Orion Education

POLICY

COMPLAINTS

Approval Date	**2026/27 – AUTUMN TERM**
Review Date	**2027/28 – SPRING TERM**
Owner	Head of Governance

Policy Type		
	■	Trust Policy to be adopted in full
		Trust Policy adapted by the Academy
		Academy Policy

Approval Body		
		Executive
	■	Trust Board
		Local Advisory Body (LAB)

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Hawkwood Lane, Chislehurst,
Kent BR7 5PS

Orion Education

Our Four Critical Questions

Why do we exist?

To improve outcomes, transform lives and enable social mobility.

How do we behave?

Trust • Kindness • Endeavour

What do we do?

We create a strong network of schools which transform the lives of students by enabling them to achieve high educational and personal goals, regardless of their background.

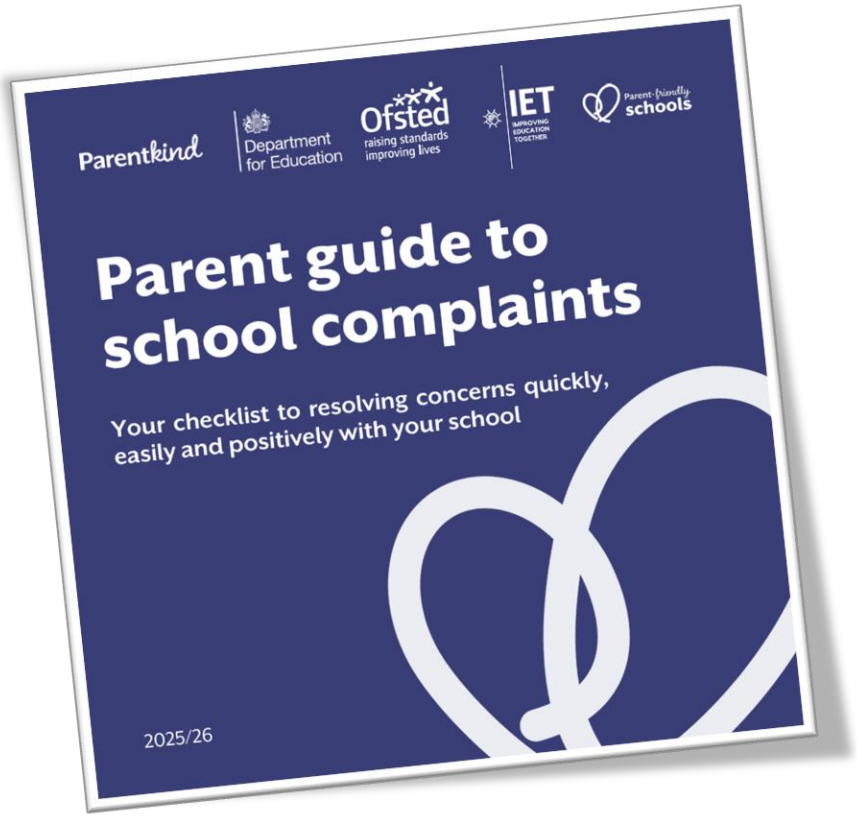
How do we succeed?

Through a clear backbone, strong culture, academic rigour and smart systems.

Orion Education

“Resolving concerns through partnership, transparency and continuous improvement.”

Before using this policy, we encourage parents/carers to read the ‘Parent guide to school complaints’, published by Parent Kind, the Department for Education, Ofsted and the Improving Education Together board, which provides helpful guidance on how to provide feedback, resolve concerns and raise complaints.



A copy of this guide is available at:

https://www.parentkind.org.uk/assets/parents-resources/Parent-Guide-to-School-Complaints.pdf

Our Trust and Academy contact details can be located at
Orion Education - Our Family of Schools

Should you have any queries about this policy or the process then please email
complaints@orionedu.org.uk

To report Complaints, Concerns or Feedback:
ORION EDUCATION Complaints, Concerns and Feedback (CCF) – Fill in form

SECTION A - Overview

1. **Purpose**

We recognise that concerns, feedback and complaints form an important part of quality assurance, accountability and continuous improvement. We welcome feedback and are committed to addressing concerns fairly, proportionately and promptly.

