



What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about actions taken or a lack of action, whether made orally or in writing. This Policy addresses general complaints.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the ACO or Principal. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual governors 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 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the Principal) should be made in the first instance to the Academy Secretary via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Principal should be addressed to Mr C Kinch (the Chair of Governors), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice Bureau to help you. In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Principal, or Chair of Governors if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by The Archbishop Lanfranc Academy, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Croydon Council.
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. 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).
Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions . *complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. 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. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus . 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.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. 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.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

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 Archbishop Lanfranc Academy 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.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, The Archbishop Lanfranc Academy wants to resolve the complaint. If 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
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- 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
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

How does the Staged Approach work?

The staged approach is designed to ensure that every effort is made to deal with complaints informally at Academy level in partnership with the complainant. The formal stages should only be triggered where reasonable attempts have been made at an informal resolution and the complainant remains dissatisfied:

- Stage 1 is the informal stage. In the case of a complaint by a Parent/Guardian, the Achievement Coordinator will respond to the first approach and the majority of issues should be resolved at this stage. In the case of a complaint by a member of the public, the Office Manager should be the first point of contact. A decision will then be made as to which member of staff is best placed to deal with the complaint;
- Stage 2 is a formal stage involving the Principal;
- Stage 3 and 4 refers the formal complaint to the Chair of Governors and the Governing Body.

The Policy is designed to manage all complaints but complaints vary in their nature and complexity. Therefore, the Academy will need to consider at which stage a complaint should be dealt with when it is initially raised and which member of staff is best placed to deal with it. Our principal aim is to deal with complaints openly, fairly, promptly and without prejudice.

Our procedure for dealing with complaints will:

- Be made available for consultation through a reference on the Academy website and through a verifiable written request for a copy of the Policy;
- Be simple to understand and follow;
- Be focused on outcomes;
- Have established time limits for action;
- Keep people informed at all stages;
- Where necessary, respect people's desire for confidentiality;
- Be carefully monitored and evaluated;
- Provide information to the Academy's Senior Leadership Team so that the Academy's procedures can be monitored.

Guidance on each stage of the Procedure

Any person expressing continued dissatisfaction will be advised of the next stage in the procedure.

Stage One: Discuss concerns informally with the relevant Achievement Co-ordinator

- Complainants are advised to speak to their child's Achievement Co-ordinator so everyone has a clear picture of the situation from all points of view. Most problems can be resolved at this informal stage;
- If the complainant indicates that he/she would have difficulty in discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff, the complaint may be referred to another member of staff. This member of staff may not necessarily be more senior;
- The member of staff who is dealing with the complaint should ensure that the complainant is reassured that the matter will be investigated and is clear what action has been agreed. All staff should be aware of the need for confidentiality;
- A brief record of any telephone calls, meetings and agreed actions should always be kept; if either the complainant or staff member feels the matter needs to be taken further, the Principal should be contacted.

Stage Two: Formalising the complaint and lodging it with the Principal

- More serious concerns which remain unresolved at the end of Stage 1 should be referred to the Principal. The Principal may choose to delegate the complaint for further investigation to a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Any meetings that are held with the complainant in relation to the complaint should be arranged with 10 Academy days. However, more complex complaints may require an extension to this time limit. The formal complaint should be lodged in writing to the Principal;
- A log of all contacts relating to the complaint should be kept;
- The Principal or member of the Senior Leadership Team investigating the complaint should communicate the outcome to the complainant in writing. Any agreed actions should be put in writing within 10 Academy days of notification of the outcome.
- If, as a result of the investigation, issues remain unresolved or arise relating to staff discipline or capability, details should remain confidential and be directed to the Principal. However, the complainant should be informed that the Academy has taken appropriate follow-up action.

