



# Complaints Policy

*This policy applies to all school pupils and all Early Years pupils*

Policy Version			
Date	Document Version	Document Revision History	Document Author/Reviser
19 April	Version 1.0	N/A	Emily Haddock
17 <sup>th</sup> March 2017	Version 1.1	Update in light of LGB & Trust review/approval	Jayne Carmichael
29 <sup>th</sup> September 2017	Version 1.2	Annual update of parent complaints for 2016/2017	Jayne Carmichael
21 <sup>st</sup> September 2018	Version 1.3	Annual update of parent complaints for 2017/2018	Jayne Carmichael
3.12.19	Version 1.4	Annual update of parent complaints for 2018/2019 and measures if complaint is in relation to Head as well as addition of Annex A and B to record/report complaints	Jayne Carmichael

This policy will be reviewed every 12 months or in light of a change to local and Government legislation.

## The Dunham Trust's Vision, Aims and Ethos

### Together we will

Challenge the ordinary  
Promote individuality  
Be advocates for change

Across our schools we encourage cross-collaboration and the sharing of best practice. We believe that we are able to help our schools and their young people to aspire to, and achieve, success. We are committed to ensuring that every child and young person has a pathway to succeed and that:

- gives the best possible start in life
- equips them with creativity, spirit and confidence
- enables individuals to appreciate life and equip for further learning
- supports the child in becoming a responsible citizen and contribute to the local community
- celebrates the individual

The Dunham Trust aims to contribute positively to the self-improving school-led system in education across this locality. We believe in true collaboration; working in partnership, investing in people and building capacity for long term, sustainable success. There is both the expectation and opportunity for collaboration across individual Trust schools.

### The five schools in The Dunham Trust are:

Acre Hall Primary School  
Barton Clough Primary School  
Elmridge Primary School  
The Orchards Special School  
Lime Tree Primary Academy

The Dunham Trust is a growing Trust with very clear educational aims and expectations. One of The Trust's primary aims is to transform the schools within The Trust into sustainable learning communities. We want to create a community of good and outstanding schools with the highest aspirations. The skills and expertise that exist within The Trust will ensure that our academies and young people aspire to, and achieve, success. We achieve this through a well-structured School Improvement Programme which is supported by The Trust's two Teaching Schools.



## Guidance

The complaints procedure at The Dunham Trust has three stages. Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school is considered as a complaint and will be addressed in accordance with this policy. In this respect, it is anticipated that the large majority of complaints will be resolved at the informal stage.

The school will keep records of complaints which are resolved at the informal stage for management purposes, for example to enable patterns or trends to be monitored. A formal written and/or electronic record is kept of complaints made to the school which reach the formal stage. Details will be recorded of;

- Whether the complaint was resolved following the formal stage or proceeded to a panel hearing;
- Action taken by the school as a result of the complaint, (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld).

Records are kept for in line with Trust's data retention policy. Upon request, the school will provide Ofsted with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

All complaints will be recorded formally by the school in a central log which will indicate at which stage the complaint was resolved. All correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential.

It should be noted that the school will not consider complaints made later than the end of the second term after an incident/issue has occurred.

In cases where the complaint concerns the conduct of the Head, the Head and the Chair of Governors will be informed of the complaint and the Chair of Governors will arrange for the matter to be investigated as he/she considers appropriate in all the circumstances. The parents/carers will be notified of the Chair of Governors' decision in this regard.

### **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution (Discussion with class teacher – use of Annex A)**

It is hoped that most concerns or complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

If parents/carers have a concern or complaint they should normally contact their child's class teacher. In many cases the matter will be resolved immediately by this means to the parents'/carers' satisfaction. In some circumstances however, the matter may require investigation or discussion with others and so it may take longer to respond to the parents/carers. The class teacher will make a written record of all concerns or complaints and the date on which they were received.