This policy sets out how complaints will be managed across all Orion Education academies and the Trust.

The aims of this policy are to:

- Resolve concerns at the earliest opportunity.
- Promote positive relationships between academies and families.
- Ensure complaints are handled fairly, consistently and transparently.
- Provide a clear escalation route where concerns remain unresolved.
- Learn from complaints to improve services and outcomes.

Those considering raising a complaint are reminded that the Trust's core purpose is to educate and safeguard pupils. It has a responsibility, as a publicly funded body, to allocate its resources proportionately and fairly. Complainants are therefore requested to cooperate with this process, and to be mindful of the length and volume of correspondence. This will also assist with ensuring a prompt and effective resolution.

2. **Key Principles**

The Trust expects all parties to approach the complaints process constructively and in good faith.

The complaints process is intended to be:

- Fair.
- Transparent.
- Proportionate.
- Non-adversarial.
- Focused on resolution.

At all stages, the Trust expects complainants and staff to treat one another with courtesy and respect.

The primary objective of the complaints process is to resolve concerns and maintain positive working relationships wherever possible in the best interests of children.

At each stage of the procedure, we will want 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;
- An assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained about will not recur (or mitigating measures will be implemented to minimise the chances of the event recurring);
- An indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made;
- An undertaking to review Trust/Academy policies in light of the complaint;
- An apology.

An acknowledgment that the Academy and/or the Trust could have handled the situation differently is not the same as an admission of unlawful or negligent action.

3. Scope

This policy applies to complaints from:

Group A **Parents/Carers of current pupils**

Group B **Anyone that does not fall into Group A**

Complaints made by those who are not parents/carers of current pupils, will be dealt with as follows:

a. Complainants should first attempt to address their complaint to the relevant Academy or the Trust (as appropriate) informally by raising the matter with a relevant member of staff.
b. If the matter is not resolved informally, the complaint may be submitted in writing to the Trust Governance team via *governors@orionedu.org.uk*
c. A final written response from the Trust will be issued within **20 school days**.

This policy does not apply to:

- Admission appeals
- Exclusion reviews
- Statutory SEN assessments
- Staff grievances and/or disciplinary matters
- Whistleblowing
- Subject access requests
- Data Protection/Freedom of Information requests
- Matters likely to require a child protection investigation
- Employment matters

Such items will be dealt with under separate procedures – please refer to **Appendix 1**

We will not investigate matters raised anonymously under this policy. A complaint will be regarded as anonymous if the complainant cannot be identified or their identity cannot be verified from the information provided. However, we may decide to look into issues raised anonymously under other policies (e.g. safeguarding) where we think it is right to do so.

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

If a complainant commences or threatens legal action against Orion Education (the Trust, its academies or officers) in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints process until those legal proceedings have concluded.

We also encourage you not to approach other organisations (for example, Ofsted, the Local Authority or the Teaching Regulation Agency) about your concern or complaint until you have completed this procedure. If other organisations are looking into or will be determining the same issues, we may need to pause our consideration of these matters under this procedure until their investigations have finished or findings have been made, which can cause a delay to the resolution of your concern or complaint.

4. Definitions

Concern
An expression of worry, dissatisfaction or uncertainty seeking clarification or reassurance.

Complaint
An expression of dissatisfaction regarding an action, decision, omission, service or conduct where the complainant seeks a formal response or remedy.

5. Expectations of Complainants

The Trust is committed to listening to concerns and complaints. In return, complainants are expected to:

- Engage constructively with the Academy and the Trust
- Cooperate with investigations
- Participate in meetings
- Provide requested information
- Respond to reasonable requests for clarification
- Focus on the matters being investigated
- Treat staff, governors and Trustees respectfully
- Seek resolution rather than escalation wherever possible

We would ask that you avoid discussing the details of your complaint publicly, including on social media, whilst it is part of the informal/formal stages – you are of course welcome to discuss the matter privately with a companion, advisor or support organisation.

