



Communications Policy
Including Complaints Procedure (page 5)

Date: May 2016

Date created: May 2016
Responsible: T Nelson
Date Ratified:
Responsible Committee:
Date to be reviewed: October 2019
Statutory Policy:

Communicating with the Academy

We want to hear from stakeholders - their views are important

We want all students, their families/carers and the local community to be happy with the education we provide, and our staff to do their best to support this. We welcome feedback and comments – either positive or negative. All are helpful.

Visits, regular reports and open evenings help to keep parents/carers up-to-date with what is happening and how your child is getting on at the Academy. You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of the Academy that you are worried about or you may be unhappy about the way in which a member of staff has dealt with your child.

Usually we can deal with any problems informally, but unfortunately this is not always possible and you may wish to make a formal complaint. Whatever the issue, please come and talk to us so that we can sort it out.

We are committed to providing excellent education at the Academy and maintaining a good reputation in the local community. The Principal, staff and Board of Directors take all concerns and complaints very seriously and we will do everything we can to ensure that you and your children are happy with our Academy.

Our promise to you:

- Your concern will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence
- Your concern will be considered thoroughly and fairly
- We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage
- You will receive an apology if we have made a mistake
- You will be told what we are going to do to put matters right

This procedure applies to any matter (other than matters relating to admissions and exclusions, which have their own processes) which has been raised with the Academy as a matter of concern

Communicating a concern

1. In any community misunderstandings arise or actions are taken which might be felt to go against the spirit of fairness and common sense established in the Academy. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about Academy policies or procedures, the conduct, actions or omissions of members of staff or Board of Directors and the standards of teaching and learning. It is important to move swiftly to prevent the escalation of a minor problem into a major incident.
2. Do not hesitate to contact the Academy if you are uneasy or dissatisfied about something. It is important not to let little concerns build up into serious mistrust or irritation. We are as keen to see things run smoothly as you are.
3. When you contact the Academy, begin as informally as possible - say what concerns you have and try to find out the facts. You will be in a much better position to know if you have grounds for/need to make a complaint when you are in possession of all the facts. We may be able to give an explanation or fill in details which answer your concerns. Do not rely solely on a child's account or on information from other parent/carers.
4. A telephone call or email is better than a letter, and a temperate letter is better than an ultimatum or threat of action. We welcome telephone calls and emails from parent/carers who wish to talk about a problem before it becomes a complaint.
5. Staff are not available to meet with stakeholders without a scheduled meeting. This is due to teaching and staff management commitments. We request that initial contact is made by telephone or email. If the matter is not resolved by this the next step would be a meeting at a mutually convenient time.
6. If a Stakeholder approaches a member of the Board of Directors directly, the Director Governor will direct that person to take the complaint to the Principal. In circumstances where the complaint is about the Principal, it may be appropriate for the Director Governor to make contact with the Chair of the Board of Directors.

Contacting the Academy

7. Talk to the right person. It may be tempting to "go straight to the top" but putting the problem to the Principal often escalates something that could have been better resolved at a lower level and will often be referred to the relevant member of staff. The reception team can help direct your enquiry to the correct person.
8. Who to contact?

Subject Related: If your concern is related to a subject matter, your son or daughter's class teacher would be your first line of approach, or should your concern not be resolved with them, contact the head of subject and then Director of Faculty.

Pastoral Care: If your concern is related to pastoral care, or discipline beyond concerns in one subject area, your first line of approach is your child's Personal Tutor and, overseeing their work, the Progress Leader for a particular year group.

Care and Welfare: Overseeing care and welfare in the Academy is the Senior Deputy Principal and Deputy Principal for Pastoral. These are the people who have immediate and overall responsibility for your child's pastoral care, discipline and involvement in Academy life. They are senior members of staff and members of the Academy's senior leadership team. In most cases, they will be best informed about your child and will be best placed to resolve problems.

Community: If you do not have a child that attends the academy or your enquiry is not covered above; please contact the reception team who will direct you to the correct member of staff.

The Academy's expectation of parent/carers and other stakeholders

9. The Academy seeks to build a partnership with parent/carers in the education of their children and with the local community.

This Communication Policy sets out how the Academy will deal with your concerns. We would ask that, for your part, you:

Parents/Carers

- Do not believe everything you hear, even from your own children – things are often not entirely the way they are reported (by children or by other parent/carers); children very much see things from their own point of view and important elements, circumstances and nuances of the story are often omitted in the version told to parent/carers.
- Find out what your child is like in the Academy - you may be surprised; children can be very different people from the way they are at home - sometimes for better and sometimes for worse;
- Do not involve your child inappropriately in your complaint - it is important that the child sees parent/carers and the Academy working together to resolve differences or difficulties; the child should not be placed in a position where s/he appears impertinent, insolent, disobedient or acts inappropriately; remember that directly countermanding a teacher's instruction or requirement is likely to make matters worse and bring confrontation rather than resolution.
- Take seriously and report without delay any concerns or suspicions of bullying;

All Stakeholders

- Trust the Academy to resolve matters according to the aims and methods stated in this document.
- Seek information from the Academy where you need it
- Consider what the Academy has to say
- Disclose full and frank information which would help the Academy to resolve situations with integrity and justice

Unreasonable or Unacceptable Communication

The Academy has a duty of care to all visitors, students and staff and does not accept unreasonable or offensive language.

