

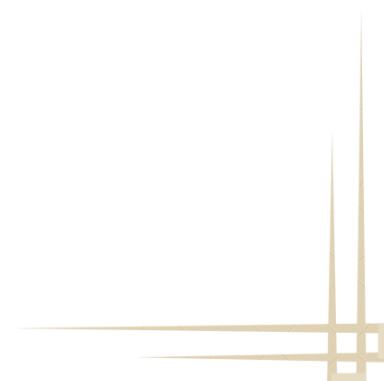


Wembley
Multi-Academy
Trust

ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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Introduction

Wembley Multi-Academy Trust (WMAT) is committed to providing the highest quality education and services. We recognise that, on occasion, parents, carers, pupils, or members of the public may wish to raise concerns or complaints. We want to know about your concerns or complaints are so that we can make improvements or changes if they are needed.

This policy sets out how such concerns or complaints will be handled fairly, promptly, and transparently. It follows the Department for Education's (DfE) 2025 model complaints procedure and complies with statutory guidance. The procedure applies to all schools and services within WMAT.

1. Scope of this Policy

This policy covers any expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of education provided, the actions of WMAT or its staff, or the application of policies.

It does not cover issues dealt with under separate statutory procedures, including:

- Exclusions (DfE statutory guidance on exclusions)
- Admissions (Local Authority process)
- Child protection / safeguarding (Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or MASH)
- Staff grievances and disciplinary matters
- Subject access requests / Freedom of Information requests
- Whistleblowing

Complaints about services provided by external providers using Trust premises should be directed to the provider. However, the Trust should be informed of any such complaints so that it can monitor the quality and suitability of services delivered on its premises.

2. Who Can Make a Complaint

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children registered at WMAT schools. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to WMAT about any provision of facilities or services we provide. Unless complaints fall under separate statutory processes (such as exclusions or admissions), they will be managed under this procedure.

WMAT is committed to ensuring that everyone can access and use this complaints procedure. In line with equality legislation, reasonable adjustments will be considered to support complainants where required. For example, this may include providing information in alternative formats, offering assistance in completing the complaints form, holding meetings in accessible locations, or making use of interpretation or translation services. Complainants are encouraged to contact the school office or Trust office if they require any such adjustments.

3. The Difference Between a Concern and a Complaint

- A **concern** is an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered important, for which reassurance is sought.
- A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally (see Stage 1 below) without progressing to the formal stages of this procedure.

4. How to Raise a Concern or Complaint

a) Raising a concern

Concerns may be raised in person, in writing, or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant with appropriate consent.

Most concerns should be raised initially with the relevant class teacher, subject leader, or Head of Year. It is hoped that most concerns can be resolved quickly and informally, without the need to move into the formal complaints procedures set out in this policy (see Stage 2 below). Some concerns can't be dealt with at class/subject/year level (for example, school-wide concerns) and these concerns may be raised with the Head Teacher informally either by sending an email via the school office or requesting a meeting.

b) Raising a complaint

If a concern is unable to be resolved informally (via Stage 1 of the process, see below) it moves into the formal complaints process set out below. If you wish to raise a formal complaint, this also follows the formal process below. To make a formal complaint (including unresolved concerns), we ask that you complete the Complaints Form and raise your complaint with the appropriate person/body as follows:

- Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made to the **Headteacher**, via the school office.
- Complaints about a Headteacher or staff within the Central Team (i.e. Finance, HR, IT) should be made directly to the **Chief Executive Officer**, via the Trust office.
- Complaints about the Chair of the Local Governing Body (LGB), an individual governor, or the entire LGB should be addressed to the **Clerk to the LGB** via the school office.
- Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer or a Trustee should be addressed to the **Chair of the Trust Board**, via the Trust office.
- Complaints about the Chair of Trustees or the entire Trust Board will be referred to an independent panel and should be addressed to the **Governance Professional**, via the Trust office.

A template **Complaint Form** is available **online – link [here](#)**, copy of the form is also attached to the policy in **Appendix A**. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office or Trust office, and reasonable adjustments will be made where required.

You can also ask a third-party organisation, for example the Citizens Advice Bureau, (<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>) or someone known to you that you trust, to help you.

5. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated. The Headteacher, CEO, or Chair of Trustees (as appropriate) will determine whether the complaint warrants investigation.

6. Timescales

Concerns should be raised promptly, as soon as is practical after the concern arises (and within three months at the latest). This allows a concern to be dealt with quickly and informally if possible, before it escalates or is repeated.