The Trust may be unable to fully investigate a complaint where a complainant refuses to engage with reasonable requests necessary to investigate and resolve the matter.

6. One Active Complaint Rule

To ensure complaints can be investigated fairly and efficiently, the Trust will normally consider only one active complaint from a complainant at any one time.

Where:

- Multiple complaints are submitted simultaneously; or
- New complaints are submitted whilst another complaint remains open;

The Trust may:

- Combine matters into a single complaint;
- Determine the order in which complaints will be considered; or
- Defer consideration of new complaints until the current complaint has concluded.

This enables the Trust to investigate matters properly and use resources proportionately in the interests of all pupils.

7. **Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

To help draft, organise or structure concerns and complaints, the Trust recognises that complainants may choose to use AI tools such as:

- Microsoft Copilot
- ChatGPT
- Gemini
- Claude
- Similar technologies

AI can be helpful in:

- Organising thoughts
- Creating timelines
- Improving clarity
- Drafting correspondence
- Summarising events

The Trust welcomes the appropriate use of AI.

However:

- The complainant remains wholly responsible for the content submitted
- Information must be accurate and based on genuine events
- AI-generated submissions must be reviewed before submission
- The Trust may seek clarification where content appears inaccurate, contradictory or artificially generated.

Important limitations and risks:

- AI tools do not know what happened – they can only work with the information you give them, and they may fill gaps with invented details that sound convincing but are untrue.
- AI tools may produce language that is overly formal, legalistic or aggressive, which may not reflect your genuine concern and may make it harder for us to resolve the matter constructively.
- Any personal data (including names, dates of birth, or other identifying information about your child, other children, staff or other individuals) that you enter into an AI tool may be stored, processed or used by the AI provider in ways that are outside your control and may breach data protection law.
- AI-generated complaints that do not accurately reflect your experience may cause delays in resolving your concern, as we may need to spend time clarifying what actually happened; and
- AI tools work by predicting the most likely answer based on the information they have been trained on. They do not check whether their output is accurate or relevant to your particular situation, and the most likely-sounding answer is not always the correct one. AI tools are also designed to make you feel helped and understood, which means they may agree with your point of view, use an overly sympathetic tone, or present your complaint in a one-sided way rather than giving a balanced account of what happened. This can wrongly reinforce your point of view and make you more fixed in your position, which may make it harder for us to work together to resolve the matter.

Use of AI alone will never prejudice a complaint.

8. Timescales

Complaints should normally be submitted **as soon as possible** and **no later than 3 months** of the incident occurring. Complaints submitted outside this period may only be considered where exceptional circumstances exist.

Where additional time is required for a complex investigation, the complainant will be informed and provided with revised timescales.

Please be aware that all timescales quoted in this policy relate to school days.

'School days' means days when our academies are open to pupils. It does not include weekends, school holidays or days when our academies are closed to pupils.

Complaints received outside of term time (please refer to our website for term dates), will be considered to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Similarly, the timescales for response to complaints will pause for any holiday period and resume on the following first school day.

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint at any point of the process, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

9. Equality

In accordance with relevant legislation, we will make reasonable adjustments, if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints process. This might include, for example, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations. Please make us aware at the earliest opportunity if you would like to request reasonable adjustments.

10. Contact with Governors/Trustees

Complainants should not approach individual Governors or Trustees to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis, and it may also prevent them from considering your complaint at Stage 4.

11. Unreasonable complaints

We are 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 us. 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. We will, therefore, refuse to investigate any complaint which we determine to be "unreasonable".

For this purpose, we adopt the Department for Education's definition of unreasonable complaints as those that, because of their frequency or nature, hinder our consideration of the complaint or other people's complaints.

