

Parental Communication and Complaints Policy

Policy Code:	SW9
Policy Start Date:	November 2025
Policy Review Date:	September 2028

Please read this policy in conjunction with the documents listed below:

- Priory Contract
- HR6 Data Protection Policy
- HR12 Staff Disciplinary Policy
- HR23 Whistleblowing Policy
- HR24 Allegations of Abuse Made Against Adults Policy
- HR29 Code of Conduct Policy
- HR33 Records Management Policy
- HR36 Academy Complaints Policy
- HR37 Zero Tolerance Policy
- HR39 Staff Communication Policy
- HR42 Low-Level Concerns Policy
- SW2 Exclusion Policy
- SW12 Attendance Policy
- TL6 Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy
- Complaints to Ofsted about schools: Complaints procedure - Ofsted - GOV.UK

1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 Parents/carers have a vital contribution to make to their child's educational progress and wellbeing. Each academy acknowledges that it is complementary to the home in its mission to educate and that parents/carers are the first and most important educators of their children.
- 1.2 References to the Trust or Academy within this policy specifically include all primary, secondary and special academies within the Trust, as well as the Early Years setting at the Priory Witham Academy, Priory Apprenticeships and Lincolnshire ITT.
- 1.3 This policy does not form part of any member of staff's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.
- 1.4 References to 'working' days within this policy refer to working days for the academy/setting. As such, weekends and holiday periods are not included within any stated timeframe, for example, 5 working days.

2 Roles, Responsibilities and Implementation

- 2.1 The Education & Standards Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework. This committee delegates day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to the Director of Welfare.
- 2.2 Leaders and managers have a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all employees are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success.

3 Aims

- 3.1 To ensure that communication between all stakeholders is efficient, effective, clear, professional, timely and appropriate.
- 3.2 To ensure that communication:
 - keeps all stakeholders well informed;
 - is open, honest, ethical and professional;
 - is actioned within a reasonable time as outlined within this policy, taking into account working hours;
 - uses methods that are the most effective and appropriate to the context, message and audience;
 - takes account of relevant Trust policies; and
 - is compatible with the Trust's ethos.

3.3 To outline the Trust's complaints procedure for parents/carers.

4 Standard Communication with Parents/Carers

4.1 Parents/carers are asked to maintain open and honest lines of communication with their child's academy. It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to ensure their contact details are up-to-date and they notify the academy of any changes in respect of their child's details, e.g., medical conditions.

4.2 In the event of their child being absent, parents/carers must follow the academy's absence procedures and notify the academy as soon as possible on each day of the child's absence. Absence procedures, including how to apply for a leave of absence, are set out in each setting's SW12 Attendance Policy.

4.3 In the event that parents/carers have a question they wish to discuss, their child's Form Tutor/Class Teacher is the first person who should be contacted. More serious issues may require communication with their Head of Year (Secondary) or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Parents/carers are asked to telephone the academy or use the general enquiries email rather than email a member of staff directly.

4.4 If parents/carers urgently need to speak to someone, e.g., if there is a serious family emergency or a safeguarding issue, they should contact the academy reception who will direct their concern to the relevant person/team.

4.5 The Trust may use the following methods to communicate with parents/carers:

- Letters
- Telephone calls
- Email or text through the Academy communication system
- Parents' Evenings
- Module Grades (Progress Checks)
- Written Reports
- Meetings (both formal and informal)
- Meetings between parents/carers and a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- School website
- Social media sites/blogs
- Newsletters

4.6 Through our programme of meetings between parents/carers and teachers, as well as through alternative forms of formal/informal communication, we provide opportunities for parents/carers to discuss their child's progress as well as raise any questions they may have about the curriculum or more general issues. If a

question is not resolved through discussion with a teacher or other member of staff, the parent/carer or the teacher can refer it to the Senior Leadership Team.

5 Responding to Parents

5.1 In all cases of communication from parents/carers the Academy/Trust will endeavour to respond as soon as reasonably possible.

5.2 Responding to telephone calls from parents/carers:

- calls from parents/carers should be via the main academy telephone number to the academy reception, who will attempt to connect callers to the appropriate member of staff;
- **urgent calls:** if the member of staff asked for is not available, the call will be put through to the most appropriate member of staff available;
- **non-urgent calls:** if the member of staff asked for is not available, the receptionist will take the parent/carer's contact details and reason for calling and forward this to the appropriate member of staff.