Complaints should also be raised promptly if possible but, at the latest, must be raised within **three months** of the incident (or the last in a series of incidents). Complaints outside this timeframe will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Concerns and complaints received outside of term time will be treated as received on the next school day.

7. Resolving Complaints

At each stage, WMAT aims to resolve complaints constructively. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. We may take action to resolve or improve the situation. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- An explanation
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- An assurance the issue will not recur
- A review of policies or systems in light of the complaint
- An apology

Where required by law or regulation, or where it is otherwise appropriate to do so, the Trust may also notify or share information with external bodies such as the Department for Education, Ofsted, the Police, or the Local Authority. Any sharing of personal data will be undertaken in accordance with data protection legislation and the Trust's Data Protection Policy.

8. Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint they are welcome to do so. We will ask you to confirm this in writing to the person or body the complaint was originally addressed to.

9. Concerns and Complaints at School Level

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution of Concerns

It is hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved quickly and informally. In the first instance, concerns should normally be raised with the relevant class teacher, subject leader, or Head of Year. If the matter cannot be resolved at that level, it may be referred to the Headteacher.

Please do not approach individual governors or Trustees to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 of the procedure.

The member of staff considering the concern will listen carefully to all relevant parties, establish the facts, and seek to provide a resolution where possible. A brief written record of the concern and the outcome may be kept to ensure consistency and allow patterns to be monitored.

If the complainant feels unable to discuss a concern with the member of staff nominated to consider it, their views will be respected and the matter referred to another appropriate colleague to address it. Similarly, if the member of staff nominated to consider the complaint feels unable to deal with the concern, it may be referred to another appropriate member of staff.

Records of concern and complaints are retained and managed in accordance with the Trust's Data Protection Policy. The Board receives anonymised information on complaints to support oversight of trends and themes.

At the conclusion of Stage 1, the person investigating the concern will provide either an informal written response or confirmation of the outcome in another appropriate format, normally within **10 school days** of the concern being received.

If the concern cannot be resolved informally, the next step is to raise a formal complaint.

Stage 2 – Raising A Formal Complaint

a) School Level Complaints

Formal complaints must be submitted in writing (using the [online](#) complaints form or copy in [Appendix A](#)) to the Headteacher, unless the complaint is about the Headteacher, in which case it should be addressed to the CEO. The complaint should set out clearly the issues and the outcome sought.

The Headteacher will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within five school days. The Headteacher may decide to investigate the matter personally or may delegate the investigation to another senior member of staff. If delegated, the Headteacher will nevertheless retain responsibility for reaching the final decision and issuing the written outcome.

The Headteacher (or senior staff member) will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, gather evidence and establish the facts of the case, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. This may include meeting with those people involved in the matter and those cited in the complaint. Individuals may be accompanied at any meeting if they wish. A written record will be kept of any meetings and discussions conducted during this investigation phase.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response to the complainant within 20 school days of receipt of the complaint. If it is not possible to meet this timescale, the complainant will be provided with an update explaining the reason for the delay and setting out a revised response date.

The written response will detail the steps taken to investigate the complaint, provide a full explanation of the decision reached and the reasons for it, and, where appropriate, explain the actions that WMAT will take to resolve the matter. The complainant will also be informed of how to escalate their complaint to Stage 3 of this procedure should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

b) Other Complaints

Other complaints will follow the same process as set out above for School level complaints, however the complaint will be dealt with and investigated by different people/bodies as follows:

- Complaints about a Headteacher or staff within the Central Team (i.e. Finance, HR, IT) should be made directly to the **Chief Executive Officer**, via the Trust office.
- Complaints about the Chair of the Local Governing Body (LGB), an individual governor, or the entire LGB should be addressed to the **Clerk to the LGB** via the school office.
- Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer or a Trustee should be addressed to the **Chair of the Trust Board**, via the Trust office.
- Complaints about the Chair of Trustees or the entire Trust Board will be referred to an independent panel and should be addressed to the **Governance Professional**, via the Trust office.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If dissatisfied with the Stage 2 outcome or the way it was handled, a complainant may appeal against the outcome/handling and request a panel hearing. Requests must be submitted in writing to the Governance Professional (via the Trust office) within **15 school days** of the Stage 2 decision letter being received. Late requests will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

The request should set out the reasons for the appeal and what outcome is sought. Grounds may include:

- Procedural irregularities
- Factual errors or misinterpretation of evidence
- Inappropriate action/inaction given the circumstances

The Governance Professional will acknowledge the appeal within **five school days** and will convene a panel within **20 school days**. If this is not possible, the Governance Professional will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed. The panel will consist of at least three people who have not been involved previously, including one person who is independent of the Trust. The Governance Professional will notify all parties of the date, time and venue of the hearing and will request any written submissions in advance of the meeting. Those materials will be circulated at least five school days in advance of the meeting. New complaints or issues not previously raised will not be considered at this stage.