Unreasonable complaints are taken seriously by the Academy/Trust as they put a strain on valuable resources and hinder the progress of proper investigations. The Academy/Trust may judge that a complaint is unreasonable by assessing a number of factors, including those that are outlined below.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

a. refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought, despite offers of assistance;
b. refuses to cooperate with the complaint's investigation process;
c. refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints process;
d. insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints process or with good practice;
e. introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
f. makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
g. changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
h. repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
i. refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where our complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed;
j. seeks an unrealistic outcome;
k. makes excessive demands on Academy time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to- face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

- maliciously;
- aggressively;
- using threats, intimidation or violence;
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
- knowing it to be false;
- using falsified information;
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if it is manifestly unjustified, inappropriate, or an improper use of formal procedure.

In assessing this, the Academy shall have regard to all the circumstances of the case and the nature of the complaint itself rather than the nature of the complainant. In assessing all of the circumstances of the case the Academy will consider a range of factors including:

- whether a complaint has reasonable foundation;
- the history and context of the complaint (and any evidence where relevant);
- whether the time and cost of investigating the complaint is proportionate to the

issue(s) complained of;

- whether an investigation of the complaint is likely to cause a disproportionate or unjustified level of disruption or distress;
- unexplained delay in raising a complaint or issue;
- if the purpose of the complaint is to obtain an outcome which is unavailable via the complaints process, such as a claim for compensation, damages or a refund of fees paid;
- any evidence of a complaint being brought for an improper purpose.

Whenever possible, the designated person responsible will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before dismissing a complaint as unreasonable.

If the behaviour continues, the Principal/Head of School, the CEO or the Chair of Trustees as appropriate will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it.

For complainants who excessively contact the Trust or the Academy causing a significant level of disruption, the Trust or the Academy may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed periodically.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence the Trust or the Academy will immediately inform the police and communicate its actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Trust premises and/or the Academy.

12. Duplicate complaints and serial complaints

When a complaint has been through the full complaints process and is closed, any subsequent complaint received from a family member about the same subject matter will be deemed as a duplicate complaint. Similarly, where the Complainant has exhausted the complaints process and attempts to re-open the same or a closely related issue again, this will be deemed a serial complaint.

In these instances, the complainant will be informed that the matter has already been considered and the full complaint process completed. The Trust will, therefore, not reinvestigate the matter. The complainant will be advised to contact the DfE if they are unhappy with the Trust's handling of the original complaint.

13. Complaint Campaigns

If the Trust or any of its academies become the focus of a campaign and receive large volumes of complaints all based on the same subject whether or not from complainants unconnected with the Academy, we may send a template response to all complainants and/or publish a single response on the Trust or Academy's website as appropriate.

14. Records of complaints

All records created in accordance with this policy are managed in accordance with the Trust's policies that apply to the retention and destruction of records.

The Academy or Trust will keep a written record of all formal complaints, including the following:

- Whether they were resolved at any of the stages;

- The action taken by the Academy or Trust as a result of the complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances*.