The School will use its reasonable endeavours to resolve any informal concerns or complaints within 10 working days of them being raised, except where they are raised during School holidays or within 2 working days of their commencement. In these cases, the School will use its reasonable endeavours to resolve the concern or complaint as soon as possible after the commencement of the new term (usually within 10 working days). If it is not possible to resolve the matter informally or

parents/carers are not satisfied with the result at this stage, then parents/carers will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage Two of this procedure.

## **Stage 2 - Formal Resolution (Complaint investigated by Head/Deputy – use of Annex B)**

Where the complainant(s) are not satisfied with the response of the school, through the procedures outlined above they may register a formal complaint. This should be done in writing to the head, including,

- The nature of the complaint
- The reasons for their dissatisfaction with the school's response

The Head will meet with the complainant as soon as is practical, to discuss the matter and, if possible, to reach a resolution at this stage. Where a complaint is received during a school holiday, it will be deemed to have reached the school on the first full school day following its arrival. It may be necessary to carry out further investigations. The Head will keep written records of all complaints, and of meetings held in relation to them.

Once the Head is satisfied that all the relevant facts have been established, a response to the complaint will be made and the complainant will be informed in writing, within ten school days: the nature of the response will depend on the nature of the complaint but it will always give a judgement whether and to what extent, if at all, the complaint is justified, and reasons; the response may include actions which the school intends to take or a decision. A complainant who is not satisfied should proceed to the next stage.

In most cases, the Head will meet or speak with the parents/carers concerned to discuss the matter. The Head will use reasonable endeavours to speak to or meet parents/carers within 10 working days of the formal complaint being received. In cases where the complaint is received during School holidays or within 2 working days of their commencement, the Head will use his/her reasonable endeavours to speak or meet with parents/carers as soon as possible after the commencement of the new term (usually within 10 working days). It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations.

The Head will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Where there are communication difficulties, schools may wish to use recording devices to ensure the complainant is able to access and review the discussions at a later point. Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is reasonably practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. Parents/carers will be informed of this decision in writing, giving reasons for the decision including the steps/action the School has taken to resolve the issue. The written decision will normally be provided no later than 10 working days after the Head has met with parents/carers to discuss the matter. The Head may also arrange a further meeting with the parents/carers to explain his/her decision.

The School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, including records of meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. This record will state if complaints were resolved at this stage of the policy or whether the matter was taken

further. Where parents/carers are dissatisfied with the result at Stage Two they should notify the Head/Chair of Governors as appropriate in writing within 10 working days of receiving the School's written response under Stage Two. The matter will then be dealt with under Stage Three of the procedure.

### **Stage 3 - Formal Resolution (Complaint investigated by Head/Chair of Governors – use of Annex B)**

If the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, or the Chair of Governors feels that it is necessary, s/he can set up a Complaints Committee to consider the complaint. The Chair of Governors will decide if this is appropriate.

The Complaints Committee will only be convened if the Chair of Governors is unable to provide a mutually acceptable resolution.

Whilst a Complaints Committee can be called it will only be convened as a last resort when all other avenues have been explored. The panel's task is to establish the facts surrounding the complaint that has been made.

The Chair of Governors can elect to appoint an investigating officer to gather evidence and conduct preliminary interviews on the Chair's behalf. The investigating officer will provide a detailed report of his/her investigation of the complaint. Parents/carers should be given a copy of this report. It is important that the investigating officer is seen as impartial, so if the investigating officer is another governor, s/he cannot be a member of the associated Complaints Committee.

The Complaints Committee must comprise of three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom must be independent of the Governance, management and running of the school. The Complaints Committee should meet at a time convenient to all parties. The complainant, the Head, the Chair of Governors and any member of staff the complaint is about will be invited to the meeting. Any person invited can bring a supporter if they wish. The Complaints Committee will consider any written material, and also give the person making the complaint and the Head, Chair of Governors and staff an opportunity to state their case and to question others present. The committee will ensure that all present are treated fairly. Meeting notes will be taken by the Clerk to Governors and these notes will be used by the committee as a basis for their decision making.

