SANDWELL ACADEMY

Concerns & Complaints Policy

July 2026

Policy Title:	Concerns & Complaint Policy
Policy Reference:	SA / Quality & Review
Description:	This document sets out how the Academy will respond to complaints and concerns raised by parents / carers of students at Sandwell Academy.
Status:	Statutory
Category:	Academy
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Introduction

This Concerns and Complaints Policy is for use by parents/carers who have students on the enrolment of the Academy. A separate policy is in place for members of the community who are not parents/carers of students at the Academy. This policy is available via the Academy's website.

This policy is designed to meet the standards set out in the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014 and guidance issued 27 January 2015. This means that parents must be offered:

- An opportunity to resolve a complaint with the relevant Academy on an informal basis for example through discussion with a senior member of staff
- A formal complaint stage where a complaint is made in writing
- A hearing with a panel appointed by or on behalf of the Governing Body and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom must be independent of the management and running of the Academy

The exceptions to this requirement are complaints relating to the Curriculum, Collective Worship and Religious Education; some Special Educational Needs issues and Admissions issues; and others where Local Authorities have statutory responsibilities, such as Safeguarding. The Head or Concerns & Complaints Officer can give information and advice about complaints in these areas.

There are certain other complaints which fall outside the remit of the governing body's complaints procedure; for example, staff grievances or disciplinary procedures. Any complaints concerning the conduct of Academy staff will be handled in accordance with the Academy's internal disciplinary procedures. The details of such an internal investigation will remain confidential.

Allegations of abuse involving a member of the Academy staff must be reported to the Head immediately. Allegations of abuse involving the Head must be reported to the Chair of Governors immediately.

The Academy reserves the right to seek external advice and support at any time that it is considered necessary or appropriate in respect of either a complaint or concern.

The Head provides the governing body with a termly report outlining matters of concern or complaint which have been satisfactorily resolved in line with this policy. A written record of all complaints is kept confidential.

The Academy's Concerns & Complaints Officer is Miss Melissa Brookes – Telephone: 0121 525 1700 or email: mbrookes@sandwellacademy.com

Stage 1: Concerns Procedure

Concerns are matters that can usually be resolved informally; if a concern is not resolved then the complainant will have the opportunity to put the complaint in writing and the formal complaint procedure will then be engaged. It is in everyone's interest that matters are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact is crucial in determining whether the concern will escalate. Concerns may be expressed verbally or in writing, via letter, email or fax. Members of staff are aware of the procedures; they know what to do when a concern is registered.

All matters of concern are documented in a log.

Stage 1: Informal concern stage

Stage 1:

