COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURES

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Policy Statement (1)

AKS Lytham (the School) prides itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its students. It recognises that parents may, from time to time, have concerns about the progress, achievement, behaviour or welfare of their son or daughter. Parents are encouraged to make those concerns known to staff so that they can be addressed in partnership with the school.

The School will take all concerns and complaints seriously and will make every effort to deal with complaints informally, at an early stage, in the spirit of continued respect and partnership.

This is a three-stage process. In most cases, any concern or complaint, regardless of whose attention to whom it is initially brought, should be discussed informally at stage 1, before being submitted to a formal process. Complaints concerning the Head may proceed directly to formal process at stage 2 and will be managed by the chair of the Local Governing Body (LGB).

A written record will be kept of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, and of any action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

Definitions

This policy deals with concerns or complaints from parents of current pupils and parents of former pupils provided the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered at the School.

The following definitions apply to the procedure outlined within this policy:

Concerns are defined as having a worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.

A **complaint** can be any matter about which a parent/carer is unhappy and seeks action by the school.

Complainant- this term is used throughout this policy and refers to the parent/carer/egal guardian or any other individual bringing their complaint to the attention of the school.

Chair- unless otherwise stated this refers to the Chair of the Local Governing Body.

Clerk- Administrative support provided to the LGB, this is usually the LGB clerk or governance professional.

All **timescales** within this policy refer to '**working days'** when the school is in session. These therefore exclude weekends, school holidays and INSET days.

Independent member of a panel at stage 3 – this individual must be independent of the management and governance of the school itself and have no knowledge of the complaint.

The school may use governors from other schools across both sectors of the United Learning to fulfil this role. An independent lay person may also be used.

The school defines '**unreasonable'** as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, 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 investigation process.
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure.
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints 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 or unmeritorious 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 unacceptable information related to the complaint on social media or other public forums.

Matters falling outside of this policy

This procedure covers all concerns and complaints about the facilities and services provided by the school except where these are covered by separate, statutory policies as described in the table below.

Admissions or appeals	**Independent schools** - Appeals against admissions are managed under the admissions policy [*Admissions Policy]*.
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	• This procedure does not apply to safeguarding concerns regarding children or allegations of abuse made against teachers, and other staff, including supply teachers and volunteers, which are managed under the school's Safeguarding Policy [*Safeguarding Policy].* • If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO): lado.admin@lancashire.gov.uk who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH): mash.education@lancashire.gov.uk
Staff grievances	• Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures. [United Learning Grievance Procedure.pdf]
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 as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
Subject Access Requests	• Subject Access Request's please see the Data Protection Policy [*Data Protection Policy]*
Whistleblowing	• United Learning has an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. *[UL Whistleblowing Policy.]* • 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 direct 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.
Complaints concerning a third party or services used by the school	Please raise the matter directly with the provider.
Anonymous Complaints	We will not normally respond to anonymous complaints however the Headteacher and chair of governors will determine whether an issue raised in this way needs investigating.

- Appeals regarding a permanent exclusion, required removal and suspension are managed in accordance with Stage 3 of this procedure.
- Any member of the public may also raise a concern or complaint about the facilities or services provided by the school. In these rare instances, and where the matter raised falls within scope, the Headteacher is authorised to use this policy to investigate and respond to the complainant in writing.
- 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 policy 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.
- 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 will **immediately suspend** the complaint process where the behaviour of the complainant is deemed to be 'unreasonable'.
- Where a complaint is deemed by the school to be **unreasonable or vexatious there will be no further action taken by the school (see section on vexatious complaints)**

Policy Statement (2)

1) This policy applies to all members of the AKS school community, including those in our EYFS setting.

2) AKS implements this policy through adherence to the procedures set out in the rest of this document.
3) This policy is made available to the parents of registered pupils.
4) AKS is fully committed to ensuring that the application of this policy is non-discriminatory in line with the UK Equality Act (2010). Further details are available in the school's *Equal Opportunity* policy document.
5) This policy is reviewed at least annually, or as events or legislation changes require, by the Whole School Leadership Team and the Local Governing Body. The deadline for the next review is no later than 12 months after the most recent review date indicated above.