The committee will give its decision, in writing, within 15 school days, within term time, following the meeting, together with the reasons for their decision. The finding may include recommendations or actions which the panel requires the school to take. The finding of the panel will be final. A copy of the finding will be sent to the complainant, Head and any, where relevant, person who is the object of the complaint by electronic mail. Where electronic mail is not appropriate, a copy will be given or sent in the post. A written response to the complainant will be made as soon as possible but in any case within 15 school working days of the panel

## **Appeal to the Secretary of State**

If after this school based process the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, they should write to the Secretary of State, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT.

## **Vexatious complaints**

A robust procedure can help limit the number of protracted complaints. It is not appropriate to make personal accusations or attacks on members of school staff, or to raise matters that are not about education or a pupil's well-being. It is also not appropriate to make unsubstantiated allegations against the school, or to behave unreasonably by not engaging with the school to attempt a joint resolution. If a complainant attempts to reopen issues that have been dealt with through the complaints procedure it will be explained that the procedure has been exhausted.

If a complainant acts unreasonably by continuing to raise similar issues, or raising a range of unrelated issues on a repeated basis then the school reserves the right not to respond. If a complainant in this category refuses to engage in the school's formal complaints procedures, but continues to complain, then the Head or Chair of Governors will inform the complainant that the complaints are vexatious.

Each school has a right and a duty to protect its employees from complaints that are malicious, personally offensive, including obscenities, racist or homophobic language. Problems arise where a complaint is unreasonable and are not seeking to have a situation remedied but instead are determined to exact retribution for some real or imagined wrong. We reserve the right not to deal with such complaints. Schools reserves the right to limit the method of contact of such complaints and restrict who the complainant may communicate with in school.

## **Monitoring complaints**

Each school will monitor complaints. Details to include:

- Name of complainant
- Details of the complaint
- How the complaint was investigated and by whom
- When the complaint was made
- The results and conclusions of the investigation(s)
- Any action taken as a result

## Annex A: Informal Resolution

*Please ensure that this form is returned to either the Head or Deputy on the same day as the incident or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter. A dated record of any further action taken will be attached to this form.*

<b>Child's Name</b>  <b>Year</b>	<b>Date Concern/Complaint Received</b>
<b>Parent's/Carer's Name and Contact Details:</b> <b>(to include address, telephone number, email)</b>	
<b>Full Details Of Concern/Complaint:</b> <b>(to include date, time, place, parties involved and, in appropriate cases, actual words spoken)</b>	
<b>Action Taken:</b> <b>(Steps Taken, When and By Whom)</b>	
<b>Further Action To Be Taken If Appropriate:</b>	
<b>Has information relating to action taken/ to be taken been shared with the parent/carers? (Y/N)</b>  <b>What was the parent's/carers' response?</b>	

**Completed By:**

**Date:**

## Annex B: Formal Resolution

*Please complete this form & return it, via the school office, to the Headt (or Clerk to the Governing Body), who will acknowledge receipt & inform you of the next stage in the procedure.*

<b>Your Name:</b>	
<b>Relationship With School:</b> (eg parent of a pupil attending school)	
<b>Pupil's Name:</b>	
<b>Your Address:</b>	
<b>Telephone Number:</b>	
<b>Email Address:</b>	

**Please give concise details of your complaint (including dates, names of those involved, witnesses, etc) to allow the matter to be fully investigated. Please use additional pages if necessary.**

**What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (ie. who have you spoken with or written to and what was the outcome?)**

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

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

--

**Completed By:**

**Date:**

<b>SCHOOL USE ONLY:</b>			
<b>Date Received From:</b>	<b>Received By:</b>	<b>Date Acknowledgement Sent:</b>	<b>Acknowledgement Sent By:</b>

<b>Agreed Outcomes:</b>

<b>Complaint Referred To:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
-------------------------------	--	--------------	--