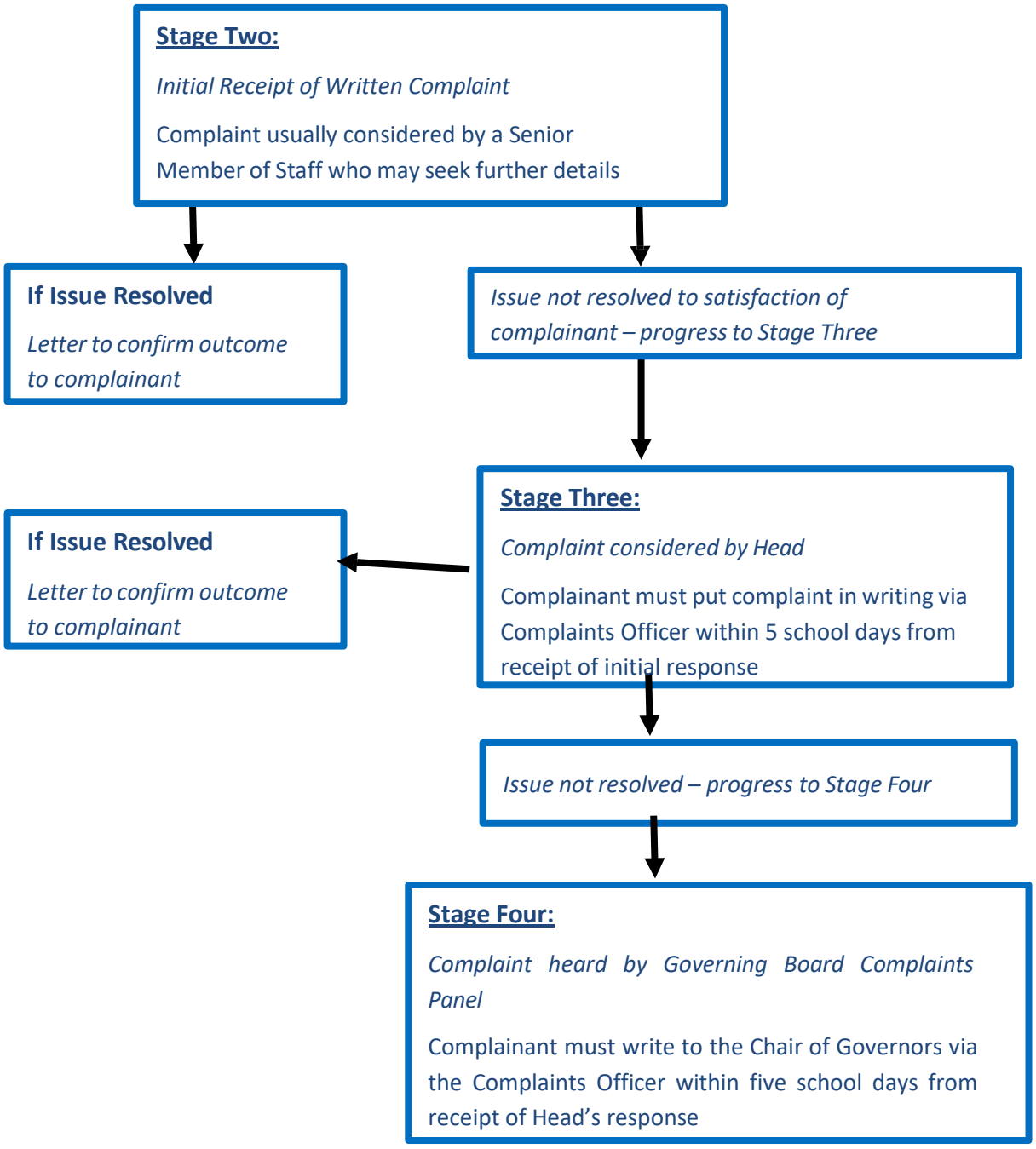
Informal concern – meeting with teacher or personal tutor to discuss issues – solutions discussed with implementation and strategies considered and agreed.

If agreement is not reached then the formal procedure can begin with a written complaint.

Stages 2 – 4 Formal Complaints Procedure

The Academy will pursue the resolution of all concerns informally and satisfactorily. On occasions where this cannot be achieved the complaints procedure can be invoked.

Stages for the formal Complaints Procedure are as follows:



All complaints are documented in a log held by the Concerns & Complaints Officer. A written confirmation of the discussions held and the resultant outcome will be made to the person expressing a complaint within five school days from completion of the relevant stage.

Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure will usually be considered by a senior staff member, but it may be delegated to a more appropriate person if the circumstances warrant this.

- The complaint must be in writing
- It will be responded to within five school days following receipt of complaint
- If the complainant is satisfied, the matter will be deemed to be closed
- If the complainant is not satisfied, then a written account to explain why the complainant is not satisfied must be submitted within five school days of receipt and the complaint will escalate to Stage 3

A **Stage 3** complaint will usually be heard by the Head or delegated to a more appropriate person if circumstances warrant this.

- The complaint will be responded to within five school days
- If the complainant is satisfied, the matter will be deemed to be closed
- If the complainant is not satisfied, then a written account to explain why the complainant is not satisfied must be submitted within five school days of receipt and the complaint will escalate to Stage 4

The **Stage 4** complaint will be dealt with by the Chair of Governors or, if he directs, delegated to another more appropriate Governor to deal with if circumstances warrant this.