Key Personnel

1) Allan McKeown: Senior Deputy Head/Complaints Co-ordinator (Senior School)
2) Amanda Ilhan: Head of Nursery and Preparatory School/Complaints Co-ordinator (Nursery and Preparatory School)

Key Policy Aims and Guidance

We aim to:

1: Encourage the informal and early resolution of complaints at stage 1, so far as it is possible.

We aim to deal with all matters of concern raised by parents or carers promptly, fairly, openly, and without prejudice. Concerns and complaints are more likely to be resolved informally when all parties commit to working together towards a resolution in the spirit of co-operation. Informal resolutions will usually involve a meeting between the complainant and the school. Any concern or complaint should be listened to by an appropriate member of the staff team -usually the class teacher, year group or pastoral leader or a member of the leadership team (as appropriate to the nature of the complaint). Where further information is needed, we will aim to respond in a timely and sensitive manner. It also helps to understand what a satisfactory outcome would look like to the complainant. We aim to resolve matters at stage 1 within 15 working days.

At each stage in the procedure, AKS Lytham 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 reoccur

· 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.

When managing a concern or complaint informally at stage 1, parents may, if they are not satisfied with the response, to escalate their complaint to the formal stage of this procedure.

Mediation meetings may be helpful in resolving issues of concern or in mending relationships and moving forward in partnership with parents/carers; however, these sit outside of the formal complaints process.

2: Ensure that the complaints process is easy to understand and access and be readily available.

United Learning and AKS Lytham has endeavoured to make its procedures as accessible as possible. Parents should not be put off from making a complaint because they are not sure how to do so. The complaints procedure is available on the School website and can be made available in hard copy on request from reception.

3: Keep the formal procedure to two distinct stages.

Stage 2 is a formal investigation and response. Stage 2 complaints should be made to the Headteacher, (or the Chair of Governors if the complaint concerns the Headteacher) who will investigate and provide a formal response.

Stage 3 is a review of the complaint by a Complaints Panel. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 2, trustees have delegated the LGB with authority to review the complaint on its behalf at **Stage 3.** The stage 3 panel **must** include independent representation*.

Resolution should be sought at all stages.

*It is a requirement of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school. United Learning determine this to mean external to the individual school and therefore a governor from another LGB within UL may be asked to join a review at stage 3.

4: Ensure that as few governors as possible are involved in the management of a complaint.

The School aims to ensure that members of the LGB do not become directly involved in the detail of a complaint, so they are not prevented from sitting on a Complaints Panel if called upon to review complaints under Stage 3.

Where a complaint has been made about a member of the local governing board or the entire governing board, the LGB clerk should seek advice from the Head of Local Governance at United Learning about how the procedure should apply and proceed given the nature of the complaint. This may involve sourcing an independent investigator and/or panel to hear the complaint.

5: Records should be kept at both stages of the formal process (stage 2 and 3)

It is important that those responsible for reviewing a complaint at each formal stage keep records of what the complaint was, whether it was resolved following a formal procedure or proceeded to a panel hearing, any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld), any evidence that was considered, and the outcome. The School will ensure that, in accordance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, a copy of the findings and recommendations made at the panel review stage are provided in writing to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, as well being made available for inspection on the school premises by United Learning, as the proprietor and the head teacher.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them

Any personal information recorded in regard to the complaint will be kept in accordance with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 (see the ICO website) and in accordance with the School's *Privacy Notice* and *Data Protection Policy*.

The School processes data in accordance with its *Privacy Notice*. When dealing with complaints the School (including any panel member appointed under the Stage [2/3] process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

The name of the complainant;

The date and time at which the complaint was made;

The details of the complaint;

The desired outcome of the complainant;

How the complaint is investigated (including written records of interviews held);

Findings and recommendations of investigations;

Any action taken;

The complainant's response (satisfaction or further pursuit of complaint).

This may include 'special category personal data' (including sensitive data such as information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint.

6: Review the Complaint Procedure regularly

United Learning is confident that the complaints procedure it recommends to schools is thorough, clear and robust. As a matter of good practice UL will therefore review this procedure every two or three years to ensure it remains fit for purpose. The procedure may need to be amended before the review date if, for example, there are any changes to the law, or if it becomes apparent, as a result

of a complaint, that the procedure is not working effectively. Any proposed amendment of the procedure will therefore be carried out centrally and submitted to Local governing boards for approval.

