

## Complaints Procedure (Thorpe Hesley Primary School)

THP Advisory Group: Updated Policy Shared May 2023

To be reviewed: two yearly or as required following notification of DfE updates

**Note:** This policy is based on the model for stand-alone academies and academies which are part of a multi-academy trust, as approved by the Department for Education. CCAT has approved this policy at the level of the Board of Trustees and it applies to all CCAT schools from April 2021. Each school in the Trust has produced an individual policy based on this model containing the relevant local information for named contacts. Each CCAT school will include the policy on their website as part of its statutory documents page. This will be incorporated into NCLT whole trust policy following consultation with trade unions.

### 1. Who can make a complaint?

- 1.1 This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Thorpe Hesley Primary School (“Thorpe Hesley”) about any provision of facilities or services that we provide.
- 1.2 We will use this complaints procedure, unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory arrangements. These exceptions to the policy are set out below, along with advice on what you should do if you have concerns.

Exceptions to the policy	Where to get help or who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Admissions to schools</li> </ul>	<p>Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the local authority.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>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).  <a href="https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/child-protection/worried-child">https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/child-protection/worried-child</a>                      Telephone <b>01709 336080</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exclusion of children from school*</li> </ul>	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be</i></p>

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	<i>made through the school's complaints procedure. This policy can be found on the school website.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whistleblowing</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff grievances</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff conduct</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>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.</p>

## 2. The difference between a concern and a complaint

- 2.1 A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.
- 2.2 A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.
- 2.3 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 the complaints procedure. Thorpe Hesley takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.



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- 2.4 If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In such cases, the Head Teacher, Mrs Hewitt, will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, Mrs Hewitt will also respect the views of the member of staff directly involved if they feel unable to deal with a concern and will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. Their ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important. The school hopes that it will be able to resolve most concerns informally at this point.
- 2.5 We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Thorpe Hesley will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

### **3. How to raise a concern or make a complaint**

- 3.1 A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so. All 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 2008 Education and Skills Act requests access to them.
- Complaints against **school staff** (except the head teacher) should be made in the first instance, to Mrs S Hewitt, Head Teacher, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
  - Complaints that involve or are about the **Head Teacher** should be addressed to Mrs K Hattersley (the Chair of the Advisory Group), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
  - Complaints about the **Chair of the Advisory Group**, any **individual advisor** or the whole **advisory group** should be addressed to Mrs H Sreaton (Clerk to the Advisory Group) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.
  - Complaints about the **Trust** and its operations should be addressed to Mr R Fletcher (Chief Executive Officer)

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- 3.2 For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask a third-party organisation such as Citizens Advice to help you.
- 3.3 In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

### **4. Anonymous complaints**

- 4.1 We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, in a Trust school, the Head Teacher or Chair of the Advisory Group, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation. For the Trust, this will be determined by the CEO.

### **5. Time scales**

- 5.1 You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

### **6. Complaints received outside of term time**

- 6.1 We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

### **6. Scope of this complaints procedure**

- 6.1 This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Thorpe Hesley Primary School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, as specified at Paragraph 1.2 of the policy.
- 6.2 If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being



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suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

- 6.3 If a complainant commences legal action against Thorpe Hesley Primary School or the Trust in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

### **7. Trust statement on managing unreasonable requests**

- 7.1 The Trust is 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 the Trust and its schools; 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.

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

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- 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
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeks to have them replaced.



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- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
  - Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
  - Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the Trust's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education (DfE).
  - Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
  - Makes excessive demands on school 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.
- 7.3 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
  - Using falsified information
  - By publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers
- 7.4 In cases of unreasonable complaints or harassment, the Trust may take any or all of the following steps, as appropriate:
- Inform the complainant that the procedures have been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.
  - Inform the complainant in writing that their behaviour is now considered to fall under the terms of this policy and that any complaint will not be investigated further until it is pursued in a manner in which the Trust considers to be reasonable.



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- Inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the school or the Trust will respond only to written communication.
- Place restrictions on the individual's access to a Trust school and/or its staff.
- Require all future meetings with a member of school or Trust staff to be conducted with a third person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken.