The hearing will be held in private. The complainant may be accompanied by a friend or relative. As this is not a legal process, **legal representation is not normally permitted**. Witnesses may be called where appropriate and may be accompanied by a union representative. Representatives of the media are not permitted to attend.

During the hearing, the panel will consider the written evidence, hear from the complainant and from the Trust, and may ask questions to clarify the grounds of appeal. The panel may uphold the complaint in full, uphold it in part, or dismiss it. Where the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the panel will decide what action should be taken to resolve the matter and, where appropriate, recommend changes to systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The decision of the panel is final within WMAT. A written outcome, setting out the decision and the reasons for it, will be sent to the complainant and, where relevant, any person complained about, within **10 school days** of the hearing. The letter will also explain how to refer the matter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if the complainant is dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the Trust.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. Records will include the outcome and any actions taken, regardless of the decision.

All correspondence, statements, and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where disclosure is required by law or where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access.

The panel's findings and recommendations will be shared with the complainant, the Trust Board, and, where appropriate, the individual complained about.

10. Complaints at Trust Level

If a complaint is escalated to the Trust directly, or relates to the work of the central Trust team or one of the Headteachers, it should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer. The CEO will acknowledge the complaint in writing within **five school days** of receipt and confirm that the matter will be investigated under this Complaints Policy. A full written response will normally be provided within **20 school days**. If this deadline cannot be met, the complainant will receive an explanation for the delay and a revised timescale.

If the complaint concerns the CEO or a Trustee, it will be investigated by the Chair of the Trust Board. If the complaint is about the Chair of Trustees, the Vice Chair will carry out the investigation. Where the Chair (or Vice Chair) of the Trust Board investigates a complaint, the outcome letter will be sent to the complainant and copied to the CEO.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of this stage, they may request that the matter be referred to a Complaint Panel. Requests must be submitted in writing to the Governance Professional within **10 school days** of the response. The Governance Professional will acknowledge receipt within **five school days** and aim to convene a panel within **20 school days**.

The Complaint Panel will consist of at least three people who have not previously been involved in the matter, and at least one member will be independent of the management and running of the Trust. The independent panel member will not be an employee, governor or Trustee of the Trust. None of the panel members will have prior detailed knowledge of the complaint. If the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair, the entire Trust Board, or the majority of the Trust Board, all three panel members will be completely independent of WMAT.

The Governance Professional will confirm the date, time, and venue of the meeting and request any further written material at least **five school days** in advance. This information will be circulated to all parties before the hearing. The panel will not normally accept covert recordings as evidence, nor will it consider new complaints raised at this stage.

The hearing will be held in private. Complainants may be accompanied by a relative or friend, and legal representation is not usually permitted. Witnesses may attend where relevant and may be accompanied by a union representative. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

The panel will consider all the evidence presented and may uphold the complaint in full, uphold it in part, or dismiss it entirely. Where the complaint is upheld, the panel will determine appropriate actions to resolve the matter and may recommend changes to Trust systems or procedures.

The Chair of the Panel will provide the complainant with a written explanation of the decision and the reasons for it within **10 school days** of the meeting. This letter will also set out the next steps, including how to refer the matter to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if the complainant believes WMAT has not followed its procedure correctly.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. Records will include the outcome and any actions taken, regardless of the decision.

All correspondence, statements, and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where disclosure is required by law or where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access.

The panel's findings and recommendations will be shared with the complainant, the Trust Board, and, where appropriate, the individual complained about.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

The effectiveness of this Complaints Procedure depends on the responsibilities of all parties being clearly set out and met:

The Complainant

Complainants will receive a more effective response to their complaint if they explain their concern fully and as early as possible, cooperate with the Trust in seeking a solution, and respond promptly to requests for information or meetings. They should ask for assistance if needed, treat all those involved in the process with courtesy and respect, and maintain confidentiality by refraining from publicising details of their complaint including on social media or other public forums.

The Headteacher or Investigator (the person investigating the complaint)

The role of the investigator is to understand the complaint, establish the facts relevant to the complaint and to provide a fair, open and transparent account of what has happened. This may involve meeting with the complainant, staff, pupils, or others involved; reviewing relevant records; and analysing the information gathered. Meetings should be conducted with sensitivity and an open mind, treating all those involved with courtesy and respect, and detailed notes should be kept. The investigator will prepare a written report setting out the facts, identifying potential solutions, and recommending actions to resolve the issue. The Headteacher, CEO, Chair, Vice Chair or Complaints Panel (as is appropriate) will then make the final decision and communicate the outcome.