In line with our Provision of Information policy, this document is available to all interested parties on our website and on request from the main school office and should be read in conjunction with the following documents; *Academic Performance Statement, Anti-Bullying Policy, Child Protection Policy, Curriculum Policy, Special Educational Needs Policy, Admissions Policy, Behaviour Policy, Discipline and Exclusions Policy, Privacy Notice, Expulsion and Removal Policy*.

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year is available on request from Complaints Co-ordinator (Senior School) – Mr A McKeown.

Relevant legislation and contact details

A complainant may also make a complaint to OFSTED (EYFS) or ISI. Their contact details are:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M21 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 4666
Web address: www.ofsted.gov.uk
Email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Independent Schools Inspectorate
CAP House
9-12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA
Tel: 020 7600 0100
Web address: www.isi.net/home/
Email:concerns@isi.net

School and UL Contact Details

Headteacher: David Harrow headmaster@akslytham.com

Chair of the LGB: David Stanhope David.stanhope@akslytham.com

Clerk to the LGB: Stephanie Gilluly clerk@akslytham.com

Head of Local Governance at United Learning: Lesley Dolben

Company Secretary: Alison Hussain Alison.hussain@unitedlearning.org,uk

Procedures: Stage 1: Informal 'Listen and Respond'

The LGB of AKS Lytham encourages those that have concerns to raise them with the appropriate person at the school (e.g. your child's class teacher) and to work constructively with that person towards resolving them. The majority of concerns can be dealt with without resorting to the formal stages of the formal complaint procedure. We recognise that, almost invariably, the sooner concerns are raised the easier it is for an appropriate resolution to be found.

Please see the following contacts in school for support:

Concerns of a pastoral nature should normally be made to your child's Form Teacher or Tutor, Head of Year or Deputy Head Pastoral/DSL: Mr P Hayden for Senior School, and Mrs A Ilhan for the Nursery and Prep School.

Concerns of an academic nature would be through the Head of Department or Senior Deputy Head: Mr A McKeown for Senior School, and Mrs A Ilhan for the Nursery and Prep School.

If the nature of your concern is broader and may cover both academic and pastoral issues, then concerns should be directed to either Deputy Head Pastoral/DSL: Mr P Hayden or Senior Deputy Head: Mr A McKeown for Senior School, and Mrs A Ilhan for the Nursery and Prep School.

The member of staff will acknowledge the complaint normally within **3 working days of receipt**. They will try to identify areas of agreement and clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred. They may make a written record of your concern or complaint, the date on which it was received, and then try to resolve the matter themselves or refer you to the appropriate person.

The extent to which complainants have attempted informal ways of addressing an issue may be taken into consideration when assessing the reasonableness of a complaint during the formal stages of the procedure.

If a complaint cannot be resolved informally **within 15 working days**, or if the relevant member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the parents should proceed with their complaint in accordance with **Stage 2** of this Complaints Procedure.

Complaints about a member of staff or the headteacher

Where a complaint is about a member of staff, the headteacher will investigate or will delegate responsibility to investigate to a senior member of staff (Deputy Head for example).

Where the subject of the complaint is the headteacher, the complainant should notify the clerk to the governors (see contact details on page 9). The formal, **Stage 2** process will then commence, but with the chair of governors as the individual responsible for the investigation, rather than the headteacher.

For reasons of confidentiality, complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any disciplinary action against any member of staff, arising from a complaint.

The timescale for making a complaint

All complaints will be handled within clear and reasonable timescales. Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays. This means that during school holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. The timescales for any complaints made outside of term time will be considered to have commenced on the first day of term.

Timescales for investigating and/or responding to a complaint may also need to be extended in the event of a force majeure, a pandemic or as the result of enforced government restrictions. The School will inform parents if there is to be a delay to the anticipated timescales, for instance because of disruption to the School, staff absence or site closure.

Parents are expected to proceed with their complaint in a timely and reasonable manner. To enable effective review, the School therefore expects complaints to be raised within 3 months of an issue arising or where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. The school will only consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

These may include (but are not limited to) subsequent information about the complaint coming to light and a valid explanation of why it was not possible to give notification of the complaint sooner. In such cases, the headteacher/chair of the governing board/clerk to the governing board (as appropriate) will review the circumstances, may seek advice, and determine whether the complaint is to be considered under this policy. It is also expected that if parents wish to escalate their complaint to the next stage of the procedure, they will generally do so within 15 working days of the conclusion of the current stage. Depending upon the circumstances, the School may, acting reasonably, treat a complaint as closed if a parent has not proceeded within this timeframe.