5.3 Responding to letters and emails from parents/carers:

- the Academy will always try to acknowledge letters and emails received from parents/carers as soon as reasonably possible. We aim to acknowledge emails sent to our general enquires email address within 3 working days. Please be aware that messages sent directly to a member of staff's email address will not receive a response within the same timeframe; and
- where additional time is required to provide a fuller response or to arrange a meeting, we will try to include, in the acknowledgement, details of when these will take place.

6 The Complaints Procedure

6.1 The Trust hopes that through working together and effective communication, any problems that parents/carers might have can be resolved at an early stage and prevent any need for a complaint. However, in the event that parents/carers feel that communication with the academy has not resolved the issue, then they should follow the Trust's complaints procedure, making it clear from the outset that this is the course they now wish to take.






6.2 The definition of a complaint for the purpose of this policy is as follows:

"....an expression of dissatisfaction made either orally or in writing and received by the academy/Trust about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the academy, Trust or staff affecting an individual or group".

- 6.3 The Trust's complaints procedure has been written in line with the DfE's guidance '*Best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures*', ensuring compliance with Part 7 of the *Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014*.
- 6.4 The guiding principles behind our complaints procedure include:
- **simplicity** – simple, well publicised stages;
 - **access** – complainants knowing exactly where, how and to whom they should complain;
 - **speed and clarity** - complaints being dealt with promptly, effectively and professionally within stated time limits and at as early a stage as possible;
 - **action** – action being agreed and reviewed, with complainants kept informed of progress throughout each stage of the procedure;
 - **objectivity** – beyond the first informal stage of investigation of a complaint against an individual, the subject of the complaint will not deal with it but will instead refer it to their manager where appropriate;
 - **development** – opportunities for the academy to consider changes to current practice on the basis of what complainants have said; and
 - **fair** - treating the complainant impartially, and without unlawful discrimination or prejudice.
- 6.5 The Trust hopes that the adoption of a clear procedure will help to ensure that most complaints are resolved quickly and smoothly and as close to the source of the misunderstanding or problem as possible. In this way, complainants can feel assured from the outset of a fair hearing, in line with a defined procedure for dealing with issues that have not immediately been resolved. The Trust also hopes that a staged framework might prevent an early and unnecessary escalation of the problem. In addition, the Trust will ensure that lessons learned from the investigation of complaints will prove useful to improve policy and practice.
- 6.6 The complaints procedure is summarised on page 6 within this policy.
- 6.7 Complainants should be aware that the Trust may not be able to consider a complaint using this process alone, in cases where separate statutory (legal) routes exist. This applies to:
- Admissions – please see each academy's website for their admission arrangements;
 - Exclusions (suspensions and permanent exclusions) – please see SW2 Exclusions Policy;
 - Statutory assessments of special educational needs – concerns about statutory assessments should be raised directly with the appropriate Local Authority;

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- Safeguarding – please see SW5 Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and/or HR42 Low-Level Concerns and/or HR24 Allegations of Abuse Made Against Adults Policy;
 - Whistleblowing – please see HR23 Whistleblowing Policy;
 - Complaints about services provided by other suppliers who may use the Trust's premises or facilities – complainants should follow the external provider's own complaints procedure; and
 - Staff conduct complaints – complaints of this nature should be raised with the Headteacher and, if required, they will be dealt with under HR12 Staff Disciplinary Policy, HR1 Capability Policy for Teaching Staff, CEO and Trust Executive Management Staff and/or HR30 Support Staff Capability. However, complainants should be aware that they will not be informed of any disciplinary or capability action taken against a member of staff as a result of a complaint.
- 6.8 There may be circumstances in which the progress of a complaint through the complaints procedure may be suspended pending a disciplinary or capability enquiry. This must be a necessary and reasonable delay and in accordance with the requirements of the disciplinary or capability procedures. In such cases of delay, complainants must be informed immediately and in writing of the length of and reason for the delay.
- 6.9 All complaints will be treated as confidential. Only those members of staff concerned with investigating the complaint will have access to the file. No confidential information regarding the investigation will be made available publicly. However, it should be noted that if any action taken by a member of staff is the subject of a complaint, then that person should be advised of the complaint made against them.
- 6.10 A complaint may be raised by a member of the general public or a client/customer or member of staff of the academy regarding a service directly provided by the academy. Anyone aged 16 or over may use this procedure or may act on behalf of a complainant who is below this age.
- 6.11 All complaints will be recorded in accordance with the academies' monitoring procedure.
- 6.12 Unless exceptional circumstances apply, the DfE will support schools who refuse to accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without informed consent of all parties being recorded.
- 6.13 If a recording device is used as part of the complaints process, e.g., to record a meeting where an individual might have communication difficulties, all parties should agree (informed consent) in advance to being recorded.