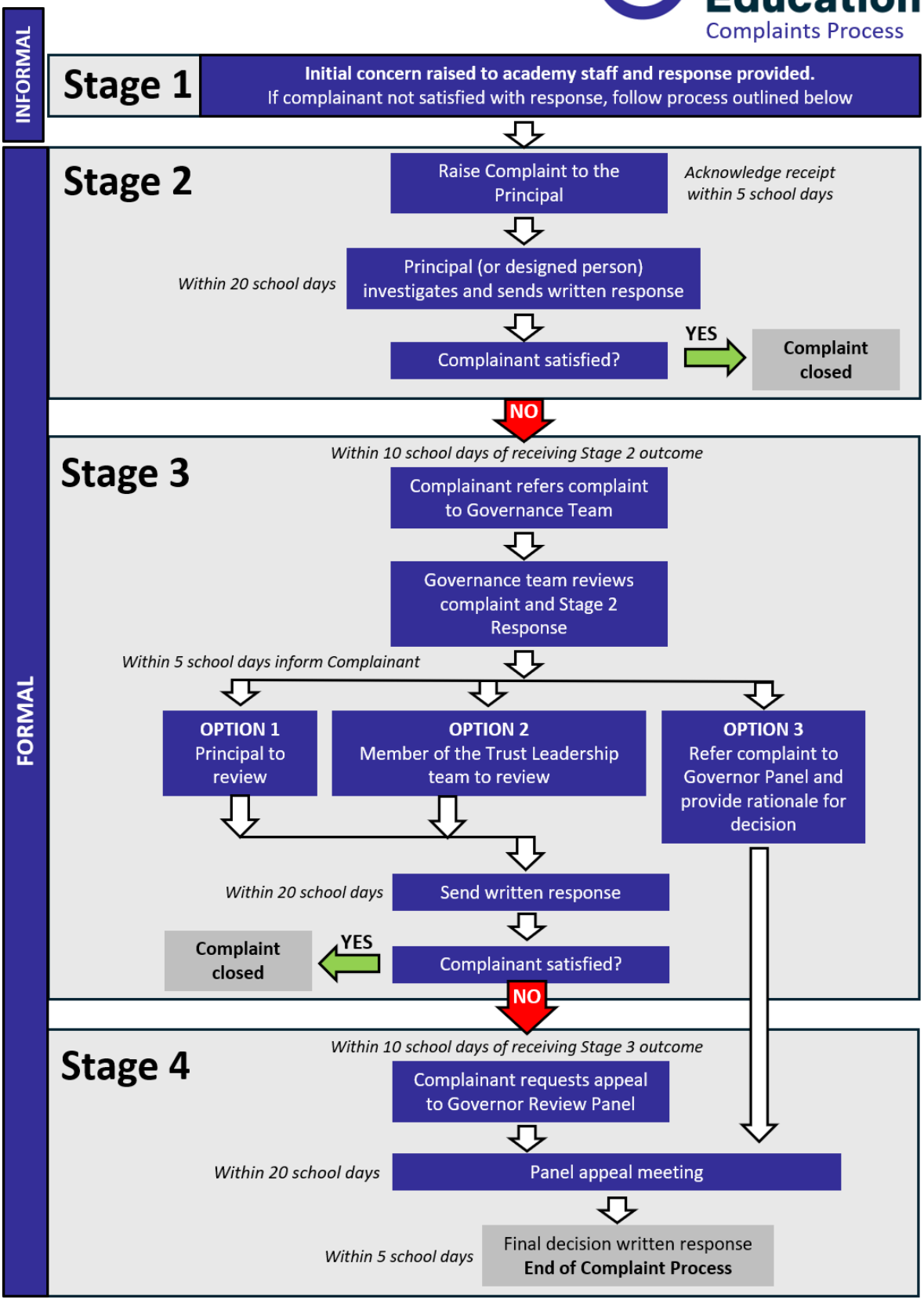
Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where requested by the Secretary of State, where disclosure is required in the course of an inspection or under other legal authority or court order, or as appropriate through Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests.

The Trust will monitor the level of concerns and complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis. Complainants will not be identified.

*__Note:__ *In accordance with the terms of reference of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse all schools are required to retain information which relates to allegations (substantiated or not) of organisations and individuals who may have been involved in, or have knowledge of child sexual abuse or child sexual exploitation; allegations (substantiated or not) of individuals having engaged in sexual activity with, or having a sexual interest in, children; institutional failures to protect children from sexual abuse or other exploitation. Details of any complaints made about such matters will be retained.*

Effective: September 2026

Orion Education
Complaints Process



SECTION B - Procedure

Stage 1

Informal Stage

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Any matter of concern or complaint should be raised, and attempted to be resolved, on an informal basis with an appropriate member of staff; most likely to be the Class Teacher or Head of Faculty/Year.

Forwarding complaints directly to the Principal or Head of School will be subject to delay as they will not be actioned but instead delegated to the appropriate member of staff.