> **The right to withdraw a complaint:** The complainant may withdraw a complaint at any stage of the process described below. Written confirmation may be requested to confirm that a complaint has been withdrawn. No further action will be taken when a complaint is withdrawn.

Maintaining records

Notes may be made to support the informal management of complaints and the school may also keep an informal record of any meeting held or any agreed action to be taken. These will be processed by the school in line with the relevant privacy notice. Records taken and used throughout the complaints process, including correspondence, notes of meetings, telephone calls etc., will be kept securely and in accordance with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018.

The record of complaints is kept for at least 7 years and may be kept for longer if there is a safeguarding aspect to the complaint.

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year is available on request from the Complaints Co-ordinator (Senior School) – Mr A McKeown.

Maintaining confidentiality

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept strictly confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Concerns and complaints will therefore be dealt with confidentially at all stages and at the conclusion of the procedure. Confidentiality should be maintained all times by everyone involved. Complaints are not to be discussed externally by parents, including via social media.

Actions taken in relation to school staff that arise from complaints will remain confidential to the school and the member of staff concerned.

Safeguarding

Wherever a concern indicates that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, the school is duty bound to act on this which may include reporting this immediately to the local authority. Any action taken will be in accordance with the school's Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy, which can be found on the school website.

Monitoring the implementation of this policy

The LGB is delegated the authority to monitor the implementation of the complaint policy at school level on behalf of the Board of Trustees of United Learning. It will review the log of complaints at termly intervals. It will review the number of complaints and 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. It will consider any lessons learned and make recommendations for any revisions to policy.

Stage 2 – Formal: Investigate and Response

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, via email or in writing. The school advises complainants to use the complaints form provided in Appendix 2. The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher it should be made to the Chair of the Local Governing Body (LGB), via the LGB clerk. This can be done by letter to the school office for the attention of the Chair. Alternatively, the contact details for the clerk are clerk@akslytham.com

The head teacher (or LGB Clerk on behalf of the chair) will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) **within 3 working days.**

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

It may be necessary for the Headteacher (or Chair as appropriate) to carry out further investigation. In investigating, the Headteacher (or Chair) will consider all evidence they consider relevant. This **may** include, but is not limited to:

- obtaining statements from the complainant and those involved with the complaint
- meeting/speaking with the complainant and those involved in the complaint
- reviewing relevant correspondence and other documents relating to the complaint

After considering all matters the Headteacher/Chair considers relevant, the Headteacher/Chair of LGB can decide to:

- uphold the complaint and direct that certain action be taken to resolve it
- uphold the complaint in part (in other words find an aspect or aspects of the complaint to be valid, but not the whole complaint) direct for certain action to be taken, or
- dismiss the complaint entirely

During the investigation, the head teacher/chair (or investigator) will keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher/Chair will provide a formal written response **within 30 working days** of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the Headteacher/Chair is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The final written response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint, provide a summary of findings and a decision. It must provide a full explanation of the decision(s) made citing evidence from the investigation as necessary.

After considering all matters the Headteacher/Chair considers relevant, the Headteacher/Chair can decide to:

- uphold the complaint and where appropriate direct that certain action is taken.
- uphold the complaint in part (in other words find an aspect or aspects of the complaint to be valid, but not the whole complaint) and where appropriate direct for certain action is taken.
- dismiss the complaint entirely.

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

Stage 3: Formal Panel Hearing

The complainant is entitled to request a review of the decision and the actions taken at **Stage 2.** This stage provides an opportunity for the panel to review the work of the investigating officer, who should be in attendance. Where the investigating officer is the chair of the LGB, the Headteacher is not expected to attend.

Stage 3 provides for a panel hearing consisting of three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint with one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school.

This is the final stage of the complaint procedure.

Requests for a review at stage 3 should be made in writing to the school **no later than 15 working days** after receipt of written notification of the decision at Stage 2. Requests made outside of this time frame will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The request should include a summary of the complaint, why the complainant it dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 2 and the outcome they are seeking. The school advises that it is helpful to use the complaint form provided at appendix 2.

