



LAURUS
TRUST

Complaints Procedure

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Procedures for dealing with complaints

In the Laurus Trust, we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which students will be helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially. We do however recognise that sometimes things can go wrong and parents/carers may need to make a complaint or raise concerns they have with the school. This policy tells you what to do if this happens.

This policy is available to the parents/carers of students within the Laurus Trust. If a parent/carer of a student initiates a complaint and then subsequently takes their child out of school, the Laurus Trust will still commit to following the procedures set out in this policy if appropriate.

The schools in the Laurus Trust will not respond to anonymous complaints unless issues of child protection are raised. Should a complaint be raised that doesn't fall within our procedure, parents/carers will be informed to whom they should direct their complaint.

INFORMAL STAGES

Most complaints/issues can be resolved informally and quickly by discussion with the member of staff concerned. Alternatively, parents/carers can write to a member of staff outlining the issue clearly.

Any complaint/issue raised by a parent or carer must be put in writing, clearly outlining all the issues. The school will provide a written response to the complaint within 10 school days, within term time. This may involve the school inviting parents/carers to come into school to discuss the issue or incident.

Directing an informal complaint/issue to the most relevant member of staff is often the best way of resolving it.

If the complaint is related to an issue of pastoral care or student welfare, then it should follow the Form Tutor > Head of Year > senior member of staff > Pastoral Deputy Headteacher route.

If the complaint is related to a specific subject area, then it should follow the Subject Teacher > Subject Leader > senior member of staff > Curriculum Deputy Headteacher route.

If the complaint is related to student progress, then it should follow the Subject Teacher > Subject Leader / Head of House > senior member of staff route.

Executive Team Meeting

In some circumstances, the Trust may offer a meeting with a member of the Executive Team to support the resolution of a parental complaint. This meeting may be offered either **before** or **after** a Formal Stage 1 investigation, where the Trust considers that such a discussion may help clarify concerns or identify a constructive way forward.

Where an Executive Team meeting is arranged, it may be necessary to extend the standard timescales set out in this policy. If revised timescales are required, the complainant will be informed of the new expected timeframe as soon as reasonably practicable.

FORMAL STAGE

There are three formal stages;

Stage 1

If a parent/carer is still dissatisfied after the informal stages, they can refer the matter to the Head of School. This should be done in writing and received within 15 school days, within term time, after the informal stage. On receipt of a complaint which has reached the formal stage, the parent/carer will initially be asked to respond to three questions in order to help reach a resolution.

- The parent/carer will be asked for details of how they have used the informal stages of the procedure and with whom.
- The parent/carer will be asked why they still feel that the matter remains unresolved.
- The parent/carer will be asked the action(s) that they would like the school to take.

The Head of School will deal with the complaint and, if appropriate, will offer a meeting to the parent/carer at a mutually convenient time. The Head of School will not agree to any meeting being recorded.

The Head of School may need to speak to other staff and students to investigate the concerns before writing a response. This should happen within 10 school days, within term time. If this timescale cannot be met the Head of School should inform the parent/carer that this will take longer. Reasons for this may be that the complaint is complex and needs more time or someone involved is absent through sickness or holidays. The Head of School should, however, give written notice of a realistic timescale for the complaint to be responded to.

Stage 2

If the complaint is still not resolved to the parent/carer's satisfaction, after the involvement of the Head of School, the complaint can be referred to the Chair of Academy Committee. This must be in writing to the Chair at the school address and received within 15 school days, within term time. This complaint must specify the unresolved issue and the complainant's preferred outcome.

If the Head of School is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should go straight to the Chair of Academy Committee without going through Stage 1. The Chair of Academy Committee will ask for the complaint to be put in writing (if this has not already happened).

If appropriate, the Chair of Academy Committee will offer to meet with the parent/carer at a mutually convenient time.

The Chair of Academy Committee has 15 school days, within term time, to investigate the complaint. If it cannot be resolved within this time, the Chair will inform the complainant and explain why it will take longer. Reasons for this may be that the complaint is complex and needs more time or someone involved is absent through sickness or holidays. The Chair of Academy Committee should, however, give written notice of a realistic timescale for the complaint to be responded to.

Stage 3

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

The Complaints Committee will only be convened if the Chair of Academy Committee 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 Chair of Academy Committee 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 Headteacher, the Chair of Academy Committee and any member of staff the complaint is about will be invited to the meeting. Any person invited can bring a friend or supporter if they wish. The Complaints Committee will consider any written material, and also give the person making the complaint and the Head of School, Chair of Academy Committee 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 findings and recommendations, in writing, within 15 school days, within term time, following the meeting, together with the reasons for their decision. A copy of these is sent to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about.

If, after this school-based process, you believe your complaint was not dealt with correctly, you can write to the DfE, acts on behalf of the Secretary of State.

A record of all written 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.

The Head of School will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. These records will state whether the complaint is resolved following a formal procedure, or if it proceeds to a panel hearing.

A written record is kept of a complaint at Stage 2 and Stage 3 of this procedure including details of the complaints, the steps that were taken and whether or not they were resolved following a formal procedure, including whether or not they proceeded to a panel hearing, and the action that was taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

A copy of this policy is available for inspection on the school premises.

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.

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. The decision not to consider a complaint of this nature will be taken by the Chair of Academy Committee or Vice Chair of Academy Committee along with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Schools reserves the right to limit the method of contact of such complaints and restrict who the complainant may communicate with in school.

The school will not respond individually to all complainants if the complaint has become a campaign by a number of complainants. The school may use a template response or publish a response/update on the website.

Complaints not in the scope of this policy include: admissions, external assessments of SEN, child protection, exclusion, whistleblowing, grievances, supplier services and complaints against the local authority.

The school also reserves the right not to consider a complaint that has been re-submitted with only minor differences after we have addressed the complaint.

Equality Impact Statement

Names and title of people involved with this assessment	Rachel Robinson Assistant Trust Director of Inclusion
Impact assessment carried out with regard to identified characteristics	☒ Race ☒ Disability ☒ Sex ☒ Age ☒ Religious Belief ☒ Sexual Orientation ☒ Gender Reassignment
Summary of any issue/proposed changes	Section added re Executive Team – highlighted at the bottom of page 3
Date	24.03.26
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