

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

Adopted by the Board of Trustees 15 July 2015

Principles

The Greenshaw Learning Trust welcomes comments on its services. Comments enable us to clarify any misunderstandings that arise and give us the opportunity to review our procedures if necessary. We are also pleased to learn of things that have gone well.

The Greenshaw Learning Trust will always deal with complaints in a courteous and reasonable manner, and follow its agreed procedures. We ask that those with comments and complaints present them in a similarly reasonable manner.

Introduction and application

If you have a complaint about the services of the Trust or the conduct of an executive officer or Trustee of the Trust the complaint will be dealt with in accordance with this Procedure.

If the complaint is about the Executive Headteacher the complaint should be addressed to the Clerk to the Trust.

If you have a comment about or complaint against a school in the Greenshaw Learning Trust or a member of the school's governing body you should take it up with the school, and if necessary through the school's complaints procedure, by contacting the school.

If a Trustee or an executive officer of the Trust is contacted directly by a complainant in relation to a complaint about a school in the Trust, then the matter should be referred to the Headteacher of the school to be dealt with under the school's complaints procedure.

Complaints about the administration of admissions to schools in the Trust should be addressed through the Admissions Appeals Process, by writing to the Clerk to the Trust.

If the complaint is about the Executive Headteacher or the Executive Headteacher has been directly involved in matters that are the subject of the complaint: where this Procedure refers to the Executive Headteacher, the Chair of the Board of Trustees will act in their place, and where it subsequently refers to the Chair of the Board of Trustees, the Vice Chair or another nominated Trustee will act in their place.

If the complaint is about the Chair of the Board of Trustees or the Chair of the Board of Trustees has been directly involved in matters that are the subject of the complaint: where this Procedure refers to the Chair of the Board of Trustees, the Vice Chair or another nominated Trustee will act in their place.

At any meeting with Trust staff or Trustees or any panel, the complainant may be accompanied by a friend and/or interpreter; and the Executive Headteacher or any other Trust staff may be accompanied by a fellow employee or professional representative.

A written record will be kept of all complaints and which stages of the complaints procedure they invoked. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential.

Stages

The Complaints Procedure has three stages that must be followed consecutively.

Stage 1: Informal resolution

In the first instance, if a person has a complaint, they should contact the Trust by telephone, email or letter for an appointment to discuss the matter with an appropriate member of staff. A complainant may find it helpful to write down the main substance of their complaint before contacting the Trust.

A senior member of Trust staff will investigate the complaint and seek to find a resolution through discussion and meetings with the complainant, informally.

If it does not prove possible to reach a resolution, the complainant may wish to put their complaint formally in writing under Stage 2, or the Executive Headteacher may refer the matter to Stage 2 or to the Chair of the Board of Trustees (under Stage 2) so that it can be dealt with more effectively.

On receipt of a written complaint, the complaint will be investigated by the Executive Headteacher. The Executive Headteacher will give a written response to the complainant, and will endeavour to give that response within 14 days of receiving the complaint.

Most concerns should be resolved at this informal stage.

Stage 2: Formal complaint

If the complaint has not been resolved informally, the complainant may put their complaint formally in writing, in a letter addressed to the Headteacher or Clerk to the Trust, Greenshaw Learning Trust, Grennell Road, Sutton SM1 3DY.

The Executive Headteacher will investigate the complaint and give a written response to the complainant, and will endeavour to give that response within 14 days.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response from the Executive Headteacher, they may refer the matter to the Chair of the Board of Trustees, in writing addressed to the Chair, care of the Clerk to the Trust.

On receipt of a written complaint the Chair of the Board of Trustees may either:

1. refer the matter back to the Executive Headteacher for further consideration under Stage 1; or
2. arrange for the complaint to be considered as a Stage 2 complaint as below; or
3. refer the complaint to a Complaints Panel of the Board of Trustees under stage 3.

The Clerk will arrange for a meeting between the complainant, the Executive Headteacher and the Chair of the Board of Trustees or a person nominated by the Chair (who is not a Trust employee), at which they will seek a resolution that is satisfactory to the complainant

The Chair of the Board of Trustees or nominated person will write to the complainant and the Executive Headteacher setting out the results of the meeting and advising the complainant of their right to take the matter to a Complaints Panel under stage 3.

Stage 3: Complaints Panel

If the complainant is still not satisfied with the response to their complaint or the way that it has been handled, they may take the matter to a Complaints Panel appointed by the Board of

Trustees, by writing to the Clerk of the Trust, enclosing a copy of the original written complaint and indicating which matters remain unresolved and/or why they are not satisfied with how the complaint has been handled. No new complaints may be included.

The Trustees will establish a Complaints Panel made up of at least three people who have not been involved with the matters that are the subject of the complaint, at least one of whom is independent of the management and running of the Trust. They will choose one of their number to chair the meeting.

The Clerk will arrange a meeting of the Complaints Panel at a convenient time for all parties, as soon as possible and within 14–28 days of receipt of the complainant's letter. Details of the complaint will be sent to the Executive Headteacher and Chair of the Board of Trustees. The Executive Headteacher will then have 7 days to submit their response to the Secretary. Any documents from either the complainant or the School to be considered by the Panel and the names of any witnesses who may be called must be received by the Clerk at least 7 days before the meeting.

The Agenda for the meeting and copies of all papers submitted will be sent to members of the Panel, complainant, Executive Headteacher and Chair of the Board of Trustees. The Executive Headteacher will copy relevant papers to any staff named in the complaint.

The Complaints Panel will consider the complaint on the basis of the papers they receive and what is said at the meeting. In the event of either party not attending the meeting, the Chair of the Panel has the discretion to proceed or to adjourn the meeting. Once the Panel has heard from both parties, it will adjourn to make its decision.

The Complaints Panel may:

- Uphold the complaint in full;
- Uphold the complaint in part; or
- Dismiss the complaint.

Or they may give a more complex response.

The complainant, any staff complained about, the Executive Headteacher and Chair of the Board of Trustees will be advised in writing or by electronic mail of the outcome of the meeting within seven school days of the meeting.

The Complaints Panel may refer issues of principle or general practice to the Board of Trustees or the Executive Headteacher.

Complaints to the Education Funding Agency

If a complaint has been considered in accordance with this Procedure, but the complainant is still not satisfied, then the complainant can make a complaint to the Education Funding Agency (EFA). The EFA will normally only consider a complaint after this Complaints Procedure has been exhausted. The EFA cannot review or overturn decisions about complaints made by the Trust; they can only investigate whether the Trust considered the complaint appropriately and may request the Trust to re-consider the complaint or to review its procedure.

If a complainant wishes to refer their complaint to the EFA, they should write to: Ministerial and Public Communications Division, Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD, or use the online feedback form on the Department for Education website.