A Stage 3 panel hearing examines the evidence and actions taken at Stage 2 and provides an opportunity for the complainant to put any remaining concerns forward to the LGB. The panel will 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 panel hearing will be held in private either remotely or face-to-face within the school. 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. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The Timescale for stage 3 is **30 working days** from receipt of a request to review the decision to the final written outcome.

The following steps are taken at **Stage 3:**

1. The clerk will acknowledge the written request for the complaint to be reviewed within **5 working** days of receipt.

2. The clerk will convene a panel of **three** people who were not directly involved in the detail of the complaint, one of which must be independent of the running and management of the school, to review the complaint.

3. The clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within **20 working 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 on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

4. The complainant or the panel may request further evidence to support the Stage 3 review. Copies of any such information must be supplied to all parties no later than **5 working days** prior to the meeting or **3 working days** if requested after receipt of the full pack of documents. Panels cannot normally consider evidence that is supplied after this time.

5. The panel hearing is not a court case, will be as informal as circumstances allow and conducted in such a manner as at the discretion of the panel. The panel members are not legally trained and therefore cannot make findings as to points of law.

6. The panel **may** speak with the following, either as part of the review meeting, or as part of any further investigation:

    - the complainant
    - The investigating officer who investigated the complaint and made the decision at Stage 2
    - relevant persons involved the complaint.
    - persons whom, in the view of the panel, can provide relevant advice and information relating to the subject of the complaint and the review process at Stage 3

7. All parties invited to attend a panel hearing are entitled to be accompanied by a family member/friend/representative as appropriate. Legal representatives /or representatives from the media are not permitted to attend the panel meeting. The clerk must be notified at

least 3 working days in advance of the hearing of the name and occupation of any accompanying person.

8. Complainants are asked to advise the clerk of any relevant disability or accessibility requirement so that the school may provide appropriate support.

9. A panel hearing may proceed notwithstanding the complainant may subsequently decide not to attend, in which case, the panel will consider the complaint in absentia and issue findings on the substance of the complaint, thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion.

10. After due consideration of all facts considered relevant, the panel will make findings as to whether the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and accordingly can decide to:

    - uphold the complaint and if appropriate recommend that certain action be taken to resolve it;

    - uphold the complaint in part (in other words find an aspect or aspects of the complaint to be valid, but not the whole complaint) and if appropriate recommend certain action to be taken, or

    - dismiss the complaint entirely.

11. The panel may make recommendations to the school as a result of its deliberations but has no power to compel the school to take action.

12. A letter of outcome (and findings and recommendations) will be provided to the complainant within **5 working days** of the date of the review panel hearing. A copy of this letter will also be provided to the headteacher, (or LGB chair as appropriate) who investigated the complaint at Stage 2, and, where relevant, the person complained about.

13. A confidential written record of all complaints that are made in accordance with the formal stage of this procedure will be kept by the school. The written record will include whether the complaint has been resolved following a formal procedure and whether it proceeded to a panel review hearing. It will also refer to any action taken by the school, regardless of whether the complaint has been upheld.

14. The school will ensure that, in accordance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, a copy of the findings and recommendations made at the panel review stage are made available for inspection on the school premises by United Learning and the headteacher. 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 2008 Act requests access to them.

15. **Decision to exclude a pupil** - Any complaint of a decision taken by the headteacher to exclude or require the removal of the pupil will be governed by this Stage [2/3] of the school's Complaints Procedure. The Panel will review the circumstances having regard to the process followed by the headteacher and consider whether the headteacher's decision was reasonable and proportionate. The Panel may either uphold or dismiss the complaint. If the complaint is upheld the Panel may recommend that the headteacher reconsiders their

decision. The Panel will explain in writing why any recommendation to reconsider a decision to exclude or remove a pupil has been made.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

Where the school is unable to resolve a complaint with you and the internal procedure has been exhausted, the school will let you know that if they cannot settle the complaint you may, if you wish, contact the Ombudsman Service as a means of alternative dispute resolution (ADR). In providing you with this information, the school will also indicate whether they are prepared to consider entering into ADR in that instance, as the school is not obliged to do so.

Complaints about members of the Local Governing Body

Where a complaint concerns a governor or the LGB, the complainant should contact the LGB clerk. The LGB clerk will seek advice from the Head of Local Governance and advise the complainant accordingly.

