



21/10/24

Review Date: 21 October 2025

Orchard Academy

www.orchard-academy.com

Complaints and Concerns Policy

1. Purpose and Scope

Orchard Academy values stakeholder feedback—comments, compliments, concerns, and complaints—as essential for continuous improvement. Your input helps us enhance our services and better meet the needs of our community. A concern is an expression of worry or doubt regarding an important issue, while a complaint indicates dissatisfaction about actions taken or not taken (Department for Education, Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016). Certain complaints, such as staff grievances, are addressed through separate policies. Anyone, including members of the public, may raise complaints about our services, except where statutory procedures apply (e.g., exclusions or admissions).

We take all concerns and complaints seriously and strive for informal resolution whenever possible. If initial attempts fail, formal procedures will be enacted to ensure a thorough resolution.

Objectives of the Policy:

- Encourage informal resolution of complaints.
- Ensure accessibility and visibility via our website.
- Maintain simplicity and clarity in the process.
- Foster an impartial and non-adversarial environment.
- Provide timely updates to complainants.
- Ensure fair investigations by independent parties when necessary.
- Protect confidentiality and share information on a need-to-know basis.
- Address all raised points and provide effective responses.
- Facilitate ongoing learning for our senior leadership teams and governing bodies through KPI monitoring.
- Ensure transparency throughout the process.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

The Director is responsible for ensuring a consistent approach to managing concerns and complaints. The Management Committee approves this procedure. Managers must respond to complaints fairly and consistently, logging all issues and investigating them discreetly. All staff are expected to engage professionally, aiming for informal resolution when possible.

3. Equality and Diversity

Orchard Academy is committed to promoting equality and diversity in its policies. We acknowledge that complainants may have different communication preferences due to various needs and will accept complaints made in alternative formats.

4. Communications

We prioritise effective communication between home and school, recognising the shift towards email as a primary mode of communication. To streamline interactions:

- Acknowledge phone calls within 48 hours.
- Respond to emails within 72 hours, indicating if more time is needed.
- Direct all correspondence through a central point to manage urgency effectively.
- Staff will not monitor emails outside of working hours.
- In cases of aggressive or unreasonable communication, staff will refer issues to senior leadership.

5. Complaints Procedure

Stage 1: Informal Concerns

Concerns should be raised informally with the relevant staff member. We will acknowledge these concerns within 3 working days and respond within 10 working days.

Stage 2: Formal Complaints

If unresolved, escalate the complaint in writing within 5 school days of receiving the Stage 1 response. The Director will investigate and respond within 10 school days.

Stage 3: Panel Hearing

If still dissatisfied, request a panel hearing within 5 school days of the Stage 2 response. The panel will include independent members and will provide a decision within 5 school days.

6. Complaints Against the Director or Management Committee

For complaints against the Director or governing members, follow similar stages but involve an independent governor or investigator as appropriate.

7. Serial and Persistent Complainants

We treat all valid complaints seriously but may designate complaints as unreasonable if they are repetitive, false, or intended to disrupt. We will communicate any limitations on contact clearly.

8. Steps We Will Take

To address unreasonable behaviour, we may:

- Provide a single point of contact.
- Limit contact frequency.
- Involve a third party for mediation.

9. Duplicate Complaints

If we receive duplicate complaints, we will assess any new information but will inform the complainant in writing if the issue has already been resolved.

10. Complaint Campaigns

In cases of numerous complaints on the same issue, we may respond with a single communication to all complainants. Normal procedures will still apply for those seeking further escalation.

11. Referring Complaints After Completion

If dissatisfied, complainants may refer to the Department for Education regarding compliance with standards.

12. Monitoring and Compliance

The Management Committee will review KPIs, including complaint statistics, every half term, while the Audit and Risk Committee will review summaries termly to ensure learning and compliance across Orchard Academy.

Approved by: Management Committee of Orchard Academy

Next Review Date: September 2025