



Complaints Procedure & Guidance

Document Control

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INTRODUCTION

At Leger Education Trust we are committed to ensuring that the highest standards are maintained in all Academies within the Trust, both in the provision of education to students and in every other aspect of the running of each Academy. A complaints policy is an important part of the management of a well-run school, allowing parents and others the opportunity to voice any concerns they may have through appropriate channels.

This procedure document is **FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY** and should be used in conjunction with the Leger Education Trust Complaints Policy, some of which is reproduced in this procedure document for ease and clarity.

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

All complaints should be resolved wherever possible at the concern stage. Complaints will not be allowed to proceed formally unless the concern stage has been exhausted.

The forms **MUST** be used in order to raise a complaint, either at Stage 1 or 2.

STAGE 1

1. A Clerk is to be appointed for the complaint to ensure that all procedures are followed and records are accurately kept. This would usually be the School Business Manager/Heads PA.
2. The Clerk should start an index of all documents from outset of the complaint and each document numbered. Paper copies should be scanned in and saved electronically.
3. The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (by the preferred method of communication as indicated on the form) within **3** school days. Within this response, the Headteacher 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.
4. The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the Senior Leadership Team, and support from external experts may be sought.
5. **WITHIN 3 days** you need to acknowledge receipt of the complaint by the preferred method of communication.
6. At that point, a meeting may be called to discuss the complaint and a resolution.
7. At the conclusion of the investigation, the Headteacher (or Chair of the AGB) will provide a formal written response within **10** school days. If this deadline cannot be met, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.
8. The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Leger Education Trust will take to resolve the complaint. The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.
9. If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

STAGE 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2. This is the final stage of the complaints policy.

1. A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made in writing using the Complaints Form Appendix 2 to the school office, within **10** school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.
2. The school will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within **3** school days. Requests received outside of this time frame will not be considered. This will be determined by the Academy Governing Body only.
3. The school should notify the Trust of the Stage 2 complaint **immediately** by emailing info@legereducationtrust.com
4. The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of

- the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from the Academy available, the school will source any additional, independent governors through another local school, in order to make up the committee.
5. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.
 6. The Complaints Panel will consist of at least three members, who have had no prior involvement or knowledge
 7. The Chair of the Complaints Panel will aim to convene a meeting within **15** school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If the complainant does not attend the meeting, the complaint will not proceed and the complainant will lose the right to the complaint being heard and the matter will be closed. This meeting can be virtual or in person. If a meeting is deferred then the panel will rearrange the meeting date, to be held as soon as possible but no longer than 25 school days from acknowledgement of the Stage 2 request.
 8. The complainant nor the school should bring legal representation. These committees are not a form of legal proceedings. If a complainant commences legal action against the school in relation to their complaint, the Academy will close the complaints procedure, as this is being dealt with through legal proceedings.
 9. At least **5** school days before the meeting, the Academy/Trust will:
 - confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
 - request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least five school days before the meeting.
 10. Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least **two** school days before the date of the meeting.
 11. The committee 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.
 12. The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it, nor do we accept electronic recordings as evidence when we are asked to consider a complaint. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before electronic recordings of any meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken. Where there are communication difficulties, the Complaints Panel may use recording devices to ensure the complainant is able to access and review the discussions at a later point. All parties should agree in advance to being recorded, if this agreement is not reached then no recordings should commence.
 13. **Any unsolicited recording will not be considered as evidence or any associated transcripts.**
 14. The clerk will undertake all associated admin such as appointment, letters – roles and responsibilities.
 15. The Complaints Panel will decide whether to deal with the complaint at Stage 2 by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations. If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. For the avoidance of doubt, the complainant's support person will be there to provide moral support and will not play any part in the proceedings and will not speak on behalf of the complainant.
 16. The Complaints Panel may decide to invite an independent person to chair the meeting, and/or invite an independent expert to advise the panel. The Complaints Panel will appoint a Clerk for the meeting.
 17. The Complaints Panel will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure. The meeting will include:
 - a summary from the complainant as to the reasons for progressing the complaint to Stage 2
 - an opportunity for the Panel to ask the complainant any questions that may help them with their investigation
 18. The Complaints Panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The Complaints Panel can:
 - uphold the complaint in whole or in part
 - dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
 19. If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the Complaints Panel will:
 - decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
 - where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.
 20. The purpose of Stage 2 is to:
 - review how the complaint has been investigated, to review any aspects of the complaint that the complainant feels have not been addressed satisfactorily

- clarify what actions the complainant feels might resolve the problem at this stage and to determine whether the complaints process has been conducted in accordance with the policy
21. The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and the Academy/Trust with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within **10** school days. The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Leger Education Trust.
 22. At this point the Academy will deem the matter closed.

CLOSURE OF COMPLAINTS

1. Very occasionally, the Academy/Trust will feel that it needs to close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied. In exceptional circumstances, closure may occur before a complaint has reached Stage 2 of the procedures described in this document. This is because a complaints panel takes considerable time and effort to set up and we must be sure that it is likely to assist the process of investigating the complaint. The Chair of the Committee may decide that every reasonable action has been undertaken to resolve the complaint and that a complaints review panel would not provide further resolution.
2. There are occasions when complainants behave in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing concerns. In these exceptional circumstances the school may take action in accordance with **Leger Education Trust's 'Complaints (Vexatious) Policy'** for dealing with persistent or vexatious complaints in schools. Please see additional policy.

SUGGESTED INDEX

DATE OF DOCUMENT	DOCUMENT TITLE	NOTES	DOCUMENT NUMBER

SUGGESTED AGENDA FOR PANEL MEETINGS

Complaints Panel Meeting

Date, Time via Microsoft Teams/Location

To avoid technical issues in joining please join at **TIME** to allow meeting to start promptly

Complainant	Chair	Complaint Panel
Name of complainant	Name	Name
Name of support person	Clerk	Name
	Name	

A.	Opening Items	Lead	Time (mins)
1.	Welcome & Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair will introduce themselves, confirming they will lead the meeting at all times. The Chair will go through the process for the meeting. The meeting will/not be video recorded on Teams, provided all agree to this The Chair will invite everyone to introduce themselves. 	Chair	10

B.	Order of Speakers	Lead	Time (mins)
1.	Complainant – Name <i>The complainant is asked to summarise the complaint, confirm why they requested this to be brought to Stage 2 and specify what they are escalating/appealing.</i>	Complainant initials	30 mins
2.	The panel will ask any questions they have.	Chair	15 mins

C.	Closure of Meeting	Lead	Time (mins)
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair will thank everyone for attending the meeting. The panel will withdraw to consider their findings of fact on the evidence put before them and reach their conclusion. The clerk will send a copy of the findings in a letter, within 10 school days. A copy of the minutes will also be included. 	Chair	5 mins

Meeting Etiquette

- All attendees will treat each other with respect and courtesy at all times.
- Minutes will be taken by the clerk and shared along with the findings.
- Equal opportunity will be given to each speaker in turn.
- No-one should speak over or interrupt another speaker during their delivery
- Please ask if you need to leave the meeting at any point and it will be minuted.
- Microphones will be turned off unless it is your turn to speak to stop any background interference.
- The panel will ensure they unmute their microphone before speaking and if they have a question they will wait until the person has finished speaking, before asking any questions.

If any of these points are not followed the chair reserves the right to take appropriate action