Complaints Procedure

Stage	Raised to:	Acknowledged within:	Response within:	Next step:
Prior to the complaints procedure being initiated	Individuals are encouraged to contact the academy to try to resolve any problems through communication and working together with appropriate staff at the academy. In the event that this does not resolve the problem, an individual can follow the complaints procedure.			
				
1 Informal	Academy Reception (either through telephone or email to 'General Enquiries' - See Appendix 1)	2 working days	5 working days	Resolved Or If unresolved, escalate to Stage 2
				
2 Formal	Academy Headteacher	5 working days	10 working days	Resolved Or If unresolved, escalate to Stage 3
	If linked to a member of the LGB – Clerk to LGB			
	If linked to the Headteacher, CEO or Trust – Clerk to Trustees			
				
3 Formal Trust Review	Director of Welfare or Trust representative	5 working days	10 working days	Resolved Or If unresolved, escalate to Stage 4
				
4 Formal Panel Hearing	Complaint Recipient (within 10 working days of receipt of Stage 3 outcome)	5 working days	CC held within 20 working days Response sent within 15 working days of the CC	Closed
				
Escalation by complainant to DfE, if required.				

7 Complaints about Staff Conduct

- 7.1 It is for the Academy Headteacher to decide whether to invoke a procedure. On receipt of a complaint about staff conduct and as the appropriate authority, the Academy Headteacher will decide whether the complaint should be dealt with according to HR12 Staff Disciplinary Policy, or according to procedure set out in this policy. The Academy Headteacher will notify the complainant in writing of any decision to deal with a complaint according to HR12 Staff Disciplinary Policy. At the same time, the Academy Headteacher may inform the Director of Student Welfare and Head of Human Resources of the issues that have led to this decision; the Chief Executive will be apprised of the issues as appropriate.
- 7.2 If the Academy Headteacher decides that using this complaints procedure is appropriate, but considers that there is any possibility that the matters could at some future point lead to disciplinary proceedings, the Academy Headteacher will advise the staff member who is the subject of the complaint of that possibility. The academy should allow that staff member to bring a Trade Union representative or colleague to any meeting about the complaint.
- 7.3 If the Academy Headteacher decides that a complaint about staff conduct should be dealt under HR12 Staff Disciplinary Policy, the Academy Headteacher will ensure that any outstanding general academy management issues which may arise from that complaint are dealt with under the complaints procedure.

8 Stage 1 – An informal complaint

- 8.1 In the first instance, the complainant should make contact with the academy, stating that they wish to make an informal complaint (under Stage 1 of this policy), and providing an outline of the reasons for their complaint. Contact should be made by telephone to the academy reception, or via email to the academy's general enquiries address. Contact details for each setting can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of this policy.
- 8.2 In order to best deal with any complaints, they should be raised within 3 months of the issue to which they relate. The Trust may still consider complaints made out of this timeframe, but a resolution may be more difficult to achieve and the Trust may decline to consider the complaint due to it being 'out of time'.
- 8.3 The complaint will be passed to the most appropriate member of staff to investigate, and provide a response to the complainant.
- 8.4 For a Stage 1 informal complaint, the academy will provide an acknowledgement within 2 working days, and will endeavour to provide a response (verbal or written) within 5 working days. If it is not possible to meet these deadlines, then the complainant will be informed when they will receive a response.