- The Chair (or delegated Governor) will organise a Panel of three members to hear the complaint, one of whom will be independent of the Governing Board and management of the Academy. This is called the Governors' Complaints Panel
- The complainant may present the complaint in person to the Panel
- The complainant may be accompanied to the panel hearing if they wish
- The complaint will be heard within 10 school days of receipt
- The complainant will be given two alternative dates for the hearing
- A third date will be offered in the event of the first two dates being unacceptable to the complainant. If this is still unacceptable a fourth date will be arranged and the complaint hearing will go ahead without the complainant present if they are unable to attend. However, the complainant will have the opportunity to send a personal representative or submit information in writing if they so wish
- The outcome will be confirmed in writing within five school days of the hearing
- The panel may determine recommendations as a result of findings from the hearing and in this circumstance, a copy will be sent to the complainant
- If the complainant is satisfied, the matter will be deemed to be closed
- If the complainant is not satisfied, it will be for the complainant to seek appropriate third party advice to ascertain what further course of action they might take

Concerns or complaints specifically about the Head:

A decision that the Head has made as a result of a Stage 3 complaint does not become a complaint about the Head. If the complainant feels the complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily he/she should proceed to Stage 4, a Governors' Complaints Panel.

If the concern or complaint is specifically about the Head and is not resolved at Stages 1-3, then it will be necessary for the complainant to proceed to Stage 4 and formally complain to the Chair of Governors. The complainant should write to him or her at the Academy address marking the envelope "Confidential". The Chair of Governors should acknowledge the complainant's letter in writing within five school days of receipt and decide on what action should be taken. In the event that the Chair of Governors is not available within the stated time period the Concerns & Complaints Officer will refer to the Clerk to the Governors for guidance.

Additional Notes:

The Academy staff and Governors will always work with parents to try and secure a satisfactory outcome following a complaint. However, there may be occasions when the expertise within the Academy is not able or sufficiently knowledgeable to deal with a specific complaint. In such rare cases the Academy reserves the right to refer complaints to experts in chosen fields at any of the three stages in the process. Any such third parties may then respond to the complainant on the Academy's behalf.

In circumstances where the nature and extent of a complaint are unusually complex, the Academy also reserves the right to amend the timescales used in the complaints procedure to ensure that adequate time is made available to try and resolve the complaint satisfactorily.

Part of the Concerns & Complaints Officer's role is to assist the complainant in the process and the complainant should feel free to take advice, as appropriate, from the Concerns & Complaints Officer at any time during school hours.

Correspondence sent by post will be deemed to have been received the day after posting when sent by first class post or two days after posting when sent by second class post.

Parents/carers who are not satisfied about the handling of their complaint have recourse to the ESFA via:
https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure

Collecting Evidence

Collecting Evidence Any recorded telephone or video images (CCTV) or photographic evidence collected as part of investigations will be processed fairly and lawfully in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR) insofar as it will be:

- Adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Used for the purposes(s) stated in this policy only and not used for any other purposes
- Accessible only by the senior member of staff conducting the investigation and after securing permission from the Headteacher
- Treated confidentially
- Stored securely

The Remit of the Governors' Complaints Panel

Whilst the Governors' Complaints Panel hearing is a formal process, and held in private, every effort will be made to allow the proceedings to be as informal and constructive as possible, focusing on resolution of the complaint to everyone's satisfaction. All parties will be expected to act with respect, courtesy, understanding and tolerance, particularly if a child is in attendance.

The Chairman will direct the proceedings and may permit adjournments at any time to allow for reflection, private discussion or the comfort and wellbeing of attendees etc. The aim will be to resolve all matters at a single meeting.

All parties at the meeting will have access to the same documentation which, so far as is possible, will be distributed in good time before the meeting date. All parties will have the opportunity to state their case or position and to ask questions.

The Panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- recommend changes to the Academy's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur

The Concerns & Complaints Officer will remain the contact point for the complainant and will set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.

The Clerk to the Governors will attend the Panel meeting and will record the proceedings. A template, **Appendix A**, is attached to assist the complainant if they wish.

APPENDIX A - Complaint letter template

Your name: **Student's name:** **Your relationship to the student:** **Address:**   **Telephone number(s):**
Details of the complaint
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: **Date:**

Please complete and return to the Head or Chair of the Governing Body (for Stage 4) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.