



LANGTREE SCHOOL TRUSTEES'

COMPLAINTS POLICY

LANGTREE SCHOOL ACADEMY TRUST COMPANY
AN EXEMPT CHARITY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE
COMPANY NUMBER 7980335

In this policy as in all documents of The Langtree School Academy Trust Company ("TLSATC") any reference to Langtree School, School, Board of Trustees or Trustees of Langtree School Academy Trust Company is a reference to The Board of Directors of The Langtree School Academy Trust Company and any reference to the head teacher of Langtree School is a reference to the Chief Executive Officer of TLSATC.

STATUS:	STATUTORY
REVIEW FREQUENCY	Annual
DATE OF POLICY	May 2026
DATE OF LAST REVIEW	July 2026
REVIEW DUE	July 2027
EXECUTIVE LEAD	Deputy Head Teacher
COMMITTEE	Pastoral
Signed: Board of Trustees	

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1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents/carers of students at the school, and others who may raise a complaint about any provision of facilities or services provided by the school, unless the matter is dealt with under a separate statutory procedure.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full, unless the complaint falls outside the scope of this policy, is withdrawn, is being considered under another procedure, or is being managed under the persistent or unreasonable complaints section of this policy.

To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals. This may include providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint, or holding meetings in accessible locations where reasonably practical.

2. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which states that the school must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents/carers of students at the school.

It reflects good practice guidance s from the Department for Education (DfE) on setting up and operating complaints procedures.

3. Definitions and scope

3.1 Definitions

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- A **concern** is defined as "an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought". The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible
- A **complaint** is defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action"

3.2 Scope

The school intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved through day-to-day communication without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of facilities or services by the school, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the local authority.
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. 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).
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions . <i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i>
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. 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: www.education.gov.uk/contactus . Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain directly to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. 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.

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of concerns or complaints.

Arrangements for handling concerns from parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) about the school's support are within the scope of this policy. Such concerns should first be made to the Special Educational Needs & Disabilities co-ordinator (SENDCo); they will then be referred to this complaints policy if we are unable to resolve the concern at this stage.

Our SEND policy includes information about the rights of parents of students with disabilities who believe that our school has discriminated against their child.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

3.3. Who can make a complaint

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of students registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to the school about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides, unless the matter is dealt with under a separate statutory procedure or another school policy

3.4 How to raise a concern or complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing, by telephone or by email. A complaint may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, provided that they have appropriate consent to do so. In this instance, we would request confirmation from the complainant that a third party will be representing them.

Where a complaint is submitted in writing, it should be marked 'Private and Confidential' and addressed to the appropriate person as set out in the policy. The complaint form at Appendix A should be used wherever possible to support this process.

If a complainant requires help completing the form or accessing the complaints process, they should contact the school office. The school will consider reasonable adjustments where required.

3.5 Anonymous complaints

The school will not normally investigate anonymous comments. However, the head teacher, chair of trustees or clerk to the board of trustees, as appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants further consideration or investigation.

3.6 Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, the school will ask them to confirm this in writing, as part of a comprehensive audit trail.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Follow the procedures set out in this policy
- Submit their complaint using the complaints form (appendix A)
- Cooperate with the school throughout the process, and respond promptly to requests for information, meetings or deadlines.
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Refrain from publishing details about the complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.
- Ask for assistance if needed

4.2 The Head Teacher

The head teacher will make every effort to resolve the complaint at the earliest appropriate stage.

- Recording all complaints, identifying trends, and providing termly reports on the number and nature of complaints to the governing body
- Where the complaint is not about the head teacher, the head teacher will appoint an appropriate person to investigate the complaint.

4.3 The investigator

An individual will be appointed by the head teacher to look into the complaint, and establish the facts. The investigator's role is to provide fair, open and thorough consideration of the complaint. They will:

- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what the complainant feels would put things right
- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- Consider records, written evidence and other relevant information
- Ensure that papers and evidence produced during the investigation are kept securely and treated confidentially.
- Be mindful of the timescales set out in this policy and keep the relevant person updated if timescales cannot be met.
- Prepare a written report or written outcome to the head teacher or complaints panel which includes the facts, findings and any recommended actions or potential solutions

4.4 Clerk to the board of trustees

The clerk will:

- Organise the complaint panel, if and when the complaint reaches Stage 3.
- Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints panel, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints panel meetings
- Set the date, time and venue of the pre-panel and panel hearing, ensuring that the venue and proceedings are accessible where reasonably practicable.
- Collate written material relevant to the complaint, including previous stage records, school submissions and complainant submissions.
- Circulate relevant papers and evidence to the complainant, the school representative and the panel within the timescales set out in the policy
- Arrange for notes/minutes to be taken within the meeting
- Circulate the panel's decision and any agreed minutes or records, as appropriate.
- Ensure that complaint records are handled securely and confidentially.

