



Complaints Policy

The Ivy Learning Trust's Complaints Policy is monitored by the Local Governing Board and the Board of Trustees and will be reviewed annually.

Date Agreed:

Agreed by: Trust Board

Review Date: March 2019

Inclusion

The Ivy Learning Trust carefully considers all policies with respect to the impact on equality and the possible implications for pupils and staff with protected characteristics.

Purpose

This policy applies to any matter (other than matters relating to admissions and exclusions which have their own processes) which has been raised by parents of pupils as a matter of concern which has not been capable of resolution informally and which the complainant or the Trust consider should be dealt with on a formal basis.

This policy must be made available to parents and carers of pupils.

Stage 1 – Informal resolution

Where the matter relates to a pupil, it should be raised with their class teacher before a request is made to deal with it under this policy. It is a precondition to the operation of this policy that the complainant shall have made reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution and shall have acted in relation to the matter in a reasonable and measured way. If a matter is not resolved at the informal stage, then a complainant may take it to the formal stage. The Chair of Trustees shall have discretion, which will be exercised reasonably, not to allow a complaint to be pursued where this precondition has not been met.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution: Investigation by a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

1. The complainant must address the complaint in writing to the Head of the school, briefly setting out the facts, stating what it is that the complainant considers should have been done and where they feel the school has not met reasonable expectations.
2. An investigation will be carried out by a member of the SLT of the school which may include the offer of a meeting with the complainant. The investigator will also speak to any others involved. Whenever reasonably possible, any meeting with the complainant will take place within 15 school days of the written complaint being received.
3. The investigator will put her/his findings in writing and will indicate what, if any, steps should be taken to resolve the matter. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 15 school days of any meeting with the complainant; if no meeting is arranged, it will be within 15 school days of the written complaint being received.
4. Any complaint relating to the Head of the school must be raised in the first instance with the Executive Head who will, if an informal resolution cannot be reached, designate a member of the Local Governing Body (LGB) to

investigate in the same way as the first stage of the formal process outlined above. Where a complaint is against a trustee or governor, it should be made in writing to the Ivy Learning Trust Governance Manager in the first instance.

5. Where the complainant remains dissatisfied, he/she may request the complaint is escalated to stage 3. Any such request must be set out in writing, stating why the complainant remains dissatisfied, and lodged within 10 school days of the complainant receiving the findings in writing.

Stage 3 – Formal Resolution: Executive Head/ CEO - investigation by a member of the LGB

1. The complainant must address the complaint in writing to the Executive Head/ CEO of the school, briefly setting out the facts, stating what it is that the complainant considers should have been done and where they feel the school has not met reasonable expectations.
2. The Executive Head may appoint a member of the LGB of the school to investigate the complaint. The investigation may include the offer of a meeting with the complainant; whenever reasonably possible, any meeting with the complainant will take place with 15 school days of the written complaint being received.
3. The investigator will put her/his findings in writing and will indicate what, if any, steps should be taken to resolve the matter. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 15 school days of any meeting with the complainant; if no meeting is arranged, it will be within 15 school days of the written complaint being received.
4. Where the complainant remains dissatisfied, he/she may request the complaint is escalated to stage 4. Any such request must be set out in writing, stating why they remain dissatisfied and what further remedy they are seeking. This must be lodged within 10 school days of the complainant receiving the findings in writing. The request must be addressed to the Clerk to the LGB or to the Trustees.

Stage 4 – Formal Resolution: Panel Hearing

1. The Complaints Panel of the Ivy Learning Trust will consider all complaints at stage 4.
2. The Complaints Panel will comprise at least three people, including at least one person who is independent of the management and running of the Trust and any of the schools.
3. The Complaints Panel may also include one or more persons from the following categories:
 - A member of the LGB of the school where the complaint emanated from;
 - A member of an LGB from another school within the trust;
 - A member of the Trust Board;
4. None of the members of the Complaints Panel will have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.
5. The Clerk will invite the Trust to put in writing its response to the complainant's grievance. The Trust will provide this within 15 school days of the complaint's escalation to Stage 4. At the end of that period (whether or not the school has responded), the Clerk will convene a meeting of the Complaints Panel. That meeting will be held as quickly as practicable given the need to find a date that is reasonably convenient for the complainant, the school and the members of the complaints panel. Whenever possible, the meeting will be held within 15 school days of the end of the school's response time. At any meeting, the complainant will be entitled to be accompanied by a friend but legal representation will not be allowed.

6. The meeting is not a court case; it will be held in private and will be as informal as circumstances allow. The complainant will have the opportunity to put forward her/his reasons for dissatisfaction and to enlarge on them but may not introduce reasons that were not previously put in writing. The Trust will have the opportunity to put its side of things and each side, as well as the Panel members, will be able to ask questions. The complainant will have the opportunity to make final comments to the Panel.
7. The Panel may make findings and recommendations and a copy of those finding and recommendations will be:-
 - Sent by email or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about.
 - Available for inspection on the school premises by the Trust, the Head and the Executive Head/ CEO.
8. The Panel will formulate its response as quickly as reasonable possible, aiming to do so within 10 school days of the meeting. The Clerk will notify all concerned.

Attendance at a Complaints Panel hearing

The Complaints Panel will only take place if the complainant and/ or their representative attend. If the complainant does not confirm attendance or fails to attend on the day without compelling reasons, the Complaints Panel will not proceed and the complainant will lose their right to the complaint being heard. Any further attempt to re-open the matter will be considered as falling under the serial/ persistent complainants section as set out below.

Serial or persistent complainants

If at any level a complainant attempts to reopen an issue or a closely related issue that has already been dealt with under this complaints procedure, the Chair of the Trustees may write to the complainant to inform him/her that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter closed, that continued correspondence is vexatious and that the Trust will not respond to any further correspondence on this issue or any closely related issue.

Record keeping

A written record will be kept of all complaints resolved at one of the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Records will contain details of whether the complaint was resolved at stage 2, stage 3 or proceeded to stage 4 Panel Hearing. The action taken by the school or the Trust as a result of a complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld) will also be recorded.

Confidentiality

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 Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.