Wherever possible, informal concerns will be responded to quickly, **no later than 10 school days** from raising the complaint and resolved amicably. Parents/carers should expect an approach that is proportionate to the complaint made. Whilst we recognise that it is not always feasible to keep detailed records of informal complaints, colleagues should take every reasonable measure to keep a record of any/all complaints and actions taken to resolve them, as part of an overall audit trail.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern or complaint with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, we will refer you to another staff member.

Stage 2

Formal Stage

If the issue remains unresolved following your engagement with Stage 1, then it is possible to move to the formal stage.

Please complete the online form located at:
ORION EDUCATION Complaints, Concerns and Feedback (CCF) – Fill in form

If you are unable to complete the online form, then please contact the Academy or Trust and we will complete the form on your behalf.

What happens next?

1. You will receive an acknowledgement of your complaint within **5 school days**
2. The Principal or their designated representative will investigate the complaint (unless the complaint relates to the Principal, in which case please refer to **Section C**)
3. The investigator will review all information available to them
4. The investigator may:
    a. Interview the complainant
    b. Interview those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
    c. Interview any person who may have information useful to the investigation (this includes your child and/or other pupils; pupils may be interviewed with their parent/carer or with an appropriate member of staff present)
5. The investigator will keep a confidential written record of their findings
6. A written report will be sent to the complainant within **20 school days** of the date of receipt of the Stage 2 complaint.

Stage 3

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome letter, then you have **10 school days** from the date of receipt to escalate the matter to Stage 3.

Please complete the online form located at:
ORION EDUCATION Complaints, Concerns and Feedback (CCF) – Fill in form

If you are unable to complete the online form, then please contact the Academy or Trust and we will complete the form on your behalf.

What happens next?

1. You will receive an acknowledgement of your complaint within **5 school days**
2. The Governance Team will review both your complaint, your resolution proposal and the Stage 2 outcome letter. There may be some correspondence with the complainant if any aspect of the complaint is unclear or not in line with the escalation process.
3. One option will be advised to the complainant
   a. **Option 1**: that the Principal will undertake a review (where that they did not undertake the investigation in Stage 2)
   b. **Option 2**: that a member of the Trust leadership team will undertake a review
   c. **Option 3**: that the matter should go straight to Governor Review Panel
4. If Option 1 or Option 2 are chosen, then
   a. The reviewer will consider all information available to them
   b. The reviewer may:
      i. Consult the complainant
      ii. Consult any person who may have information useful to the review (this includes your child and/or other pupils; pupils may be interviewed with their parent/carer or with an appropriate staff member present)
   c. The reviewer will keep a confidential written record of their findings
   d. A written report will be sent to the complainant within **20 school days** of the date of receipt of the Stage 3 complaint.

Stage 4

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome letter, then you have **10 school days** from the date of receipt to escalate the matter to Stage 4.

[in exceptional circumstances the Trust reserves the right to escalate a complaint from Stage 2 to Stage 4]

Please complete the online form located at:
ORION EDUCATION Complaints, Concerns and Feedback (CCF) – Fill in form

If you are unable to complete the online form, then please contact the Academy or Trust and we will complete the form on your behalf.

The panel cannot reinvestigate your complaint at the hearing. The purpose of the hearing is to give you the opportunity to explain why you are not happy with the decision about your formal complaint. The panel will decide if they agree with your reasons and can make recommendations about how this can be put right. For this reason, the panel will not consider new complaints or evidence that is not related to your original complaint.

What happens next?

1. You will receive an acknowledgement of your complaint within **5 school days**
2. Within **20 school days** of receiving the complaint, a Governor Review Panel will be convened.
3. The panel will consist of
    a. At least 3 individuals who have no prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint, including one independent member (an independent member may include a governor from another Academy within the Trust)
4. At least **10 school days** before the hearing date the complainant will be informed of the hearing date/time.
5. The complainant will be advised:
    a. That they are allowed to bring someone along to provide support; this can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not permit either party to bring legal representatives. However, there may be occasion when legal representation is appropriate. The decision will be at the discretion of the panel Chair.
    b. That media representatives are not permitted to attend.
    c. That the panel hearing will proceed irrespective of whether or not the complainant (and/or their companion) attend. If there are compelling reasons why the complainant cannot attend, then they should make the Chair aware immediately. It is at the discretion of the Chair whether the panel hearing is postponed.
    d. That they may submit additional material for consideration by the panel.
        i. The material needs to be received no later than **7 school days** before the panel hearing date.
        ii. The material **must not exceed 10 (ten) A4 pages** and should not include repetition of documents already included in previous submissions.
        iii. The panel will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider additional material that is unrelated to the initial complaint.
6. At least **3 school days** before the panel hearing all parties will receive a "bundle" containing all the documentation that will be considered at the hearing.