4.5 Complaint Review Panel chair

The complaint panel chair will:

- Chair the pre-panel and panel meeting, ensuring that they are conducted fairly, respectfully and everyone is treated with respect throughout
- Explain the purpose and remit of the panel at the start of the hearing
- Ensure that all parties understand the process and have a reasonable opportunity to present their case
- Ensure that written material is seen by all parties, provided this does not breach confidentiality, data protection requirements or any individual's right to privacy.
- Work with the panel to reach findings and recommendations based on the evidence.

4.6 Complaint Review Panel members

The complaint review panel members will:

- Consider the complaint fairly and impartially
- Declare any prior involvement, conflict of interest or prior knowledge of the complaint before agreeing to sit on the panel
- Keep all information relating to the complaint confidential
- Contribute to the panel's findings, recommendations and outcome decision.

5. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What action has already been taken to try to resolve the concern or complaint
- What remains unresolved
- What outcome the complainant is seeking
- What the school can reasonably do to resolve the complaint

5.1 Time scales

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

The school will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair and reasonable manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time or at weekends, we will consider them to have been received on the next school day. For the purpose of this policy 'school days' means days when the school is open to students. Weekends, school holidays and INSET days do not count as school days.

If at any point we cannot meet the time scales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Inform the complainant as soon as is reasonably practical
- Explain the reason for the delay.
- Provide a revised response date or revised timescale
- Keep the complainant updated where appropriate.

6. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the head teacher or trustees)

6.1 Stage 1: informal

The school will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

The complainant should raise the concern as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff or the head teacher, either in person or by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the school office office@langtreeschool.com / 01491 680514

Complainants should not approach individual trustees to raise concerns or complaints. Trustees have no power to act on an individual basis and involvement at an early stage may prevent them from considering a complaint at stage 3.

The school will acknowledge concerns (informal complaints) raised at stage 1 within 5 school days, and will aim to investigate and provide a response within 10 school days.

The informal stage will involve a meeting between the complainant and a member of the senior leadership team and/or the subject of the concern, if appropriate.

If the concern is not resolved informally, the complainant may escalate the matter to stage 2 as a formal complaint.

6.2 Stage 2: formal

The formal stage involves the complainant putting the complaint to the head teacher and/or the subject of the complaint:

- In a letter or email - using the complaint form in Appendix A. This can be completed and submitted electronically or by hand.
- Over the phone
- In person
- Through a third party acting on their behalf

The complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents. The complainant should also state what they feel would resolve the complaint.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the school office office@langtreeschool.com / 01491 680514

The head teacher (or other person appointed by the head teacher for this purpose) will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 10 school days by the head teacher.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and wishes to proceed to the next stage of this procedure, they should inform the clerk to the Board of Trustees in writing within 10 school days. The clerk can be contacted via email: trusteesclerk@langtreeschool.com or in writing addressing the complaint to "The Trustees Clerk" at the school address.

6.3 Stage 3: complaint review panel

Complaints will be escalated to the complaint review panel hearing stage if the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint at the second, formal, stage.

The panel will be appointed by or on behalf of the Board of Trustees and must consist of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least 1 panel member must be independent of the management and running of the school. The panel cannot be made up solely of Board of Trustees members, as they are not independent of the management and running of the school.

The panel will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress (see section 10).

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel; the review panel will seek to arrange a date that is reasonably convenient for all parties, but may proceed in the complainant's absence if reasonable dates are rejected without good reason. At the review panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the school, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings are not normally permitted unless required as a reasonable adjustment and agreed in advance by all parties.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the school representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

The panel will then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide copies of the minutes of the hearing and the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint, and make a copy available for inspection by the Board of Trustees and head teacher.

The school will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 15 school days.