Stage Three: Formal Complaint referred to the Chair of Governors

- The Chair of Governors will only proceed with this formal stage of the Complaints Procedure if a complaint has been received in writing addressed to the Chair of Governors and all previous stages have been exhausted;
- The complaint should be made within 10 Academy days of the response at Stage 2 and set out why the complainant remains dissatisfied;
- Acknowledgement of the written complaint should normally be sent by the Clerk to the Governing Body to the Chair of Governors and to the complainant within 5 Academy days;
- It is essential that this process is fair and objective. To avoid a conflict of interest, it is vital that the Chair of Governors does not consider complaints at an earlier stage;
- The Chair of Governors will notify the Principal and the complainant as to whether they will be invited to attend a meeting. Alternatively, the Chair of Governors may decide to consider written material only. Both parties must be treated equally. For example, if the Principal is invited to a meeting the complainant must also be invited. The Chair of Governors will usually consider the complaint within 15 Academy days of notification by the Clerk to the Governing Body;
- If the complaint relates to a staff disciplinary or capability matter about which the Principal has already taken action, the Chair of Governors should focus on how the original complaint was managed to avoid prejudicing any ongoing disciplinary or capability procedures;
- If the complaint relates to a student matter, parents will be notified of their right to be accompanied at a meeting if the Chair of Governors decides to hold one;
- After the Chair of Governors has considered the complaint a copy of the findings and recommendations will be sent to the complainant, the person complained about and the Principal within 10 Academy days.
- Any complaint relating to the Principal must be raised in the first instance with the Chair of Governors (or Vice-Chair in the absence of the Chair) who will, if an informal resolution cannot be reached, designate a Governor to investigate in the same way as in the first stage of the formal process outlined above.

Stage Four: Formal Complaint referred to the Board of Governors

- The Board of Governors will only proceed with this formal stage of the Complaints Procedure if they have received a complaint in writing addressed to the Board of Governors and all previous stages have been exhausted;
- The complaint should be made within 10 Academy days of the response at Stage 3 and set out why the complainant remains dissatisfied;
- Acknowledgement of the written complaint should normally be sent by the Clerk to the Governing Body within 5 Academy days;
- The Clerk will invite the Academy to respond in writing to the complaint. The Academy will do this within 15 Academy days and at the end of that period (whether or not the Academy has responded) the Clerk will convene a meeting of the Complaints Panel of the Governing Body. That meeting will be held as quickly as practicable given the need to find a date that is reasonably convenient for the complainant, the Academy and the members of the Panel. Whenever possible, the meeting will be held within 15 Academy days of the end of the Academy's response time.
- The Governing Body will convene a panel of three Governors who have not previously been involved in the complaint and at least one person who is independent of the management and running of the Academy. It is essential that this process is fair and objective. To avoid a conflict of interest, it is vital that Governors do not consider complaints at an earlier stage;
- Governors who have previously been involved in the complaint and the Chair of Governors may not be members of the Panel;
- The panel will be provided with copies of the complaint and all other documentation and at least 5 working days' notice of the hearing will be given to all concerned. All parties involved may be accompanied, if desired, by a friend or representative and may call witnesses.
- The meeting is not a court case and will be as informal as circumstances allow. However the structure of the hearing will be as follows:
- The complainant will have the opportunity to present her/his reasons for dissatisfaction and to call witnesses.
- The panel and the Academy will have an opportunity to question the complainant and witnesses.
- The Academy will have the opportunity to respond to the complainant and to call witnesses if appropriate.
- The Panel and the complainant will have the opportunity to question the Academy and any witnesses.
- Both the complainant and the Academy will have the opportunity to make final comments and summarise their position to the Panel.
- All but the members of the Panel and the Clerk will withdraw while the panel decision is reached. The panel may make findings and recommendations and a copy of those findings and recommendations will be sent to the Principal and complainant. The findings should include an explanation of the conclusion, the reason for it, and any action taken, including details of any request made of those complained against to take particular action in respect of the complaint.
- The Panel will formulate its response as quickly as reasonably possible, aiming to do so within 5 Academy days, and the Clerk to the Governors will notify the complainant, the person complained about, the Principal and the Chair of Governors;
- If the complaint relates to a staff disciplinary or capability matter about which the Principal has already taken action the Panel should focus on how the original complaint was managed to avoid prejudicing any ongoing disciplinary or capability procedures;
- If the complaint relates to a student matter, parents will be notified of their right to be accompanied at the panel hearing
- This is the final stage in the Academy's Complaints Policy General Principles
- Written records will be kept of all complaints at every stage of the process (even the informal stage). Copies of letters of complaint from parents sent to the Chair of Governors and the response will be sent to the Clerk to the Governors to ensure that an audit trail is maintained.
- All written records will be stored securely and kept confidential.

Policy Review

The effective date of this policy is January 2019

The policy was approved by the Governing Body on 11 February 2019

This policy was reviewed and re-approved in December 2021

Complaint Form- Stage 2 and above

Please complete and return this form to the Academy Secretary, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

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

What actions do you feel 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 who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: