



WICKERSLEY  
PARTNERSHIP  
TRUST.

# Parental/Customer Complaints Policy

**DATE:** March 2026

**OWNED BY:** Risk and Compliance Manager

**APPROVED BY:** Trust Board

**WICKERSLEY PARTNERSHIP TRUST**

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 [wickersleypt.org](http://wickersleypt.org) **CEO:** Mrs H O'Brien



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This policy does not form part of the contract of employment and from time to time may be altered following consultation and negotiations with recognised Trade Unions. Any changes will be communicated to employees with reasonable notice. The policy may vary from time to time on a case-by-case basis in consultation and agreement with Union Representatives.



# 1. Introduction

Wickersley Partnership Trust (hereafter referred to as WPT) believes that everyone should be treated fairly and with respect.

This policy is intended to allow individuals to raise:

**A concern** – this is where an individual has ‘worry or anxiety’ over an issue caused by or happening in School or WPT which they consider important and to which reassurances are sought.

**A complaint** – this is where a concern has not been resolved relating to a School or WPT, or the services that it provides.

An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this policy but will be reviewed under the whistleblowing policy.

To allow for a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school/WPT as soon as possible. In general, in line with the government departmental guidance below, any matter raised more than three months after the issue, will not be considered unless there are exceptional circumstances.

This policy is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at School within WPT. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to a School or WPT about any provision of facilities or services that we provide.

***Department for Education (DfE) guidance – best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures 2021:***

*Your procedure should set realistic and reasonable time limits for each action within each stage. Where further investigations are necessary and its clear published timescales cannot be met, we recommend you:*

*set new time limits*

*send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay*

*allow a reasonable timeframe for complaints to be raised after an incident arises*

*We consider 3 months to be an acceptable time frame in which to lodge a complaint. Additional time can be given in exceptional circumstances.*

*You can include a cut-off time frame for:*

*raising a complaint*

*escalating a complaint*

*If your procedure includes a cut-off time frame, you should make it clear that you'll take exceptional circumstances into account when deciding whether to accept or progress a complaint.*

**In line with the above DfE best practice guidance:**

The trust and schools within the trust consider 3 months to be an acceptable time frame in which to lodge a complaint and complaints beyond the 3-month timeframe will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

The trust considers exceptional circumstances to be:

- Physical and mental illness or health emergencies (including treatment that has had a sufficient impact on the ability to undertake the required submission of information).

- Disabilities for which a reasonable adjustment in timeline have been requested by the complainant to support their submission of information.
- Bereavement by reason of the recent death of a person to whom the complainant can show a close relationship affecting the submission of information within the required timeframe.
- Legal issues or advice have delayed the required submission of information within the required timeframe.

The Trust reserves the right to seek clarity in relation to any request to extend the timeline made under exceptional circumstances.

Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as an appeal relating to a refused admission application or an independent review relating to an exclusion from school), we will use this Complaints Policy.

WPT are responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of this policy. As part of equality monitoring, WPT will review and monitor the operation and impact of the policy on a regular basis.

Any complaint which relates to harassment or bullying on the part of a colleague, will be dealt with under the WPT Harassment and Bullying Policy - the procedure for which has been drafted in line with this WPT Complaints Policy (please refer to the WPT Harassment and Bullying Policy).

Given the academic year calendar, WPT will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

## 2. Aims

This policy applies to any individual wishing to raise a concern or complaint regarding WPT or any of our services that we provide, and aims to:

- Ensure WPT fulfils its legal obligations in accordance with relevant legislation
- Promote a climate in which good equal opportunities practice exists
- Ensure every employee is treated with dignity and respect
- Ensure that any form of intimidation, victimisation, harassment or bullying (see Harassment and Bullying Policy) will not be tolerated
- Ensure training, development and progression opportunities are available to all
- Ensure we allow our staff the power to change lives for the better and the responsibility to do no less
- Ensure we create an atmosphere where each child is valued as an individual, enabling them to develop a positive self-image, self-discipline and respect for other students
- Reinforce our inclusive and diverse approach to recruitment, retention and development

## 3. Legislation

This policy complies with (but is not limited to) the following legislation and regulation:

- Education and Training (Welfare of Children) Act 2021
- Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- General Data Protection Regulations

- Equality Act 2010

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

### Complainants

Complainants will receive a more effective response to the concern/complaint if they:

- Explain their concern/complaint in full outlining event(s) as accurately as possible and, where possible, within three months of the incident occurring.
- Provide clarity regarding what they would like to happen next and what outcome(s) they would wish to achieve
- Co-operate with the school/WPT in seeking a solution
- Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- Refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality
- Ensure that they are familiar with the content of this policy

### Roles and Responsibilities – Concerns and Complaints Relating to a School

**If you have concerns** over an issue caused by or happening in School which you consider important and to which reassurances are sought. We would advise that you try to resolve these in person in the first instance with a member of staff e.g. Senior Leader, Pastoral Team, class teacher etc.

Should you not be satisfied with the outcome of discussions with staff member(s), you have the right to make a complaint.

**Where a complaint has been submitted**, the following steps will be taken:

#### Stage 1: Informal Stage

**Responsibility:** School Senior Leadership Team

They are responsible for:

- Meeting a complainant at an informal level to investigate a complaint in relation to the school
- Working with the complainant to satisfactorily resolve the issues

#### Stage 2: Formal Stage

**Responsibility:** Headteacher

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the stage 1 meeting, the Headteacher is responsible for:

- Meeting a complainant at a formal level to review the investigation of the complaint at stage 1
- Review the outcomes of the stage 1 complaint
- Work towards a satisfactory resolution with the complainant.

#### Stage 3: Formal Stage

**Responsibility:** Governing Body

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the stage 2 meeting with the Headteacher, the governing body are responsible for:

- Convening a governors' panel to hear the complaint
- Review whether the school has acted appropriately in relation to the complaint outcome and resolution or determine if the complaint is upheld
- The Panel can make findings and recommendations as part of the hearing process and a copy of those findings or recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises

#### **Stage 4: Formal Stage**

**Responsibility:** Wickersley Partnership Trust - as appointed by the Chief Executive Officer

If the complainant feels that the investigation and hearing of the complaint has not been conducted **appropriately** the Trust is responsible for:

- Conducting a review of the process the school has followed during stages 1,2 and 3
- Determining whether the school has acted fairly and proportionately in their response to the complaint
- The Panel can make findings and recommendations as part of the hearing process and a copy of those findings or recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises

#### **Stage 5: Formal Stage**

**Responsibility:** Wickersley Partnership Trust Board - as appointed by the Chair of the Trust Board

If the complainant feels that the investigation, hearing and Trust review of the process has not been conducted appropriately the Trust Board is responsible for convening a panel, with no insight into the complaint or prior involvement to ensure impartiality, who will:

- Review the process followed
- Determine whether the process has been fair and proportionate
- The Panel can make findings and recommendations as part of the hearing process and a copy of those findings or recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises

**NB:** Circumstances may sometimes dictate that a complaint may be initially escalated to a higher level at the point of receipt (e.g. where a complaint relates to a Member of the Schools SLT then the Headteacher may have to assume responsibility for the initial investigation under stage 2)

#### **Roles and Responsibilities - Complaints Relating to the Trust's Central Operational Activity, conduct of a Trust (Central Team) Employee or a Headteacher**

**If you have concerns** over an issue caused by or happening at WPT which you consider important and to which reassurances are sought. We would advise that you try to resolve these in person in the first instance with a member of staff e.g. person you have been dealing with / their line manager etc.

Should you not be satisfied with the outcome of discussions with staff member(s), you have the right to make a complaint.

**Where a complaint has been submitted**, the following steps will be taken:

#### **Stage 1: Informal Stage**

**Responsibility:** Investigating Officer (Service Leader)

The Investigating Officer will be responsible for:

- Meeting a complainant at an informal level to investigate a complaint in relation to the Trust

- Working with the complainant to satisfactorily resolve the issues

**Stage 2: Formal Stage**

**Responsibility:** Senior Trust Officer(s)

If the complainant feels that the investigation of the complaint has not been conducted appropriately the Trust is responsible for:

- Conducting a review of the investigation process and outcome during stage 1
- Determining whether the Trust has acted fairly and proportionately in their response to the complaint

**Stage 3: Formal Stage**

**Responsibility:** Trust Officer Panel as appointed by the Chief Executive Officer

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the stage 1 and 2 meeting, the panel is responsible for:

- Hearing representations from the complainant
- Review whether the Trust has acted appropriately in relation to the complaint outcome and resolution
- Determine if the complaint is upheld
- The Panel can make findings and recommendations as part of the hearing process and a copy of those findings or recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises

**Stage 4: Formal Stage**

**Responsibility:** Wickersley Partnership Trust Board - as appointed by the Chair of the Trust Board

If the complainant feels that the investigation, hearing and Trust review of the process has not been conducted appropriately, the Trust Board is responsible for convening a panel, with no insight into the complaint or prior involvement to ensure impartiality, who will:

- Review the process followed
- Determine whether the process has been fair and proportionate
- The Panel can make findings and recommendations as part of the hearing process and a copy of those findings or recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises

**NB:** Circumstances may sometimes dictate that a complaint may be initially escalated to a higher level at the point of receipt (e.g. where a complaint relates to a Headteacher, then Senior Trust Manager(s) may have to assume responsibility for the initial investigation under stage 2)

**Chief Executive Officer (CEO) / Headteachers**

They are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all existing and new employees are trained on this policy, and become familiar with this policy
- Ensuring the complaints policy is embedded within the Trust and schools
- Ensuring the complaints policy is followed appropriately

**Investigating Officers and Hearing Panels**

Complaints investigators and hearing panels will:

- Providing a sensitive and thorough meeting / hearing process with the complainant to establish what has happened and who is involved
- Considering all records, evidence and relevant information provided
- Interviewing all parties that are involved in the complaint, including staff and pupils (if necessary)
- Analyse all information in a comprehensive and fair manner
- Liaise with the complainant and clarifying an appropriate resolution to the problem
- Identifying and recommending solutions and courses of action to take
- Responding to the complainant in a clear and understandable manner
- Ensuring that any concerns raised under the scope of this policy will be treated seriously and sensitively
- Ensuring that any allegations raised are investigated promptly and appropriately in accordance with the procedure set out in this policy and/or any other relevant policies as appropriate
- Where appropriate, make findings and recommendations as part of the hearing process and a copy of those findings or recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises

### **The Clerk to the School Governing Body**

They are responsible for:

- Handling and delegating responsibilities regarding formal complaints in relation to the school/staff.

### **The Clerk to the Trust Board**

They are responsible for:

- Handling and delegating responsibilities regarding complaints against local Governors, Trustees, the Chair of Trustees or where applicable, the CEO.

### **Complaints Review Panel Members**

They will be aware that:

- The review panel hearing is independent and impartial of previous investigations and responses
- No individual with prior involvement in a complaint, or the circumstances surrounding it, is permitted to sit on the panel
- The aim of the panel is to achieve a reasonable resolution and, ultimately, attain reconciliation between the parties involved
- Reconciliation between the trust and complainant is not always achievable, and that it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations to reassure the complainant that their case has been taken seriously
- The panel can:
  - Dismiss or uphold the complaint, in whole or in part
  - Recommend changes that the school/trust can make to prevent reoccurrence of the problem
- Complainants may feel nervous or inhibited in a formal setting and, therefore, the proceedings should be as welcoming as possible
- When a child is present at the hearing, extra care needs to be taken to ensure that the child does not feel intimidated, as well as ensuring the child's view is represented equally
- Make findings and recommendations as part of the hearing process and a copy of those findings or recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises.

## 5. Scope of the Policy

This policy covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by WPT, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below:

Exceptions	Who to Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions to schools</li> <li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs</li> <li>• School re-organisation proposals</li> </ul>	<p>Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with the Head of Service Access to Education in Rotherham Local Authority.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>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).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of children from school*</li> </ul>	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at:</p> <p><a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a></p> <p>*Complaints about the application of policies relating to behaviour can be made through the school's complaints procedure. See WPT Staff Code of Conduct and the WPT Policy for more details.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whistleblowing</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer.</p> <p>Referrals can be made at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a></p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff grievances</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff conduct</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p>

Exceptions	Who to Contact
	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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities</li> </ul>	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National curriculum – content</li> </ul>	Please contact the Department for Education at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the Police, Local Authority (LA) Safeguarding Teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against the Trust or any of the schools within the Trust in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

## 6. Raising a Concern or Complaint and the Process

If you have concerns over an issue caused by or happening in School which you consider important and to which reassurances are sought. We would advise that you try to resolve these directly in the first instance with a member of staff e.g. Senior Leader, Pastoral Team, class teacher etc.

Should you not be satisfied with the outcome of discussions with staff member(s), you have the right to make a formal complaint. Where a formal complaint has been submitted, the following steps will be taken:

### Complaints about a school

Complainants should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events and copies of relevant documents.

It is very important that complainants include a clear statement of the actions they would like the school/Trust to take to resolve their concern.

**Complaints should be raised in writing via email to the school's email address which can be found on the 'Contact Us' page of the school's website** following the format outlined below:

- Your name
- Relationship to the school
- Child's name
- Your address
- Contact details
- Concise details of your complaint (including dates, names of witnesses etc.)
- What actions you have already taken to try to resolve your complaint (who have you spoken with or written to already?)
- What actions you feel might resolve the problem at this stage
- Date

The Headteacher and/or nominated person(s) will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within two (2) working school days.

The school will always take the complaint expressed seriously and hope to resolve the issue in an informal way wherever possible. The school will aim to discuss ways of resolving the issue with the complainant. Unless specifically stated otherwise, the school will deal with all initial contacts at the informal stage.

At each stage of the process the school aims to resolve the complaint. Where appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- An explanation
- Where appropriate an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- Where appropriate an assurance that we will try to ensure the event leading to the complaint will not reoccur
- Where appropriate an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- Where appropriate an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- Where appropriate an apology

### **Withdrawal of a Complaint**

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

### **Submitting a Complaint**

#### **Informal Stage**

##### **Stage 1: School Senior Leadership Team member resolution meeting**

It is normally appropriate to communicate directly with a member of the Senior Leadership Team at the school.

If the complaint is about a Senior Leadership member of staff, the complainant should follow the process below by contacting the Headteacher.

The complaint may be by letter or by e-mail, many concerns can be resolved by a simple clarification, or the provision of relevant information and, it is anticipated that most concerns will be resolved within five (5) working school days at this informal stage.

A written summary of the complaint meeting and any agreed actions will be provided to the complainant within ten (10) working school days of the complaint being received. The SLT member will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome; the complainant should escalate the complaint within ten (10) working school days of receipt of the written outcome.

#### **Formal Stage**

##### **Stage 2: Headteacher investigation and resolution meeting and written response**

If a complainant is concerned that the complaint has not been resolved at the informal stage, the complainant must put the complaint in writing for the attention of the Headteacher via email/letter to the school's email address which can be found on the 'contact us' page of the school's website who will be responsible for:

Meeting a complainant at a formal level to review the investigation of the complaint at stage 1 and work towards a satisfactory resolution with the complainant. It is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved within ten (10) working school days at this formal stage.

A written summary of the complaint meeting and any agreed actions will be provided to the complainant within five (5) working school days of the complaint meeting taking place. The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome; the complainant should escalate the complaint within ten (10) working school days of receipt of the written outcome.

### **Stage 3: Governance hearing of the complaint and formal response**

Should stage 2 of the complaint process not bring about a satisfactory resolution for the complainant, then the complainant must re-submit their original email or letter, and outline why they feel the matter has not been satisfactorily resolved at stage 2 and how they feel it could be.

The re-submission of the email or letter, should also include any new details which might assist the process. The governors will then review the complaint to establish whether due process has been followed, and the actions taken are fair, reasonable and proportionate. Each area of the complaint will either be upheld, partially upheld or not upheld and governors can also make recommendations where appropriate

The re-submission of the email or letter, should be sent to the clerk to governing bodies at: [clerk@wickersleypt.org](mailto:clerk@wickersleypt.org) for the attention of the chair of the Governing Body. The Governing body will then convene a panel to investigate the complaint within twenty (20) working school days and respond to the complainant in writing within five (5) working school days after the hearing.

The letter will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint to a Trust review should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome, the complainant should escalate the complaint within ten (10) working school days of receipt of the written outcome.

### **Stage 4: Trust Review process**

Should stage 3 of the complaints process not bring about a satisfactory resolution for the complainant, a Complaint Review Request should be made either via email/letter following the format outlined including:

- Your name
- Your address
- Contact details
- Outline why you are dissatisfied with how your complaint has been dealt with by the school
- What actions you feel may resolve the problem at this stage
- Date

The email or letter must be submitted to the Trust at [clerk@wickersleypt.org](mailto:clerk@wickersleypt.org) within ten (10) working school days of receiving notice of the outcome of the formal complaint stage 3 (governance hearing). It must include a statement that explains the reasons why the Complainant is not happy with the outcome of the investigation.

A review of the process followed by the school will be conducted by a Trust representative appointed by the Chief Executive Officer or appropriate senior manager. This will usually take place within Twenty (20) working school days of the receipt of the request. The review will normally be conducted through a consideration of written submissions, but reasonable requests to make oral representations will be considered sympathetically.

The review will be conducted by Trust Senior leaders and an outcome letter sent to the complainant within five (5) working school days of the conclusion of the review. The letter will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint to a Trust review should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome, the complainant should escalate the complaint within ten (10) working school days of receipt of the written outcome.

### **Stage 5: Trust Board Review process**

Should stage 4 of the complaints process not bring about a satisfactory resolution for the complainant then the final stage of the Trust's process will be to refer the complaint to a review panel.

The email or letter must be submitted to the Trust Board at [clerk@wickersleypt.org](mailto:clerk@wickersleypt.org) within ten (10) working school days of receiving notice of the outcome of the Trust Review stage 4.

- The Complaints Review Panel will be made up of three members (who have had no previous involvement or knowledge of the complaint). The panel will consist of at least 1 Trustee (a Director of the Trust Board) who is independent of the day-to-day management and running of the School/Trust and two other persons appointed by the board, who maybe other Trustees or governors at other schools within the Trust or wider learning community with no prior involvement in the complaint. The constitution of the panel will be determined by the circumstances of the complaint. This will usually take place within Twenty (20) working school days of the receipt of the request.
- The complainant may be accompanied by a friend/colleague, if they wish, to assist them in explaining the nature of their complaint
- The complainant has the opportunity to submit evidence to the review panel and all parties will receive relevant written evidence (at least three working days) from the Complainant prior to the Complaints Review Panel meeting
- The Complainant will have the opportunity to explain their complaint, the reasons why they are not satisfied and what they think will help resolve their complaint
- The panel will then invite representatives of the school (usually the person(s) that have investigated the complaint at different stages) to make a response in full to the complaint
- The complainant will be informed in writing of the Complaints Review Panel outcome, usually within five (5) working school days of the panel meeting.