Face to Face:

We politely request all visitors to the Academy consider their behaviour when on site. In cases of unreasonable behaviour a member of staff may advise the visitor that their behaviour is unacceptable and that they will be asked to leave if the behaviour does not stop.

Communication by telephone: Staff will end telephone calls if they feel the caller is being aggressive, abusive or offensive. The employee dealing with the caller has the right to make this decision and will advise that the call will be ended if the behaviour does not stop.

Unmanageable demands: Although not always intentionally, stakeholders may make what we consider unmanageable demands due to the amount of information they seek; the nature and scale of service they expect; or, the number of approaches they make. Examples of this include demanding responses within an unreasonable time-scale; insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff, excessive telephone calls and duplicate requests to more than one member of staff.

We will consider this contact to be unacceptable and/or unreasonable if it starts to impact substantially upon workload to the disadvantage of other stakeholders or academy service delivery.

What you can expect of the Academy

10. You can expect to receive a response to your communication within a minimum of 48 hours (2 school days).
11. You can expect staff to be professional. This may sometimes mean we do not agree with you and must put forward a view or make a decision that you may not like - but we will always explain our reasons.
12. Should your concern involve your child at the academy, they will be involved only if the complaint directly and personally concerns them.
Parent/Carers are sometimes worried that if they complain there will be adverse consequences for their child. The Academy is committed to ensuring that this is never the case.
13. You can expect members of staff to treat the complaint professionally and with appropriate confidentiality.

Anonymous complaints

17. Anonymous complaints are unhelpful and will not usually be acted upon.

Hazeley Formal Complaint Procedure

It is a precondition to the operation of the formal complaints policy that the complainant shall have made reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution and shall have acted in relation to the matter in a reasonable and measured way consistent with the Academy's Behaviour Code.

The Principal, Chair of the Board of Directors and the Chair of the Standards, Personalisation and Curriculum Development Committee shall have discretion to not allow a formal complaint to be pursued unless this precondition has been met.

We have adopted a formal procedure for dealing with complaints which have not been resolved following the informal route.

Stage 1 –

18. The complaint should be made formally in writing to the Principal via his Personal Assistant, detailing the nature of the complaint and the desired outcome.
19. The Academy will document the complaint, acknowledge it in writing within 7 school days of receipt, and the Principal will consult with those directly involved, and aim to deal with the complaint within 14 school days of the receipt of the formal letter of complaint. Senior staff will be involved as appropriate at this level.
20. The Principal or a senior member of staff may also meet with the complainant and, following any necessary investigation or actions provide a written response to the complaint.
21. If the complaint cannot be resolved, the complainant will be advised of the next stage which is to have the complaint heard before a panel.

Stage 2 –

22. If the stakeholder is not satisfied with the response to the complaint as dealt with at Stage 1 above then they will be invited to write to the Chair of the Board (at the Academy address) requesting a panel hearing.
23. The request for a panel hearing must be submitted as soon as possible and, in any event, within 7 school days of the decision in Stage 1 of the complaint being notified to parents. A panel hearing will be convened for the majority of complaints not capable of stage 1 resolution. The Chair of the Board retains the discretion not to move to stage 2 when the complaint concerns agreed Academy policies, procedure or is clearly vexatious.
24. The Chair of the Board will appoint a panel that will consider the complaint, within 21 school days of receipt of the notification.
25. The panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, including one person who is independent of the management and the running of the Academy.
26. Stakeholders may attend and be accompanied by a witness at a panel hearing if they wish.
27. The panel will also consider the Academy's response and may require further investigations and/or interviews as appropriate.
27. The panel will aim to reach a conclusion as quickly as possible, normally within 7 school days after the panel hearing.
28. The panel will record in writing its findings and recommendations and these will be sent to the complainant, the Principal and where relevant, the person complained about. This will normally be within 21 school days of the hearing.

Support

14. At any stage of the complaints procedure, stakeholders are welcome to bring with them a supportive friend who is not involved in the complaint.
15. Within the complaints procedure it is not appropriate for the Academy to engage in meetings to which stakeholders bring legal representatives or advisors.
16. The Academy will not generally enter into correspondence with solicitors or others in place of direct communication with parents.

Vexatious Complaints

There may be occasions when the complainant is deemed to be “vexatious”. This could be because it is clear that the complainant has insufficient grounds for complaint and is seeking to annoy, or that a complaint has been investigated and is found not to be justified, but the complainant persistently engages in making further accusations relating to the same issue. Any such case will be dealt with on an individual basis but the Principal and Chair of the Board of Directors reserve the right to close the complaint if the complainant is deemed to be “vexatious”, and to determine that the matter is now concluded.

Education Funding Agency

The Education Funding Agency also considers some complaints about Academy schools.

They can be contacted at:

Academies Central Unit (Academy Complaints)
Education Funding Agency
Earlsdon Park
53-55 Butts Road
Coventry
CV1 3BH

The Hazeley Academy
May 2016