9 Stage 2 – A formal complaint

- 9.1 In the event that a complainant considers that an informal concern raised at Stage 1 has not been resolved, they may pursue the issue by means of a written letter of complaint addressed to the Headteacher of the individual academy. This is designed to provide a fair, equitable and consistent arrangement for the investigation of any complaint.
- 9.2 If the complaint concerns the Local Governing Body (LGB), this should be directed to the Clerk to the LGB. Contact details for the Clerk to the LGB can be found on each academy's website. Upon receipt of the complaint, the Clerk to the LGB will notify the Academy Headteacher who will work with the Clerk to manage the complaint.
- 9.3 If the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the CEO or the Trust, this should be directed to the Clerk to the Trustees (federation@prioryacademies.co.uk).
- 9.4 For the purpose of this policy, moving forward, the term 'Complaint Recipient' will be used to refer to either the Academy Headteacher, Clerk to the LGB or Clerk to the Trustees as appropriate.
- 9.5 In order to best deal with any complaints, they should be raised within 3 months of the issue to which they relate. The Trust may still consider complaints made out of this timeframe, but a resolution may be more difficult to achieve and the Trust may decline to consider the complaint due to it being 'out of time'.
- 9.6 The Complaint Recipient will decide whether to delegate the investigation of the complaint to another member of staff or whether to undertake the investigation themselves. At the recipient's discretion, they can request that a member of staff from the Trust's Central Services investigates the complaint on their behalf, or acts in an advisory capacity whilst the investigation is ongoing.
- 9.7 Another body may be commissioned to offer assistance to find a resolution to the complaint where required. This could include the provision of a mediation service, including facilitating meetings between the complainant and member(s) of staff.
- 9.8 The person investigating the complaint will ensure that a written acknowledgement is provided to the complainant within 5 working days of Stage 2 commencing. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the next steps to be taken and will give a target date for providing a response to the complainant, which should normally be within 10 working days. If this target cannot be met, a communication will be sent within 10 working days explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised target date.

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- 9.9 The person investigating the complaint will seek to speak, or meet, with all appropriate people in order to establish all facts relating to the complaint. This includes the complainant, staff and any other person.
- 9.10 Once all the relevant facts have been established, the person investigating the complaint will produce a written response to the complaint, or may wish to meet the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter directly.
- 9.11 A written response, if produced, will contain an outline of the complaint and a summary of the response to the complaint, including the decision reached and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this will also include what action the academy will take to resolve the complaint. If Stage 2 highlights any recommendations of changes in working practice the complainant must allow 60 working days for these recommendations to be embedded.
- 9.12 If the complainant is not satisfied by the results of Stage 2, then they can request to move to Stage 3 of this procedure. Should this be the case, the complainant must send a written request stating this to the Complaint Recipient, within 10 working days of receiving the response, or if Stage 2 highlighted any recommendations of changes to working practices, within 70 working days of receiving the response.
- 9.13 If no further communication is received from the complainant within 10 working days (or 70 working days where appropriate), it will be assumed that the complaint has been satisfactorily resolved and it will be closed.

10 Stage 3 – A formal complaint escalated to the Trust

- 10.1 If a complainant is not satisfied with the response received at Stage 2, they can request for their complaint to be escalated to the Trust's Director of Welfare (who may, if required, nominate a Trust member of staff). The complainant should notify the Complaint Recipient of this, who will inform the Director of Welfare.
- 10.2 If the complaint relates to the Director of Welfare, then the Complaint Recipient will notify the CEO, who will appoint an appropriate member of staff to manage the Stage 3 complaint process in place of the Director of Welfare.
- 10.3 The Director of Welfare will ensure that a written acknowledgement is provided to the complainant within 5 working days of Stage 3 commencing. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the next steps to be taken and will give a target date for providing a response to the complainant, which should normally be within 10 working days. If this target cannot be met, a letter will be sent within 10 working days explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised target date.
- 10.4 Where appropriate, the Director of Welfare may seek to speak to, or meet with, individuals connected to the complaint. However, depending upon the nature

of the complaint, care will be taken to avoid putting individuals through repeated requests to meet with staff in relation to the complaint. As such, not every individual involved in Stages 1 and 2 may be spoken to as part of the Stage 3 review.

