

## **GDST Academy Trust**

### **Complaints Procedure**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 The purpose of the procedure:

- (a) The aim of this procedure is to achieve a fair, effective and as rapid as possible resolution of parental concerns about the education and/or welfare of individual children in the care of the Academies. It will not normally be an appropriate mechanism for representations in respect of the Academy policy, nor for resolution of legal issues between the Academy and parents. Parents may always write to the Chair of the Local Governing Body (“LGB”) or the Principal of the Academy about the former and to the Chair of the GDST Academy Trust about the latter.
- (b) This procedure will not apply to circumstances covered by a more specific procedure, whether internal or external. For example, exclusions are dealt with in accordance with the relevant Academy’s exclusions procedure, and concerns relating to public examinations are usually dealt with in accordance with the procedures laid down by examination boards.
- (c) The expression ‘parents’ is used for those having parental responsibility for the child.

#### **2. Time limits**

2.1 Effective and fair resolution of concerns usually requires that they are brought to the Academy’s attention promptly. To be considered under this procedure, complaints should normally be brought within three months of the relevant event(s). However, even where complaints are made within three months, should it appear to the Complaints Panel that delay has prejudiced an effective and fair resolution, they may judge it inappropriate to deal with the complaint. This condition applies equally to pupils who have left the school.

#### **3. Minor complaints**

3.1 The Complaints Panel may decline to proceed with a complaint where it appears to them that the issues raised are of a nature that it would be disproportionate for them to be considered at that level. In exercising this discretion, the Complaints Panel will have regard primarily to the importance of the issues in the onward education or welfare of the pupil concerned.

#### **4. Professional judgment**

- 4.1 Where the judgment of a member of the Academy staff is subject to complaint, the Complaints Panel will determine whether the judgment was exercised fairly and reasonably according to the Academy's standards. There may be more than one fair and reasonable response to a situation. Where a complaint is upheld, the Complaints Panel will usually make recommendations to be considered by the Academy.

## **5. Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

- 5.1 It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- 5.2 If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their daughter's Progress Leader or Key Stage Manager, as appropriate. In many cases the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult with other staff within the school.
- 5.3 The teacher will make a written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 school days or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

## **6. Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

- 6.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Principal as soon as possible. The Principal or Vice Principal will investigate and respond to the parents within 10 school days.
- 6.2 The Principal will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held to investigate the complaint.
- 6.3 Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents informed of this decision in writing. The Principal will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- 6.4 If parents are not satisfied with the decision, or if the complaint is about the Principal, parents are able to proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

## **7. Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

- 7.1 If parents wish to have their complaint considered at a Panel Hearing, they should write to the Chair of the GDST Academy Trust at 100 Rochester Row, London SW1P 1JP, setting out their complaint in detail. The Chair will then convene a Complaints Panel. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the Academy and the Trust.

- 7.2 A hearing will be scheduled to take place as soon as practical and normally within 25 school days of receipt of the parents' letter. It will normally be held at the Academy premises or near the Academy.
- 7.3 The parents should supply copies of the written complaint to the Principal and any documentation they may wish to rely on to the Chair's PA for circulation to the Panel and Principal not more than 7 days after the date of notification of the hearing.
- 7.4 The parents will be supplied with copies of any supporting/background documentation provided by the Principal to the Panel not less than 10 school days before the hearing.
- 7.5 The Panel may refuse to consider matters of which written notice has not been given if doing so appears to them likely to be prejudicial to a fair and effective consideration of the complaint.
- 7.6 If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to the Chair's PA not less than 5 school days prior to the hearing, for circulation to all parties.
- 7.7 The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate other than in exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Chair of the Panel.
- 7.8 The Principal may be accompanied by the Chairman of the Local Governing Body (or the Chairman's nominee).
- 7.9 Conduct of the hearing shall be at the Panel's discretion which will be exercised in the interests of a fair, effective, and appropriately rapid resolution of the complaint. The Chair of the Panel, or its Clerk, will normally write to the parents before the hearing, having considered the nature of the complaint and the documentary material, to state how the hearing will be conducted. Prior to the hearing, decisions relating to procedure may be dealt with by the Chair of the Panel acting alone. Should the parents have any questions concerning the Panel's procedure, they should address them to the Chair of the Panel at 100 Rochester Row, London SW1P 1JP.
- 7.10 After due consideration of all relevant facts, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations. The Panel will write to the parents as soon as reasonably practicable informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The Panel's findings, and (if any) recommendations will also be sent in writing to the Principal, the Chair of the LGB and, where relevant, the person complained of.
- 7.11 Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. A written record will be kept of all complaints received, indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or were heard by a Complaints Panel. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where

disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection or where any other legal obligation prevails.

## **8. Review**

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed when there are changes in the law, or in accordance with the schedule drawn up by the Principals of the Academies and agreed by the Academy Trust Board.