7. Complaints against the head teacher, a trustee or the board of trustees

7.1 Stage 1: informal

Concerns (informal complaints) made against the head teacher or any member of the board of trustees should be directed to the clerk to the board of trustees in the first instance.

If the concerns is about the head teacher or one member of the board of trustees (including the chair or vice-chair), a suitably-skilled and impartial trustee (appointed by the board of trustees, chair or vice chair of trustees as appropriate) will carry out the steps at stage 1 (set out in section 6 above).

It may be possible to resolve a concern jointly against the Chair and vice chair of trustees , or the whole or the majority of the board of trustees at stage 1 , at a meeting between the complainant and one of the trustees, selected appropriately by the clerk. If not the process moves to Stage 2

7.2 Stage 2: formal

If the complaint is about a trustee, jointly about the chair and vice-chair, the entire board of trustees or the majority of the board of trustees, an independent investigator will carry out the steps in stage 2 (set out in section 6 above). They will be appointed by the clerk of the board of trustees and will write a formal response at the end of their investigation.

If the complaint is about the head teacher, the board of trustees will appoint an impartial member of the trustees to carry out the steps in stage 2 as set out in section 6 above.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and wishes to proceed to the next stage of this procedure, they should inform the clerk to the Board of Trustees in writing within 10 school days.

7.3 Stage 3: review panel

If the complaint is about the head teacher, any trustee or jointly about the chair and vice-chair, the entire board of trustees or the majority of the board of trustees, a panel of independent trustees will hear the complaint. They will be sourced from at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least 1 panel member must be independent of the management and running of the school. The panel cannot be made up solely of Board of Trustees members, as they are not independent of the management and running of the school.

7.4 The outcome of a complaint review panel:

The panel can:

- Uphold the complaint, in whole or in part
- Dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld, the panel will:

- Decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

The school will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 10 school days.

8. Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedure

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the school. The DfE will not overturn a school's decision about a complaint. However, it will look into:

- Whether there was undue delay, or the school did not comply with its own complaints procedure
- Whether the school was in breach of its funding agreement with the secretary of state
- Whether the school has failed to comply with any other legal obligation

If the school did not deal with the complaint properly, the school may be asked to re-investigate the complaint. If the school's complaints procedure is found to not meet regulations, the school will be asked to correct its procedures accordingly.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

The school will include this information in the outcome letter to complainants.

9. Persistent and unreasonable complaints

9.1 Unreasonably persistent complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore Langtree School will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive
- Knowingly provides false information
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to cooperate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

Steps we will take

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#)
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

Stopping responding

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from our school site.

9.2 Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete
- Direct them to the Department for Education Services (DfE) if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

9.3 Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

10. Record keeping

The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint, administering the complaint process or sitting on the review panel.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, or privacy notices.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole Board of Trustees in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the board of trustees is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the school will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the Board of Trustees, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

Complainants are also expected to keep complaint correspondence, statements and records confidential and are requested to not publish information relating to the complaint on social media or elsewhere and will be asked to return all documentation related to the complaint to the school for disposal at the end of the complaints procedure and dispose of all electronic records.

11. Learning lessons

The board of trustees will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the head teacher, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

12. Monitoring arrangements

The Pastoral and Community Committee will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly. The Board of Trustees will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in section 11.

The complaints records are logged and managed by the head teacher's PA.

This policy will be reviewed by the head teacher and the Pastoral and Community Committee on an annual basis.

13. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Exclusions policy
- SEN policy
- Privacy notices
- Equality and Diversity policy

Appendix A: Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the school office in an envelope marked for the attention of the **Head Teacher**, the **Chair of Trustees**, or the **Clerk to the Trustees**. They will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your Name: _____

School Name: Langtree School

Name(s) of Child/ren (If Applicable): _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Email Address: _____

Daytime Telephone Number: _____

Evening Telephone Number: _____

Your relationship to the school (e.g., parent, carer, member of public): _____

Please give details of your complaint: *(Include relevant dates, times, and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents)*

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (Who did you speak to and what was the response?)

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

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

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Official Use Only:

Date Complaint Received: _____

Date Acknowledgement Sent: _____

By Whom: _____

Complaint Referred To: _____

Date Referred: _____

Outcome:

Appendix B: Complaint Flow Chart

Complaint Flow Chart

Appendix B