- 10.5 A written response will contain an outline of the review undertaken by the Director of Welfare and a summary of their response to the complaint, including the decision reached and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this will also include what action the academy will take to resolve the complaint. If Stage 3 highlights any recommendations of changes in working practice the complainant must allow 60 working days for these recommendations to be embedded. In addition to the written response, a face-to-face may occur with the complainant to discuss the outcome of the review.
- 10.6 If the complainant is not satisfied by the results of Stage 3, then they can request to move to Stage 4 of this procedure. Should this be the case, the complainant must send a written request stating this to the Complaint Recipient, within 10 working days of receiving the response, or if Stage 3 highlighted any recommendations of changes to working practices, within 70 working days of receiving the response.
- 10.7 If no further communication is received from the complainant within 10 working days (or 70 working days where appropriate), it will be assumed that the complaint has been satisfactorily resolved and it will be closed.

11 Stage 4 – A complaint referred to the Complaints Committee

- 11.1 Upon receipt of a written request from the complainant for the complaint to proceed to Stage 4, the Complaint Recipient will first ascertain whether Stages 1, 2 and 3 have been followed. If not, the appropriate Stage will be initiated. If Stages 1, 2 and 3 have been observed, the procedures outlined below will be followed.
- 11.2 It should be noted that the purpose of a Complaints Committee (CC) is for the committee, as an independent panel, to review the complaint and try to resolve it. The panel will not re-investigate the complaint and whilst the complainant will be invited to present their complaint to the committee, it is not an opportunity for the complainant to cross-examine any staff or individuals involved.
- 11.3 The Complaint Recipient, having received a written request under 10.6 above, will appoint a Chair for a Complaints Committee (CC).
- 11.4 The designated Chair of the Complaints Committee will appoint a Clerk to convene a CC hearing.
- 11.5 The Clerk to the CC will write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written request for the complaint to be heard by the CC. The acknowledgement must be sent within 5 working days and should also inform the complainant that

the complaint is to be heard by the CC within 20 working days of receiving the complaint.

11.6 As required by The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014:

- the panel must consist of at least 3 people;
- no member of the panel can have had any prior involvement in the complaint; and
- the panel must include at least one member who is independent of the management and running of the school*.

*For schools within a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), with the exception of the MAT's Trustees, the DfE are satisfied that a governor from a local governing body at a different school within the MAT, who has no conflict of interest or prior knowledge of the complaint, can be an independent panel member. This is because such person would have no direct involvement with the management and running of the school being complained about.

11.7 The Panel should, where possible and where appropriate, include the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Local Governing Body (LGB) or a member of the Board of Trustees. It is not appropriate for the Complaint Recipient to have a place on this panel. The composition of the CC should, as far as possible, be sensitive to issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.

11.8 The CC Chair will ensure that the complaint is heard by the panel within 20 working days of receiving the request for a Stage 4 hearing. All relevant correspondence regarding the complaint will be distributed to each panel member as soon as the composition of the panel is confirmed.

11.9 The complainant and the staff previously involved in managing the complaint have the right to submit any documents relevant to the complaint prior to the meeting. These must be sent to the Clerk of the CC no later than 5 working days before the date of the hearing to allow adequate time for the documents to be circulated.

11.10 The CC Clerk or Chair will write and inform the complainant, the Complaint Recipient and any relevant witnesses and members of the panel of the date, time and place of the meeting, at least 5 working days in advance. The notification to the complainant will also inform them of the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend.

11.11 The Clerk or Chair of the CC will invite the Complaint Recipient (or nominated individual) to speak to the panel and/or prepare a written report for the panel in response to the complaint. The Complaint Recipient (or nominated individual) may also invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant, to respond in writing or in person to the complaint.

11.12 The involvement of individuals from establishments other than the Trust is subject to the discretion of the Chair of the Panel.

11.13 It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Panel to ensure that the meeting is properly minuted.

12 Hearing the Complaint at the Meeting

12.1 The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the setting and the complainant.

12.2 The panel should remember that many complainants are not used to dealing with groups of people in formal situations and may feel inhibited when speaking to the panel. It is therefore recommended that the Chair of the Panel ensures that the proceedings are as informal as possible.

12.3 In the interests of natural justice, the introduction of previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses would be a reason to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence.

12.4 The procedure recommended for the meeting is as follows:

- (i) the Chair of the Panel will welcome the complainant, introduce the panel members and explain the procedure;
- (ii) the Chair of the Panel will invite the complainant, or person accompanying the complainant, to explain the complaint;
- (iii) the Panel may question the complainant about the complaint and the reasons why it has been made;
- (iv) the Complaint Recipient (or nominated individual) will be invited by the Chair of the Panel to question the complainant about the complaint and why it has been made;
- (v) the Chair of the Panel will invite the Complaint Recipient (or nominated individual) to make a statement in response to the complaint. At the discretion of the Chair of the Panel, the Complaint Recipient (or nominated individual) may invite members of staff directly involved in the complaint to supplement their response;
- (vi) the Panel may question the Complaint Recipient (or nominated individual) and/or members of staff about the response to the complaint;
- (vii) the Chair of the Panel will invite the complainant to question the Complaint Recipient (or nominated individual) and/or members of staff about the response to the complaint;

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- (viii) any party has the right to call witnesses, subject to the approval of the Panel (any witnesses should be known about in advance of the meeting);
 - (ix) the Panel, the Complaint Recipient (or nominated individual) and the complainant have the right to question any such witnesses;
 - (x) the Complaint Recipient (or nominated individual) will be invited by the Chair of the Panel to make a final statement;
 - (xi) the complainant will be invited by the Chair of the Panel to make a final statement;
 - (xii) the Chair of the Panel will explain to the complainant and the Complaint Recipient (or nominated individual) that the decision of the Panel will now be considered and a written decision will be sent to both parties within 15 working days. The Chair of the Panel will then ask all parties to leave, except for members of the Panel and their Clerk; and
 - (xiii) the Panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and:
 - a) reach a decision on the complaint and the reasons for it;
 - b) decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint; and
 - c) where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to systems or procedures to ensure complaints of a similar nature are not repeated.

12.5 The minutes of the meeting will be recorded and kept on file.

12.6 A written statement outlining the decision of the Panel must be sent to the complainant and the Complaint Recipient. The statement sent to the complainant by the Chair of the Panel must explain that the decision of the Panel is final.

12.7 The setting must ensure a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept on file.

13 Outcomes

13.1 At any of the four stages, any of the below outcomes or findings may be reached as a result of the complaint:

- the complaint requires no further action;
- there is insufficient evidence to either uphold or dismiss the complaint;
- an acknowledgement that the academy or Trust could have handled the situation differently or better;

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- an apology;
 - an explanation of steps which have been taken to ensure the circumstances which led to the complaint will not happen again; and/or
 - an agreement to review the Trust's policies in light of the complaint.
- 13.2 A written record will be kept of all complaints made, along with the details of whether they were resolved in Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3 or Stage 4 of the process, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld.
- 13.3 The Trust will keep a record of the action taken, as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether the complaint is upheld.
- 13.4 If the complaint proceeds to Stage 4, once a finding has been reached the following actions will be taken:
- the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about will receive a copy of the findings and recommendations of the panel, provided that where any information, if disclosed, is likely to breach the Trust's data protection obligations, those relevant sections of the findings and recommendations may be omitted or redacted; and
 - the findings and recommendation of the panel will be available at the setting for review.
- 13.5 The correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

14 Department for Education

- 14.1 If the complainant is not satisfied with the CC's response to their complaint at Stage 4, they can complain to the DfE.
- 14.2 The procedure for complaints can be found at: [Complaints procedure - Education and Skills Funding Agency - GOV.UK](#)

15 Ofsted

- 15.1 Ofsted will not consider a complaint unless the complainant has first followed the Trust's and the Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA) complaints procedures.
- 15.2 Ofsted cannot consider an individual pupil issue. Its powers relate only to 'whole-school' issues.
- 15.3 Ofsted is also not able to consider a complaint when there are other statutory (legal) ways of pursuing it. This includes complaints relating to:

- admission procedures;
- legal exclusions of individual pupils;
- providing education for individual pupils with special educational needs;
- religious education or the religious character of a school; and/or
- temporary changes to the curriculum.

15.4 Ofsted is also not in a position to:

- investigate incidents that are alleged to have taken place;
- judge how well a school investigated or responded to a complaint; and/or
- mediate between a parent/carer and a school to resolve a dispute.

15.5 Ofsted can consider cases where:

- the school is not providing a good enough education;
- the pupils are not achieving as much as they should, or their different needs are not being met;
- the school is not well led and managed, or is inappropriately managing finances; and/or
- as a group, the pupils' personal development and well-being are being neglected.

15.6 Ofsted can be contacted through its website at www.ofsted.gov.uk/contact-us.

15.7 Ofsted's address for written communications is:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 1231

16 Managing serial and persistent complaints

- 16.1 In the event that, despite all stages of the complaints procedure having been followed, a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the academy/Trust will inform the complainant that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.
- 16.2 Further to this, if the complainant contacts the Trust again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the academy/Trust may choose not to respond.

17 Unreasonable Complainants

- 17.1 The Trust is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. The Trust will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the setting or investigating officer. However, the Trust does not expect its staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening under the Trust's HR37 Zero Tolerance Policy.
- 17.2 The Trust defines unreasonable complainants as *'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'*.
- 17.3 A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:
- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;
 - refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
 - refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure;
 - insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
 - introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
 - makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;
 - changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;
 - repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
 - refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to the Department for Education;
 - seeks an unrealistic outcome; and/or
 - makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.
- 17.4 A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so (either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically):

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- maliciously;
 - aggressively;
 - using threats, intimidation or violence;
 - using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
 - knowing it to be false;
 - using falsified information; and/or
 - publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as on social media websites and in newspapers.
- 17.5 Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with the academy or the investigating officer while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.
- 17.6 Whenever possible, the Complaint Recipient will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking to the complaint.
- 17.7 If the behaviour continues the Academy Headteacher, or nominated individual, will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the Trust or academy, causing a significant level of disruption, the Trust may implement a tailored communication strategy, normally reviewed after 6 months. This may include:
- the individual being restricted to a single point of contact via a designated telephone number or email address; and/or
 - limiting the number of times an individual can make contact with the academy, for example, a fixed number of contacts per term.
- 17.8 In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include barring an individual from one of more of the Trust's premises.
- 18 Barring from the Academy Premises**
- 18.1 Although fulfilling a public function, academies within the Trust are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. The Trust will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.
- 18.2 If an individual's behaviour is a cause for concern, an academy within the Trust can ask them to leave school premises. In serious cases, the Academy Headteacher, after discussion with the Trust, can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the individual may wish to make.

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- 18.3 The Academy will always give the individual the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing. The decision to bar will then be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the individual, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the individual should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place.
- 18.4 Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the Academy Headteacher. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department for Education.

19 Policy Changes

- 19.1 This policy may only be amended or withdrawn by The Priory Federation of Academies Trust.

The Priory Federation of Academies Trust Parental Communication and Complaints Policy

This Policy has been approved by The Priory Federation of Academies Trust's
Education and Standards Committee:

Signed..... Name..... Date.....

Trustee

Signed..... Name..... Date.....

Chief Executive Officer

Signed..... Name..... Date.....

Designated Member of Staff

Please note that a signed copy of this agreement is available via Human Resources.

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Appendix 1

Contact details for settings

Setting	Telephone	General Enquiries email
Central Services	01522 871370	generalenquiries@prioryfederation.co.uk
Bracebridge Heath St John's Primary Academy	01522 530954	stjohnsenquiries@prioryacademies.co.uk
Cherry Willingham Primary Academy	01522 751148	cherryenquiries@prioryacademies.co.uk
Heighington Millfield Primary Academy	01522 827625	heighingtonenquiries@prioryacademies.co.uk
Huntingtower Community Primary Academy	01476 564291	huntingtowerenquiries@prioryacademies.co.uk
Ling Moor Primary Academy	01522 682602	lingmoorenquiries@prioryacademies.co.uk
The Priory Academy LSST	01522 889977	generalenquiries@priorylsst.co.uk
The Priory Belvoir Academy	01949 844920	generalenquiries@belvoiracademy.co.uk
The Priory City of Lincoln Academy	01522 882800	generalenquiries@priorycity.co.uk
The Priory Pembroke Academy	01522 751040	Pembrokeenquiries@prioryacademies.co.uk
The Priory Ruskin Academy	01476 410410	generalenquiries@prioryruskin.co.uk
The Priory Witham Academy	01522 882900	generalenquiries@priorywitham.co.uk
Waddington Redwood Primary Academy	01522 721156	redwoodenquiries@prioryacademies.co.uk
Willoughby Academy	01778 425203	willoughbyenquiries@prioryacademies.co.uk