The School/Trust complaint process will then be exhausted.

If the complainant believes that the Trust has acted unfairly or disproportionately in handling the complaint, then they may make representations to the Department for Education (DfE) Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) or the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) as outlined below:

#### **If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint at the end of the process**

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you can refer this matter to the Department for Education (DfE), if you believe the School / Trust has acted unreasonably or unlawfully.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure#checkcomplaint>

Alternatively, your concerns can be addressed to the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/complaints-procedure>

#### **Complaints relating to Wickersley Partnership Trust's Central Operating Activity, conduct of a Trust Central Team Employee or a Headteacher**

If you have concerns over an issue caused by or happening at WPT which you consider important and to which reassurances are sought. We would advise that you try to resolve these in person in the first instance with a member of staff e.g. person you have been dealing with / their line manager etc.

Should you not be satisfied with the outcome of discussions with staff member(s), you have the right to make a formal complaint. Where a formal complaint has been submitted, the following steps will be taken:

Complainants should include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events and copies of relevant documents.

It is very important that complainants include a clear statement of the actions they would like the Trust to take to resolve their complaint.

Complaints should be raised in writing via email to [clerk@wickersleypt.org](mailto:clerk@wickersleypt.org) following the format outlined below including:

- Your name
- Relationship to the school
- Child's name
- Your address
- Contact details
- Concise details of your complaint (including dates, names of witnesses etc.)
- What actions you have already taken to try to resolve your complaint (who have you spoken with or written to already?)
- What actions you feel might resolve the problem at this stage
- Date

A nominated person will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within two (2) working school days.

WPT will always take the concerns expressed seriously and hope to resolve the issue in an informal way wherever possible. The Trust will aim to discuss ways of resolving the issue with the complainant. Unless specifically stated otherwise, the Trust will deal with all initial contacts at the informal stage.

At each stage of the process the Trust, aims to resolve the complaint. Where appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- An explanation
- Where appropriate an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- Where appropriate an assurance that we will try to ensure the event leading to the complaint will not reoccur
- Where appropriate an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- Where appropriate an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- Where appropriate an apology

### **Withdrawal of a Complaint**

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

### **Complaints relating to the Trust's Central Operational Activity, conduct of a Trust (Central Team) Employee or a Headteacher**

#### **Informal stage**

##### **Stage 1: Service Leader**

The complainant should contact the Clerk to the Trust Board at [clerk@wickersleypt.org](mailto:clerk@wickersleypt.org) who will refer the informal complaint to an appropriate level Manager within the Central Team.

A written summary of the complaint meeting and any agreed actions will be provided to the complainant within ten (10) working school days of the complaint being received.

If the complaint is about a member of the Senior Leadership Team of the Trust or a Headteacher, this should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) via the Clerk to the Trust Board at [clerk@wickersleypt.org](mailto:clerk@wickersleypt.org)  
If the complaint is about the CEO, this should be addressed to the Chair of Trust Board via the Clerk to the Trust Board at [clerk@wickersleypt.org](mailto:clerk@wickersleypt.org)

If complainants are uncertain about who to contact, they should seek advice from the Clerk to the Trust Board at [clerk@wickersleypt.org](mailto:clerk@wickersleypt.org)

At this informal stage, the Trust will take the concerns expressed seriously and hope to resolve the issue in an informal way. The Trust will aim to discuss ways of resolving the issue with the complainant. Unless specifically stated otherwise, the Trust will deal with all initial contacts at the informal stage.

The complaint may be by letter or e-mail, many concerns can be resolved by a simple clarification, or the provision of relevant information. It is anticipated that most concerns will be resolved within ten (10) working school days at this informal stage.

A written summary of the complaint meeting and any agreed actions will be provided to the complainant within five (5) working school days of the resolution meeting / subsequent meetings being completed. This will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

If the complainant feels that the complaint has not been dealt with appropriately or to a satisfactory resolution at the informal stage, then the next step in the process is to follow the formal complaint process, the complainant should escalate the complaint within ten (10) working school days of receipt of the written outcome.

## **Formal Stage**

### **Stage 2: Senior Trust Manager(s)**

Should stage 1 of the complaints process not bring about a satisfactory resolution for the complainant, an investigation will be completed by a senior manager.

An email or letter submitted to the Clerk to the Trust Board at [clerk@wickersleypt.org](mailto:clerk@wickersleypt.org) within ten (10) working school days of receiving notice of the outcome of the stage 1 (Service Leader meeting). It must include a statement that explains the reasons why the Complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the informal meeting.

An investigation of the complaint will be conducted by a Senior Trust Manager. This will usually be completed within Twenty (20) working school days of the receipt of the request. An outcome letter will be sent to the complainant within five (5) working school days of the conclusion of the review. This will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome; the complainant should escalate the complaint within ten (10) working school days of receipt of the written outcome.

### **Stage 3: Trust Panel as appointed by the Chief Executive Officer**

Should stage 2 of the complaint process not bring about a satisfactory resolution for the complainant, then the complainant must submit an email or letter outlining why they feel the matter has not been satisfactorily resolved

at stage 2 and how they feel it could be. The submission of the email or letter should also include any details which might assist the investigation and should be sent to [clerk@wickersleypt.org](mailto:clerk@wickersleypt.org).

A panel of Trust officers will be convened to hear the complaint within twenty (20) working school days and respond to the complainant in writing within five (5) working school days after the hearing.

The letter will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint to a Trust review should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

Should stage 3 of the complaints process not bring about a satisfactory resolution for the complainant, a Complaint Review Request should be submitted via email or letter following the format outlined below:

- Your name
- Your address
- Contact details
- Outline why you are dissatisfied with how your complaint has been dealt with by the school
- What actions you feel may resolve the problem at this stage
- Date

It should be submitted to the Clerk to the Trust Board at [clerk@wickersleypt.org](mailto:clerk@wickersleypt.org) within ten (10) working school days of receiving notice of the outcome of the formal complaint stage 3 (Trust hearing). It must include a statement that explains the reasons why the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation and hearing.

**Stage 4:** Wickersley Partnership Trust Board Panel - as appointed by the Chair of the Trust Board

If the complainant feels that the investigation and hearing of the complaint has not been conducted appropriately the Trust Board will convene a review panel (this will be made up of members who have had no insight in to the complaint or prior involvement) which may include an independent panel member from outside of the organisation to review the process followed, decisions taken and outcome of the hearing.

This will usually take place within twenty (20) working school days of the receipt of the request.

- The Complaints Review Panel will be made up of three members (who have had no previous involvement or knowledge of the complaint). The panel will consist of at least 1 Trustee (a Director of the Trust Board) who is independent of the day-to-day management and running of the Trust and two other persons appointed by the board, who may be other Trustees or governors at other schools within the Trust or wider learning community with no prior involvement in the complaint. The constitution of the panel will be determined by the circumstances of the complaint.
- The complainant may be accompanied by a friend/colleague, if they wish, to assist them in explaining the nature of their complaint
- The complainant has the opportunity to submit evidence to the review panel and all parties will receive relevant written evidence (at least three working school days) from the Complainant prior to the Complaints Review Panel meeting
- The Complainant will have the opportunity to explain their complaint, the reasons why they are not satisfied and what they think will help resolve their complaint
- The panel will then invite representatives of the school (usually the person(s) that have investigated the complaint at different stages) to make a response in full to the complaint
- The complainant will be informed in writing of the Complaints Review Panel outcome, usually within five (5) working school days of the panel meeting.

The Trust complaint process will then be exhausted.

If the complainant believes that the Trust has acted unfairly or disproportionately in handling the complaint, then they may make representations to the Department for Education (DfE) Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) or the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) as outlined below.