Complaints about officers of United Learning

Where a complaint concerns a member of United Learning staff, this should be referred to the Company Secretary, Alison Hussain, (Alison.Hussain@unitedlearning.org.uk)who will determine the most appropriate person to review the complaint and advise the complainant accordingly.

Written complaints relating to the requirements of the EYFS Statutory Framework

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated in accordance with Stage 1 of the complaints procedure and the complainant will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 calendar days of the complaint being received. Formal Stage 2 process will be available to complainants if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1.

The school will provide Ofsted and ISI (as appropriate), on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, their outcome and the action that was taken. It will include details of whether the complaint was upheld.

Complainants may also complain directly to ISI or OFSTED if they believe that the school is not meeting the EYFS requirements:

ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net.

Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 4666 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Responding to Complaint Campaigns

Occasionally schools can become the focus of a campaign and receive large volumes of complaints;

- All based on the same subject
- From complainants unconnected with the school

In these rare instances, the school will seek advice from United Learning central office and may respond using a template response to all complainants. Alternatively, the school may choose to publish a single response on its website. In these circumstances we would expect to respond to a complaint campaign within 30 working days.

Vexatious Complaints

There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, and where central office has agreed to investigate, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue or a closely related issue that has already been dealt with under this complaints procedure, the relevant United Learning Director and the Chair of the LGB will inform parents in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant writes again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be recognised as vexatious and there will be no obligation on the part of the school or Central Office to respond to any further correspondence on the same issues or a closely related issue.

Whilst we understand that some matters may be potentially upsetting, if the conduct of the complainant is inappropriate, threatening or abusive (either in person or in written form), the school reserves the right to regard the matter as a vexatious complaint and there will be no obligation on the part of the school to respond.

Summary of Requirements

a. The school will take all concerns and complaints seriously and will make every effort to deal with complaints informally, at an early stage, in the spirit of continued respect and partnership.
b. This is a three-stage process. In most cases, any concern or complaint, regardless of whose attention to whom it is initially brought, should be discussed informally at stage 1, before being submitted to a formal process. Complaints concerning the Headteacher may proceed directly to formal process at Stage 2 and will be managed by the chair of the Local Governing Body (LGB).
c. Whilst we endeavour to resolve all concerns and complaints informally, the school cannot compel complainants to use the informal stage 1 and will not refuse to progress a complaint to a formal stage if there has been no informal engagement.
d. The school will accept complaints via email, writing or in person and whilst we advise the complainant to make use of the complaint form at appendix 2, there is no obligation for them to do so.
e. **The timescales** defined for each stage of the process are outline in appendix 1.
f. In exceptional circumstances the timescales for managing a complaint may be extended by mutual consent. These could include and are not limited to the following; request from the complainant to extend the timescale, ill-health of the complainant, significant disruption to school, force majeure, or as the result of enforced government restrictions.

g. Complainants retain the right to appeal at the end of each stage of the process if they remain dissatisfied. The management of the complaint at school level ends at stage 3.

Record of Formal Complaints in the Previous Year

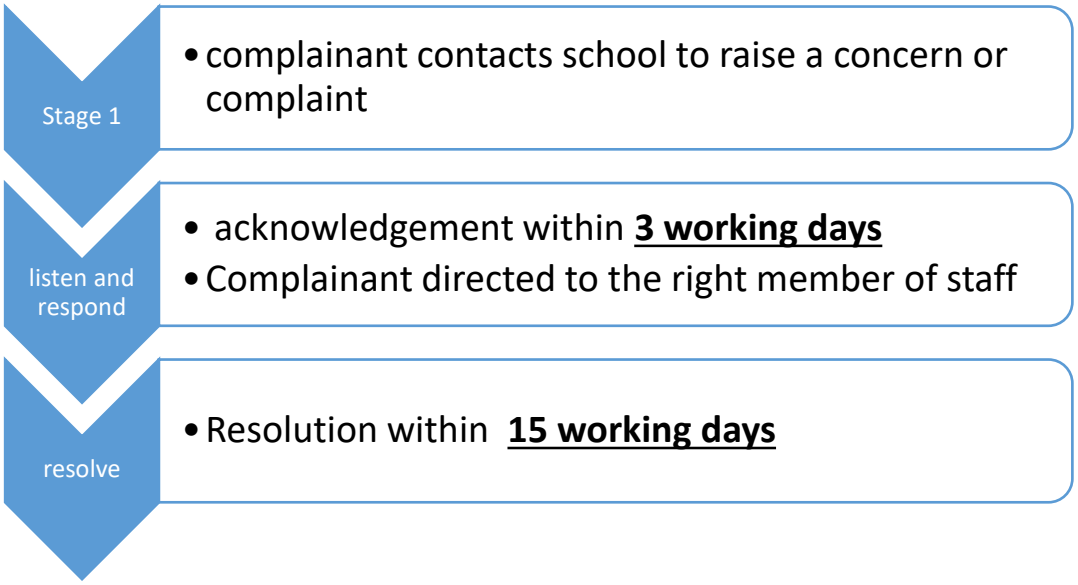
There has been 1 complaint registered under the formal procedures of stages 2 and 3 during the academic year 2025-2026.