How does the panel hearing operate?

1. The hearing will start on time. If the complainant has not arrived by the start of the hearing, then the Clerk will attempt to contact them. If the Clerk does not hear from the complainant within 20 minutes of the scheduled start time, the Chair will decide whether the hearing continues or is to be postponed.
2. The hearing will be held in private. Electronic recordings are not permitted unless agreed in advance with all parties.
3. Unless otherwise stated in the bundle, the procedure for the panel hearing will be as follows:

	Maximum time allocated
Introduction by the Panel Chair	
Complainant outlines their complaint and how they feel that the matter remains unresolved	5 mins
Academy representative is given an opportunity to question the Complainant	5 mins
Panel members are given the opportunity to question the Complainant	5 mins

Academy representative will outline the Academy's actions in relation to Stage 2	10 mins
Complainant is given the opportunity to question the Academy representative	5 mins
Panel members are given the opportunity to question the Academy representative	5 mins
The Stage 3 reviewer will explain their findings	5 mins
Complainant is given the opportunity to question the Stage 3 reviewer	5 mins
Panel members are given the opportunity to question the Stage 3 reviewer	5 mins
Complainant is given the opportunity to summarise their case	5 mins
Academy is given the opportunity to summarise their actions	5 mins
Meeting ends and panel retires to deliberate	

4. The panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and will make findings on the balance of probabilities. The panel may:
    a. Uphold the complaint, in whole or in part;
    b. Dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part.
5. Whether the complaint is upheld or otherwise, the panel may:
    a. Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
    b. Where appropriate, make recommendations to change the Trust/Academy's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.
6. In exceptional circumstances, a panel hearing may be adjourned and a new hearing date set. This might be needed if the panel members require further evidence to make their decision. A new panel hearing will take place as soon as possible and within **10 school days.**
7. Minutes of the panel hearing are available on request. You are welcome to take your own notes of the hearing if you wish.
8. The Chair of the panel hearing will write to the complainant within **10 school days** with the outcome. The decision of the panel is final. There will be no further opportunity for consideration of the complaint, and this represents the conclusion of the complaints process.

The outcome of a formal complaint is intended to be a resolution where parents/carers and the Academy/Trust have worked together to listen and take action to support the child's education. We encourage all parties to move forward positively after the complaints process has concluded, in the interest of maintaining a supportive and constructive relationship.

1. Taking your complaint to the Department for Education

If you are not happy with the Stage 4 outcome, you can refer your complaint to the Department for Education (DfE) which has limited powers to consider complaints about academies. The DfE cannot change our decision about your complaint but can review whether the complaint was handled properly.

Details about the DfE procedure and the DfE complaints form are available at: https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe

2. Complaints about the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

To comply with the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), written concerns or complaints about whether an Academy is meeting the EYFS requirements will be dealt with as follows:

1. We will acknowledge the written concern or complaint within **5 school days.**
2. The Principal will investigate the concern or complaint, which may include meeting with you and the early years lead. We will send you a written response with the outcome of the investigation within **28 school days** of receiving the complaint.
3. If you are not happy with the outcome, you can ask for your complaint to be reviewed by the Governor Review Panel as set out in Stage 4 of this policy.

We are committed to continually improving how we handle complaints. Once your complaint has been closed, you may leave feedback on your experience of the process via the link below. Your comments will help us understand what we have done well and where we can make improvements for the future.

ORION EDUCATION - Complaint Feedback Form

SECTION C – Complaints against specific role-holders

Complaints against the Principal/Head of School

Any complaint relating to the Principal/Head of School of the Academy must be raised in the first instance with the Chief Executive Officer who will, if an informal resolution cannot be reached, designate a member of the Local Advisory Body to investigate the complaint as per Stage 2.

Contact: **complaints@orionedu.org.uk**

Complaints against the Local Advisory Body

Where a complaint is brought against a member of the Local Advisory Body, it should be raised with the Chair of Governors, who will investigate the complaint (or appoint another governor to do so) in the same way as in the first stage of the formal process at Stage 3.

Contact: **governors@orionedu.org.uk**

If the complaint is against the Chair of Governors, then the Vice Chair will investigate the complaint (or appoint another governor to do so) in the same way as in the first stage of the formal process at Stage 3.

In exceptional circumstances the Chair of Trustees may at his or her absolute discretion determine that a complaint against a Governor should be dealt with at Trust Board level and, if so determined, the Chair of Trustees will oversee Stage 3.

Complaints against individual Trustees/the Trust Board

If the complaint is against a Trustee, then it should be raised with the Chair of Trustees. In the case of a complaint against either the Chair or the Trust Board as a whole, then it should be put in writing to the Governance Team, who will refer it to the Members.

Contact: **governors@orionedu.org.uk**

In such cases, the Chair of Trustees/the Members will investigate the complaint or appoint an appropriate person to do so in the same way as in the first stage of the formal process at Stage 3.

Where the complaint moves to Stage 4, the Chair of Trustees/the Members (as applicable) will determine how the Complaints Panel is to be constituted but will ensure that at least one person is independent of the management and running of the Academy.

Complaints against the Chief Executive Officer or other Trust central team staff

If the complaint is against a member of the Trust central team, then it should be raised with the Chief Executive Officer, (or in the case of a complaint against the Chief Executive Officer, the Chair of Trustees), who will investigate the complaint in the same way as the first stage of the formal process at Stage 3.

Contact: **complaints@orionedu.org.uk**

Appendix 1: Exceptions to the Complaints Policy

Exceptions	Who to Contact
• Admissions	Admissions Appeals
• Help with special educational needs	We work together with the Local Authority to provide support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). We will always try to help, but for some things that are outside of our control we will refer you to the Local Authority. The Local Authority decides whether to assess a child for an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP), issues and maintains the EHCP, and provides the funding and services specified within it. Some support depends on national or local funding decisions that are outside of our control. We will always do our best within the resources available to us. If you are unsure about who is responsible for a particular aspect of SEND support, please ask.
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation **If the matter relates to a serious safeguarding concern or an allegation of abuse, the Principal/Head of School must be informed directly.**	Complaints about Child Protection matters are handled under our Safeguarding (Child Protection) 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); contact details can be found on the Local Authority website.
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusions can be found at: www.gov.uk/schooldisciplineexclusions/exclusions. **Complaints about the application of the Behaviour Policy (excluding exclusions) can be made through this complaints process.*

• Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, also covering temporary staff, and contractors. If you have a concern about regulatory, financial or other malpractice please contact the CEO's Office. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers 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 an Orion Education Trust Academy should complain through the Orion Education Complaints Policy.
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff conduct will be dealt with under the Orion Education Trust's 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.
• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use Academy premises or facilities.	Providers should have their own complaints process to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.
• National Curriculum – content.	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.
• Data protection matters	Complaints about data protection matters are handled under our Data Protection policy and in accordance with relevant guidance from the Information Commissioner's office (ICO).
• Governor/Trustee grievances	Complaints from Governors or Trustees will be dealt with under the Trust's internal governance procedures. This does not prevent Governors or Trustees raising complaints in their capacity as a parent.

• Academy re-organisation proposals	Where concerns are not adequately addressed by the Academy/Trust, complaints can be raised directly with the Department for Education at www.education.gov.uk/contactus.