**If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint at the end of the process**

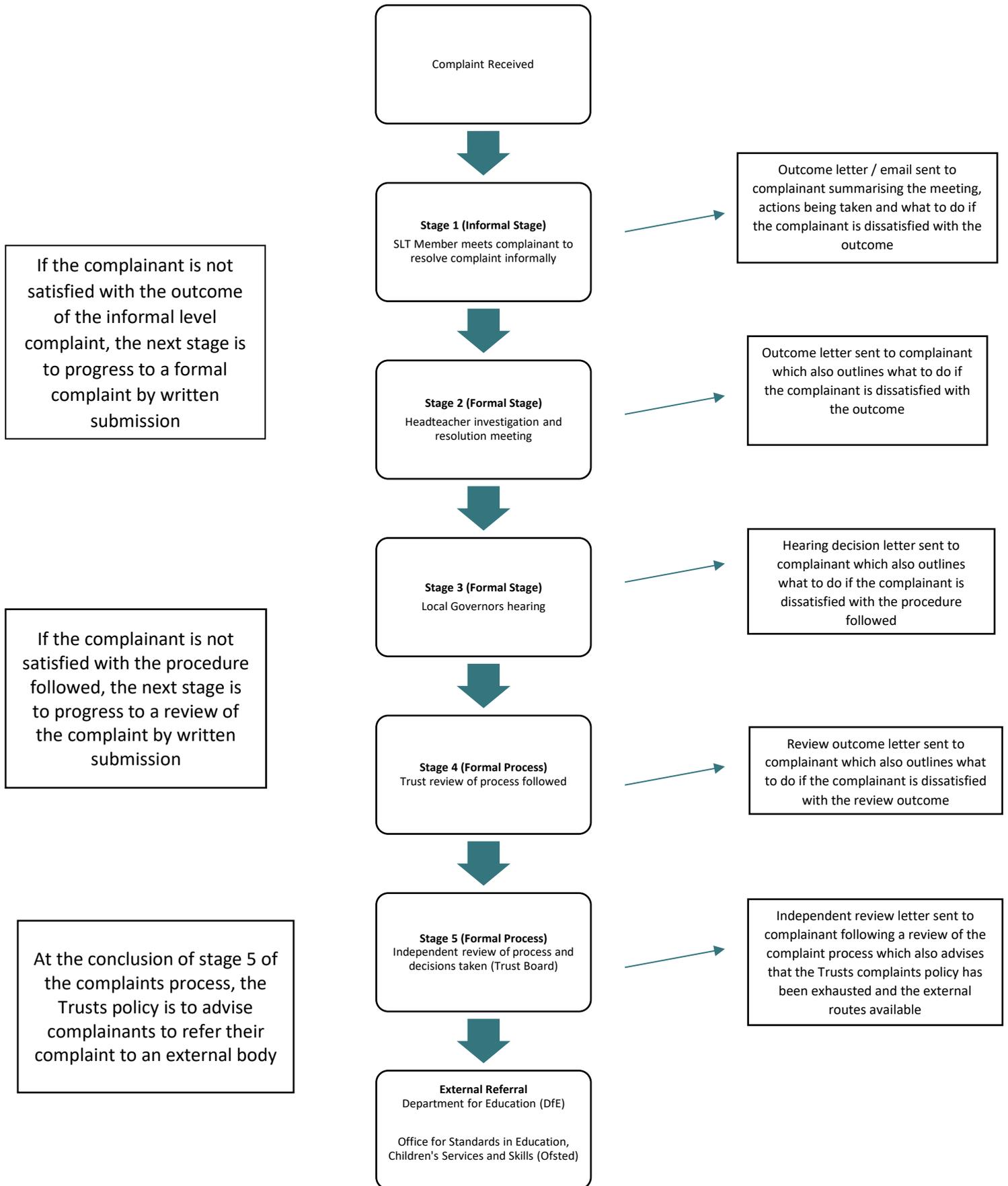
If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you can refer this matter to the Department for Education (DfE) if you believe the Trust has acted unreasonably or unlawfully.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure#checkcomplaint>

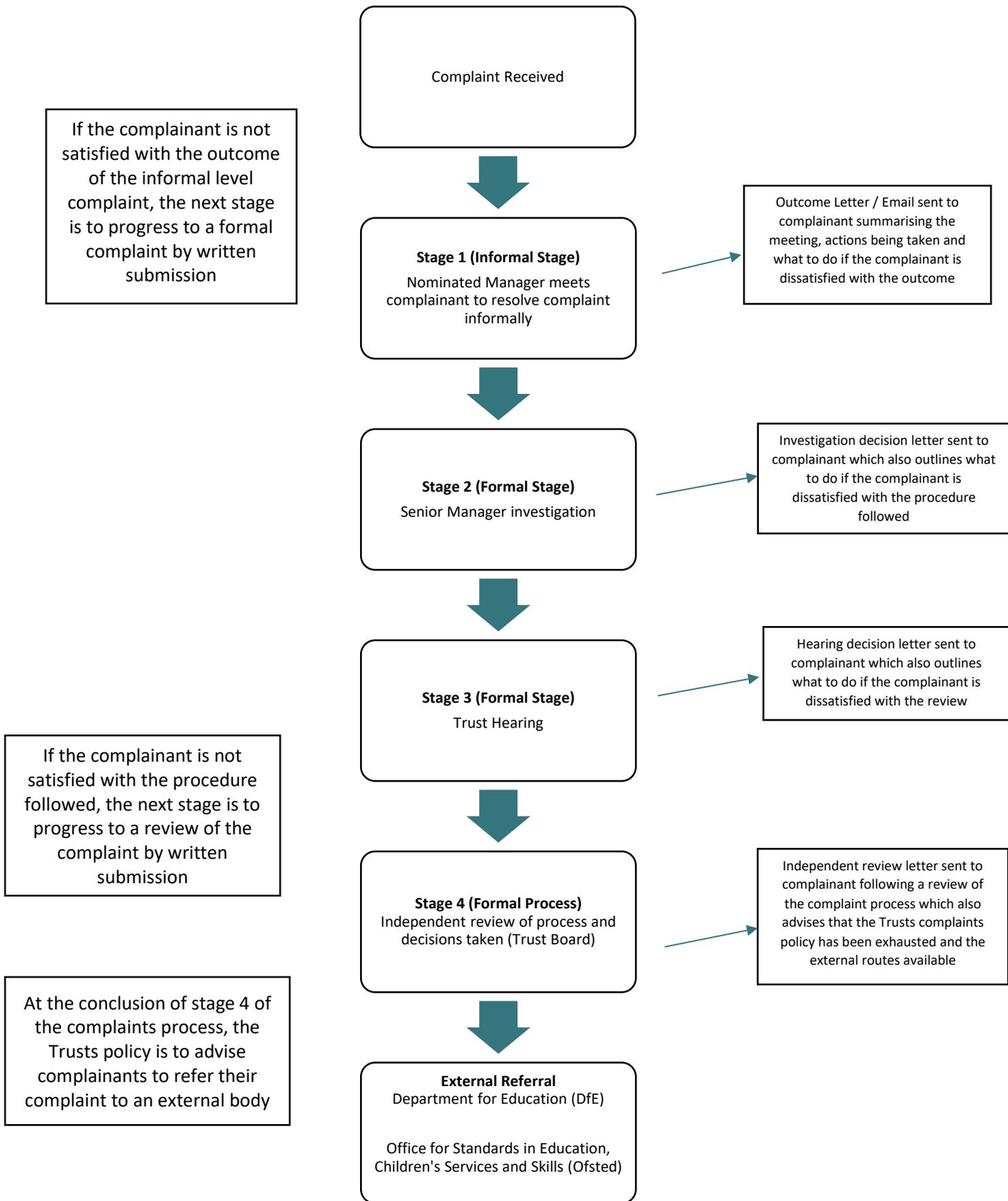
Alternatively, your concerns can be addressed to the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/complaints-procedure>



## School Complaint Flow Chart



# Complaints about Central Team Services, Central Staff or a Headteacher



## Complaints Timeline

### School Complaints

Stage	Acknowledgement of receipt	Meeting / Hearing / Review	Outcome letter
Stage 1 (Senior Leader)	Within 2 working school days following receipt	Within 5 working school days following receipt	Within 5 working school days following the meeting
Stage 2 (Headteacher)	Within 2 working school days following receipt	Within 10 working school days following receipt	Within 5 working school days following the meeting
Stage 3 (Governing Body)	Within 2 working school days following receipt	Within 20 working school days following receipt	Within 5 working school days following the meeting
Stage 4 (Trust Review)	Within 2 working school days following receipt	Within 20 working school days following receipt	Within 5 working school days following the meeting
Stage 5 (Trust Board Review)	Within 2 working school days following receipt	Within 20 working school days following receipt	Within 5 working school days following the meeting

## Complaints Timeline

### Wickersley Partnership Trust Complaints

Stage	Acknowledgement of receipt	Meeting / Hearing / Review	Outcome letter
Stage 1 (As Appointed by Chief Executive Officer)	Within 2 working school days following receipt	Within 5 working school days following receipt	Within 5 working school days following the meeting
Stage 2 (Trust Review Panel as Appointed by Chief Executive Officer)	Within 2 working school days following receipt	Within 10 working school days following receipt	Within 5 working school days following the meeting
Stage 3 (Trust Senior Officer as Appointed by Chief Executive Officer)	Within 2 working school days following receipt	Within 20 working school days following receipt	Within 5 working school days following the meeting
Stage 4 (Trust Board Review)	Within 2 working school days following receipt	Within 20 working school days following receipt	Within 5 working school days following the meeting

## 7. Monitoring and Review

The Trust will review this policy and assess its implementation and effectiveness annually in consultation with the recognised Trade Unions. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout all schools.

KPIs will also be set and monitored to ensure consistent and ongoing reporting to review the impact of this policy.

The policy will be updated regularly in line with legislation and any major changes to the policy will be consulted on with the recognised Trade Unions.

## 8. Links with other Policies

This Policy links with other policies including:

- Grievance Policy
- Harassment and Bullying Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- SEND Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Records Retention Schedule

## 9. Confidentiality

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept and stored confidentially and in line with the Trusts Data Protection Policy and Records Retention Schedule. Where the Secretary of State for Education (or a representative) or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to any records, these will be made available.

## 10. Version Control

Date	Revision (Details and Reason)	Author
April 2024	Rewrite of policy	Risk and Compliance Manager
March 2025	Amendments to process flow charts	"
March 2026	<b>Section 1</b> inclusion of an exert from the Department for Education (DfE) guidance for academies complaints procedures 2021 - setting realistic and reasonable time limits. Clarification of WPT acceptable time frame in which to lodge a complaint and description of 'exceptional circumstances'.	"



# **Parental / Customer Complaints Policy**