Updated	7th July 2026
Reason for changes	Annual review and update
Name of the owner	Allan McKeown – Senior Deputy Head/Amanda Ilhan – Head of Nursery and Prep School
Audience	Staff/School community
Location	Whole School Team and School website
Originator/Author	Head of Local Governance at United Learning
Review date	July 2027
Reference	• ISSR Part 7 • EYFS Statutory Framework

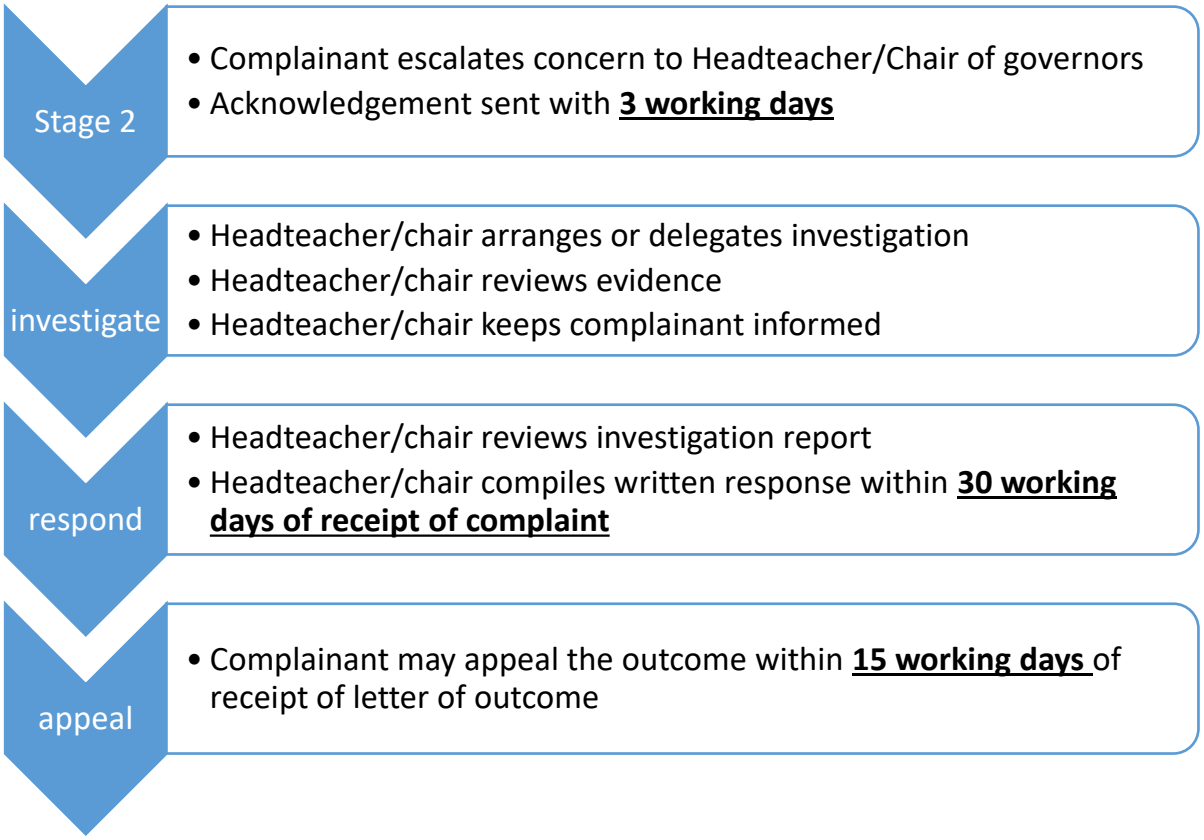
Governor Responsible: David Stanhope

Appendix 1: Complaint Process – Timelines

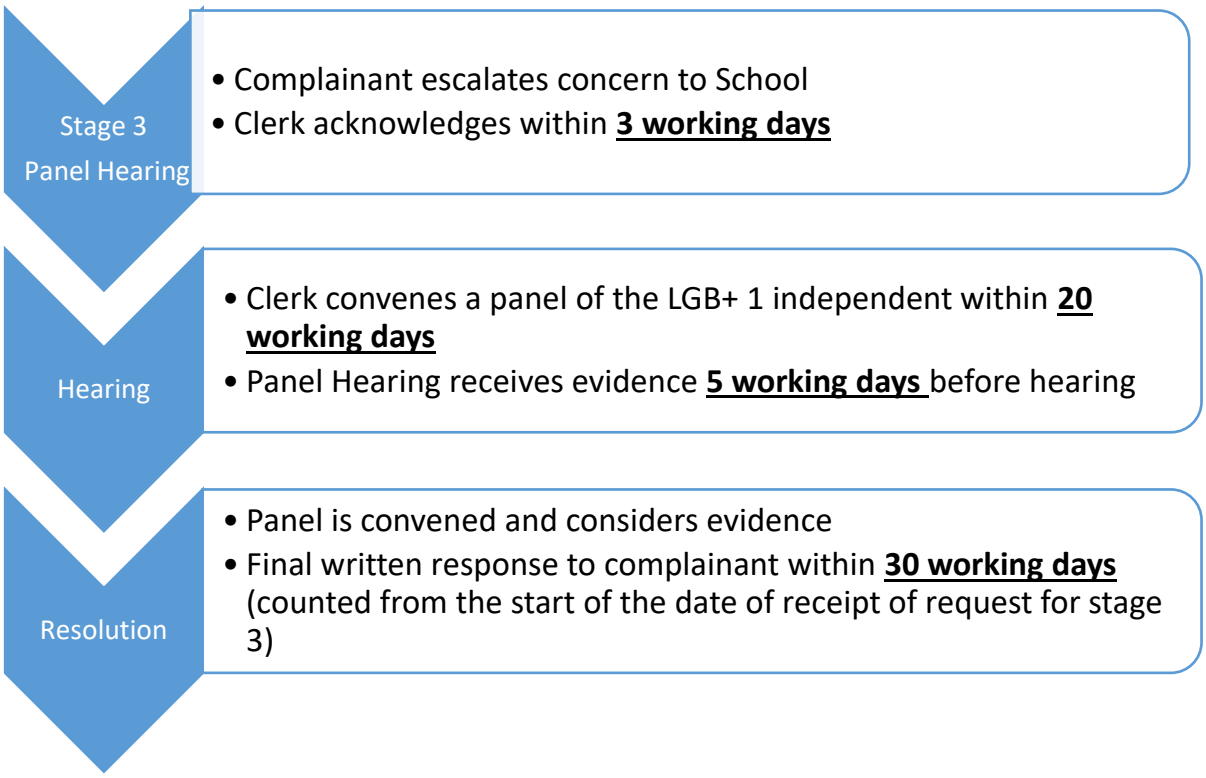
Stage 1- Informal 'Listen and respond'



Stage 2 – Formal – Investigate and Respond (Headteacher/Chair of Governors)



Stage 3- Formal LGB Panel Hearing



Appendix 2: Complaint Form

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS and return to the Senior Deputy Head: A McKeown, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.	
Your name	
Student's name	
Your relationship to the student	
Address	
Postcode	
Contact telephone number (1)	
Contact telephone number (2)	
Please give details of your complaint below	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (To whom did you speak to and what was the response?)	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork?	**YES / NO**
If so, please give details.	
Signature:	**Date:**

For Official use only			
Date acknowledgement sent		Complaint resolved at which stage	
Acknowledgement sent by		Complaint recorded in school records	
Complaint referred to			
Complaint referred on (date)			