### **8. Working together to resolve complaints**

8.1 At each stage in the procedure, the Trust and its schools wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, Thorpe Hesley Primary School will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, it may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation.
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur.
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made.
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.
- an apology.

### **9. Withdrawal of a complaint**

9.1 If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint at any stage, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

### **10. Stages in the complaints process**

#### **10.1 Stage 1 – Informal complaints**

10.1.1 It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis.

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10.1.2 Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher, year head/subject head or Head Teacher. Complainants should not approach individual members of the advisory group to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 of the procedure.

10.1.3 At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response within fifteen school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

10.1.4 If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

### **10.2 Stage 2 – Formal complaints**

10.2.1 Formal complaints must be made to the Head Teacher via the school office. This may be done in person or in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form). If the complaint is about the Head Teacher, there is a separate process which is described below.

10.2.2 The Head Teacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within three school days.

10.2.3 Within this response, the Head Teacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Head Teacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

*Note: The head teacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.*

10.2.4 During the investigation, the Head Teacher or nominated investigator will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

10.2.5 At the conclusion of the investigation, the Head Teacher will provide a formal written response within fifteen school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.



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10.2.6 If the Head Teacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

10.2.7 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 Thorpe Hesley Primary School will take to resolve the complaint.

10.2.8 The Head Teacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

### **10.3 Complaints about the Head Teacher**

10.3.1 If the complaint is about the Head Teacher, the Chair of the Advisory Group will complete the Stage 2 investigation by:

- seeking to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Chair of the Advisory Group can consider whether a face to face meeting is an appropriate way of doing this.
- interviewing those involved in the matter and/or those complained of.
- keeping a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

10.3.2 At the conclusion of the investigation, the Chair of the Advisory Group will provide a formal written response to the complainant within thirty school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

### **10.4 Complaints about members of the Advisory Group**

10.4.1 If the complaint is about a member of the Advisory Group (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a panel of suitably skilled governors, not involved with the complaint or the running of the school will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2, concluding with providing the complainant with a formal written response.

10.4.2 Complaints about the Head Teacher or member of the Advisory Group must be made to the Clerk to the Advisory Group, via the school office. The Clerk, will make all arrangements for the governor panel and will liaise with the complainant.

10.4.3 If the complaint is:



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- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire advisory group or
- the majority of the advisory group

Stage 2 will be escalated to the CEO of the Trust.

### **10.5 Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

10.5.1 If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a panel hearing consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint with one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

10.5.2 A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within five school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response.

10.5.3 The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days.

10.5.4 Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

10.5.5 The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within twenty school days of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

10.5.6 If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence based on written submissions from both parties.

10.5.7 If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or



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- the entire advisory group or
- the majority of the advisory group

Stage 3 will be heard by the trustees and an independent panel member.

10.5.8 A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support.

This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the panel meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

*Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under (Human Resources) staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.*

### **10.6 Stage 3 process**

10.6.1 At least **ten** school days before the meeting, the Clerk 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 panel at least three school days before the meeting.

10.6.2 Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least three school days before the date of the meeting. The panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

10.6.3 The panel will also 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.



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- 10.6.4 The meeting will be held in private. Arrangements will comply with any current Coronavirus guidance and regulations. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.
- 10.6.5 The panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
  - dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- 10.6.6 If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the 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.
- 10.6.7 The Chair of the panel will provide the complainant and Thorpe Hesley with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within five school days. The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Thorpe Hesley.
- 10.6.8 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 Thorpe Hesley will take to resolve the complaint.
- 10.6.9 The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher. A written record will be kept of all complaints, in accordance with sub-paragraph (e) of Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and –

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- whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
- action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

### **10.7 Complaints escalated to/about the Trust, CEO or Trustee**

10.7.1 If a complaint is escalated to the trust (NCLT) or if a complainant wishes to complain directly about the trust, then the complaint should be sent to the CEO to be investigated.

10.7.2 The CEO will write to the complainant acknowledging the complaint within five school days of the date that the written request was received. The acknowledgement will confirm that the complaint will now be investigated under the appropriate Stage of this Complaints Policy and will confirm the date for providing a response to the complainant.