The Complaints Co-Ordinator

Where appointed, the Complaints Co-ordinator ensures the smooth running of the procedure. This includes keeping the complainant updated, liaising between staff, the Headteacher, the CEO, the Chair of the LGB or Trustees, Panel Members and the Governance Professional, and ensuring that records are maintained. They must be mindful of issues such as confidentiality, third-party information and additional support needs, for example interpretation or child-appropriate communication.

The Governance Professional

The Governance Professional acts as the Clerk to the Complaints Panel. They are responsible for ensuring all parties understand their rights and duties under relevant law, for arranging meetings, collating and circulating papers in good time, taking minutes, and notifying all parties of the Panel's decision.

In practice, where a Complaints Panel is convened, the Governance Professional may also perform the duties of the Complaints Co-ordinator for that stage, ensuring continuity and avoiding duplication.

The Panel Chair

The Panel Chair, nominated in advance of the hearing, ensures that the meeting is conducted fairly, courteously, and without unnecessary formality. They confirm the remit of the Panel, ensure that both the complainant and the Trust are able to present their case, and that all written material is seen by the parties in attendance. The Chair ensures the issues are addressed, key findings of fact are made, and that the Panel acts independently and without bias.

Panel Members

Panel members must be independent and impartial, with no prior involvement in the matter. Their role is to establish the facts and seek reconciliation where possible, recognising that the complainant may not always agree with the outcome. Panel members should take particular care where a child or young person is involved, ensuring they are supported, their views are heard, and their welfare is given paramount consideration.

12. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

WMAT will maintain a written record of all complaints, including whether they were resolved informally (stage 1) or formally, at Stage 2, or at Stage 3, and what actions were taken in response. Records will note the stage reached, the outcome, and any recommendations made. These records will be reviewed periodically by the Trust Board and, in some cases, Members, to identify patterns and inform improvements. All records relating to individual complaints will be kept securely and treated as confidential, in line with WMAT's Data Protection Policy. Information will only be shared where it is legally required, such as at the request of the Secretary of State for Education, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), or Ofsted.

13. Next Steps

If a complainant believes that WMAT has not handled their complaint in accordance with this procedure, or that the Trust has acted unlawfully or unreasonably under education law, they may contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) once Stage 3 has been completed.

The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of a complaint or overturn any decision made by WMAT. Its role is to consider whether the Trust has followed the correct process and complied with relevant education legislation.

Complaints can be referred to the DfE in the following ways:

- **Online:** [https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact the Department for Education](https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact%20the%20Department%20for%20Education)
- **Post:** Ministerial and Public Communication Division
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

14. Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

WMAT is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high-quality service to those who raise genuine concerns.

We do not expect staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect them from behaviour that is abusive, intimidating, threatening or disrespectful.

WMAT defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders the proper consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact.

Examples include refusing to articulate a complaint clearly, refusing to cooperate with the investigation process, repeatedly raising the same issue after it has been addressed, introducing trivial or irrelevant information, making excessive demands on staff time, or seeking unrealistic outcomes. It may also include threats, intimidation, offensive or discriminatory language, knowingly providing false information, or publishing defamatory material on social media or other public forums.

Complainants are expected to limit their communications to what is necessary for the complaint to be considered. Where behaviour is unreasonable, the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees will normally discuss concerns with the complainant informally before designating the behaviour as unreasonable.

If the behaviour continues, the complainant will be informed in writing that their behaviour is unreasonable and will be asked to modify it. WMAT may, where necessary, limit the complainant's contact with staff, specify a single method of communication, or restrict the frequency of contact. Such arrangements will normally be reviewed after six months.

In cases of serious incidents involving aggression, threats, or violence, WMAT will immediately contact the police and take appropriate protective action, which may include barring the individual from Trust premises.

COMPLAINT FORM

- For formal complaints within a school, please refer to point [10a of the policy](#), complete the form and send it to the relevant email address below.
- For other formal complaints, please refer to point [10b of the policy](#), complete the form and send it to the relevant email address below.

ELPS Office
Email: complaints@elps.co.uk

WHTC Office
Email: complaints@whtc.co.uk

NBS Office
Email: complaints@northbrentschool.co.uk

Trust Office
Email: complaints@wmat.co.uk

Your name:	
Pupil's name (if relevant):	
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Day time telephone number:	
Evening telephone number:	
Email address:	
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.	

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

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

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Action taken:

Date: