



IPAT Policy for Complaints (M12)

The Board of Trustees reviewed and adopted this policy: Spring 2026
To be reviewed (Three year cycle): Spring 2029

Compliance Statement

This policy complies with:

- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (Part 7)
- The Academy Trust Handbook
- The Trust's Funding Agreement
- Department for Education (DfE) guidance: *Complaints Procedures for Academies*

This policy is published on the Trust website and on the websites of all schools within Inspiring Primaries Academy Trust and is available free of charge.

Introduction

All schools within Inspiring Primaries Academy Trust (IPAT) are committed to working in close partnership with all members of each school's community. Our schools aim to be warm and welcoming with positive relationships between all members of each school's community, striving to provide an outstanding education for all our children, placing great value on the role which parents and carers can play in supporting children's learning.

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 this procedure. IPAT takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

Scope of the Policy

This complaints procedure applies to complaints about any provision of facilities or services by Inspiring Primaries Academy Trust or its schools, other than those dealt with under separate statutory procedures.

The procedure applies to parents, carers, pupils, former pupils, members of the public and any other persons who may wish to raise a complaint.

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated. However, the Headteacher/Head of School, Trust Leader (CEO) or Chair of Trustees may determine that an anonymous complaint warrants investigation.

Complaints should normally be raised within three months of the incident being complained about. This time limit may be waived where there are good reasons for delay and it remains possible to investigate the complaint fairly.

Complaints received outside of term time will be deemed to have been received on the first school day following the holiday period.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

Stage 1 aims to resolve concerns quickly and informally.

Concerns should initially be raised with the class teacher or the member of staff concerned, either in person, by telephone or in writing. The majority of concerns can be resolved at this stage.

Where appropriate, an informal written response will be provided within 10 school days.

While the Trust encourages informal resolution where appropriate, complainants are not required to complete Stage 1 before progressing to the formal stages of this procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint (School-Level Investigation)

1. A formal complaint must be submitted in writing to the Headteacher/Head of School, using the complaint form at Appendix 1 where possible.
2. Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 5 school days.
3. The Headteacher/Head of School will appoint a suitably impartial investigator.

4. The investigator may meet with the complainant and will speak to relevant parties.
5. A written response will be provided within 25 school days of receipt of the complaint.

The response will:

- summarise the investigation undertaken
- state whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld
- explain the reasons for the decision
- detail any actions to be taken
- explain how to escalate the complaint to Stage 3

Complaints about the Headteacher/Head of School/Central Team

Where a complaint is about the Headteacher/Head of School, Stage 2 of this procedure does not apply. The complaint must be submitted in writing to the Trust Leader (Chief Executive Officer). If the matter cannot be resolved informally, the complaint will be escalated directly to Stage 3 and considered at governance level.

Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Where a complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer, Stage 2 of this procedure does not apply. The complaint must be submitted in writing to the Chair of Trustees and will be escalated directly to Stage 3.

Stage 3 – Formal Complaint (Governance-Level Review)

1. If dissatisfied with the Stage 2 outcome, or where Stage 2 does not apply, the complainant may request escalation to Stage 3 within 10 school days of receiving the written response or acknowledgement.
2. The complaint must be addressed in writing to:
 - the Chair of the Local Governing Body (for school-level complaints), or
 - the Chair of Trustees (for complaints concerning a Headteacher/Head of School or the CEO).

3. The Chair will appoint an impartial governor or trustee who has had no prior involvement in the matters under complaint.
4. The appointed individual may meet with the complainant and relevant parties as part of the review.
5. A written response will be issued within 25 school days.

Stage 4 – Complaints Panel Hearing

1. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request a panel hearing within 10 school days.
2. The panel will consist of at least three members, including one independent member.
3. No panel member will have had prior involvement in the complaint.
4. The panel will meet within 15 school days of the request wherever reasonably possible.
5. A written decision will be issued within 10 school days of the hearing.

The panel's decision is final.

Department for Education (DFE)

If the complainant believes the Trust has not followed its published complaints procedure, or has acted unlawfully or unreasonably, they may refer the matter to the Department for Education after all stages of this procedure have been exhausted.

The Department for Education will not re-investigate the substance of complaints but will consider whether the Trust has complied with its legal obligations, funding agreement and published procedures.

EYFS Complaints

Written complaints relating to EYFS provision will be:

- acknowledged within 5 days
- investigated and responded to within 28 days

Records of EYFS complaints and outcomes will be retained for a minimum of three years and made available to Ofsted upon request.

Parents may also contact Ofsted directly regarding EYFS compliance.

Serial or Unreasonable Complaints

Being deemed persistent or unreasonable will not prevent a complaint from being considered on its merits.

Where behaviour is unreasonable, proportionate measures may be put in place to manage communication, including communication plans.

Record Keeping

The Trust will keep a written record of all complaints and their outcomes, including whether they were resolved informally or progressed to a panel hearing.

Records will be kept confidential and made available to the Secretary of State or Ofsted upon request.

Appendix 1 – Complaint Form

School name:	
Your name:	Pupil's name:
Your relationship to pupil:	
Address:	
Postcode:	Daytime tel:
Mobile:	Email:
Concise details of the complaint:	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (Who did you speak to, when and what was the response?):	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage:	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details:	
Signed:	Date:
Official Use:	Complaint referred to:
Date acknowledgement sent:	Date:
By who:	

Appendix 2 – Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- cooperate with the school/academy trust in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Nominated Individual (investigator):

The nominated individual's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
 - interviewing staff and children and other people relevant to the complaint
 - consideration of records and other relevant information
 - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right

The nominated individual should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting

- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems
- communicate the decision to all parties and provide the complainant of appropriate escalation details

Clerk to the Committee

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint panel meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy

- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.
- if a new issue arises, it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it;
- this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- both the complainant and the school / Academy Trust are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any
- involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk.

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
- no one may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the School or Trust and the complainant

We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations. Committee chair and members should:

- understand many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
- understand parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child
- provide extra care when the complainant is a child who will be present during all or part of the meeting
- give careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings to ensure that the child does not feel intimidated
- respect the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults
- if the child is the complainant, ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint
- where the child's parent/carer is the complainant, give the parent/carer the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child needs to attend; also advise agreement might not always be possible if the parent/carer wishes the child to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child's best interests
- ultimately, the welfare of the child is paramount.