10.7.3 Following the investigation, the CEO will write to the complainant adhering to the timescales appropriate to the stage confirming the outcome. If this time limit cannot be met, the CEO will write to the Complainant within ten school days of the date that the letter was received, explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised date.

10.7.4 If the complaint concerns the CEO or a Trustee, the complaint should be investigated by the Chair of the Trust Board. If a formal complaint form is received about the Chair, the complaint will be referred to the Vice Chair for investigation.

*Note: Where the Chair of the Trust Board has investigated the complaint, they will write the letter of outcome to the Complainant and provide a copy to the CEO.*

10.7.5 If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the previous stage, the complainant should write to the Clerk to the Trust Board asking for the complaint to be heard before a Complaint Panel, within five school days.

10.7.6 The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days. Requests



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received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

10.7.7 The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within twenty school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

10.7.8 If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

10.7.9 If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire trust board or
- the majority of the trust board

Stage 3 will be heard by a completely independent committee panel.

### **10.8 Stage 3 Independent Complaint Panel (ICP)**

10.8.1 The Complaint Panel will consist of three members. None of the three members of the Complaint Panel will have been involved in the incidents or events which led to the complaint, or have been involved in dealing with the complaint in the previous stages, or have any detailed prior knowledge of the complaint.

10.8.2 One of the Complaint Panel members will be independent of the management and running of the Academy Trust. This means that this independent Complaint Panel member will not be a Trustee or an employee of the Trust.

10.8.3 A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a trust employee is called

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as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

*Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.*

10.8.4 At least ten school days before the meeting, the Clerk 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 three school days before the meeting.

10.8.5 Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least three school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

10.8.6 The Panel will also 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.

10.8.7 The meeting will be held in private. Arrangements will comply with any current Coronavirus guidance and regulations. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

10.8.8 The Panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.



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10.8.9 If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the 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.

### **10.9 Stage 3 Independent Complaint Panel (ICP) outcomes**

10.9.1 The Chair of the Panel will provide the complainant and the Creative Children's Academy Trust with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within five school days.

10.9.2 The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the Creative Children's Academy Trust.

10.9.3 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 the Creative Children's Academy Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

10.9.4 The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection at the Trust's registered office.

10.9.5 A written record will be kept of all complaints, in accordance with sub-paragraph (e) of Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and –

- whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
- action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).



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### **Next Steps**

1. If the complainant believes the school/trust did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the ESFA after they have completed Stage 3.
2. The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Thorpe Hesley school or the New Collaborative Learning Trust. They will consider whether Thorpe Hesley and the Trust has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed [Part 7 of the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).
3. The complainant can refer their complaint to the ESFA online at: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit  
Education and Skills Funding Agency  
Cheylesmore House  
5 Quinton Road  
Coventry  
CV1 2WT

### **Complaint Form**

Please complete and return the form (on the next page) to the individual specified in the policy document so that they can acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken. They will act as coordinator for the complaint.



**Thorpe Hesley  
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**Your name:**

**Pupil's name (if relevant):**

**Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):**

**Address:**

**Postcode:**

**Day time telephone number:**

**Evening telephone number:**

**Email address:**

**Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.**

**What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?**



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**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Action taken:**

**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
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint



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- 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.

### Investigator

The investigator'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/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
  - consideration of records and other relevant information
  - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator 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 for the head teacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The head teacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing

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the appropriate escalation details.

### Complaints Co-ordinator

#### **The nominated complaints co-ordinator should:**

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, head teacher, CEO, Chair of Governors, Chair of Trust or the Clerk and to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
  - sharing third party information
  - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

### Clerk to the Advisory Group / Trust Board

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and may also be the nominated complaints co-ordinator. They 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 (for example: stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) 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.



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### **Committee/Panel Chair**

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint 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/young person
- 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.
- both the complainant and the school 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 (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

### **Committee/Panel Member**

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so  
No governor / trustee 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



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between the school 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.

- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting

Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.

- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting:

Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.