.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the Panel will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint or to address the circumstances giving rise to the complaint.
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Panel will provide the Complainant and the School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, **within 5 school days**.

The letter to the Complainant will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the school.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The Panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the Complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust and the Headteacher/Head of School.

The school will keep a written record of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

Complaints Escalated to / About the Trust, CEO or Trustee

If a complaint is escalated to the Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust ("**the Trust**") or if a Complainant wishes to complain directly about the Trust, then the complaint should be sent to the CEO to be investigated.

The CEO will write to the Complainant acknowledging the complaint **within 5 school days** of the date that the written request was received.

The acknowledgement will confirm which stage of this Complaints Procedure the complaint will be investigated under and will confirm the date for providing a response to the Complainant.

Following the investigation, the CEO will write to the Complainant confirming the outcome **within 15 school days** of the date that the letter was received. If this time limit cannot be met, the CEO will write to the Complainant. If this is not possible, the CEO will provide an anticipated date and keep the Complainant informed.

If the complaint concerns the CEO or a Trustee, the complaint should be sent to and investigated by the Chair of the Trust Board. If a formal complaint form is received about the Chair, the complaint will be referred to the Vice Chair for investigation. In either case the Chair/Vice Chair will follow the process (set out immediately above) for communicating with the Complainant.

NB. Where the Chair of the Trust Board has investigated the complaint, they will write the letter of outcome to the Complainant and provide a copy to the CEO.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, **within 15 calendar days** (i.e. including weekends and public holidays) of issue to the Complainant of the Stage 2 response. **Within 5 calendar days** after the request, the Complainant must send to the Clerk a summary of the complaint, why the Complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2 and the outcome they are seeking. Requests and summaries received outside of this time frame will be considered only if exceptional circumstances apply. The Clerk will record the date(s) the complaint (and summary) is received and acknowledge receipt in writing (either by letter or email) **within 5 school days**.

The Clerk will write to the Complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting **within 15 school days** of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the Complainant informed.

If the Complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the Complainant's absence based on written submissions from both parties.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- The entire Trust Board or
- The majority of the Trust Board

then Stage 3 will be heard by a completely independent panel.

The Complaint Panel will consist of three members. None of the three members of the Complaint Panel will have been involved in the incidents or events which led to the complaint or have been involved in dealing with the complaint in the previous stages or have any detailed prior knowledge of the complaint.

One of the Complaint Panel members will be independent of the management and running of the Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust.

This means that the independent Complaint Panel member will not be a governor or member of any school in the Trust, a member, Trustee or an employee of the Trust or any person who has a clear connection with the school or Trust (for example, a solicitor. who routinely handles legal matters for the school). However, a governor, from a local governing body at a different school within the Trust, who has no conflict of interest or prior knowledge of the complaint, can be an independent panel member.

The Complaint Panel will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a Hearing or by way of written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the Complainant's needs. The Hearing may take place with both parties present and attending separately at different times. Once again, this will depend on the circumstances of the complaint.

A Complainant may bring someone along to the Panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. However, neither party may bring a legal representative to the Panel meeting (as it is not a court of law and cross questioning is not permitted). The Panel may grant exceptions to this, on occasions when it considers that legal representation is appropriate – for instance, a Trust employee who is called as a witness in a complaint meeting may be supported by the union and/or legal representation. All questioning throughout the Hearing is conducted by the Panel.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaint's procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

The Trust will be represented at the Complaint Panel Hearing by the person who investigated the complaint under the most recent stage of the procedure. If the Complainant has complained about the way in which the complaint was investigated by that person (rather than simply disagreeing with the outcome of the complaint) then the Trust will not be represented by that person at the Complaint Panel Hearing, and the Trust will nominate another person to represent the Trust.

At least **5 school days** before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the Complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the Complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the Panel at least **5 school days** before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least **3 school days** before the date of the Hearing. The Panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The Panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The Hearing will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a Complainant's own disability or special needs require a reasonable adjustment to be made. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before recording meetings or conversations take place. Any request to audio or video the Hearing and whether this was consented to or not by all parties present should be documented in the Clerk's detailed notes. The final decision as to what reasonable adjustments will be made, if any, rests with the chair of the Panel.

The chair of the Complaint Panel, in consultation with the Clerk as appropriate, may determine any aspect of the procedure for the Complaint Panel or Hearing that is not set out in this Complaint Procedure.

The Panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented.

The Panel can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- make a finding of No Judgement if there is insufficient evidence to reach a definitive conclusion.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the Panel will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint or to address the circumstances giving rise to the complaint.
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Panel will provide the Complainant and the Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, **within 5 school days**.

The letter to the Complainant will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of the actions Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

The Panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the Complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust and the Headteacher/Head of School.

The school will keep a written record of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

Next Steps

If the Complainant believes the School/Trust did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the ESFA after they have completed Stage 3.

The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust. They will consider whether the School/Trust has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

The Complainant can refer their complaint to the ESFA online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
5 Quinton Road
Coventry

SEND Complaints

In the case of complaints about Special Educational Needs provision, you may complain further to the Local Authority. This should be done by writing to the Children's Services Complaints Manager. It should be noted however that if you wish to pursue this route, you must do so within 20 working days (4 weeks) of receiving the written outcome of the hearing into your complaint. After 20 working days (4 weeks), neither the school nor the Local Authority is under any obligation to investigate or progress your complaint any further.

Serial and Persistent Complaints

The School/Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive, or threatening.

The School/Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust define unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the Complainant's contact with its schools, such as, if the Complainant:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaint's investigation process
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaint's procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be considered and commented on
- Raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeks to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the department for education.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- Uses threats to intimidate.
- Uses abusive, offensive, or discriminatory language or violence.
- Knowingly provides falsified information.
- Publishes unsubstantiated allegations or information or other details which would generally be regarded as unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Unless there is significant new information, complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher/Head of School or Chair of the Local Governing Body will discuss any concerns with the Complainant informally before considering behaviour to be unreasonable.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher/Head of School will write to the Complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For Complainants who excessively contact one or more of the schools in the Trust causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the Police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the premises of one or more of the schools in the Trust. Schools can bar someone from the premises if they feel that their aggressive, abusive or insulting behaviour or language is a risk to staff or pupils. It's enough for a member of staff or a pupil to feel threatened. Should the School deem this necessary, it will ensure that it adheres to the guidance issued by the Department for Education (DFE) entitled Controlling access to School premises.

The School/Chess Valley Primary Learning Trust also reserves the right to use and adapt this Complaints Procedure whenever it deems it appropriate to manage unreasonable or persistent contact not directly associated with, or resulting from, formal complaints.

Complaint Campaigns

If the School/Trust receives a large number of complaints all based on the same subject or from complainants unconnected to the school/Trust, it may become the focus of a complaints campaign. If the school/Trust consider this to be the case, a template response will be sent.

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Headteacher/Head of School/Clerk who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:** **Email address:**
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 whom:
Complaint referred to:
Action taken:
Date: