



Learning Link Multi-Academy Trust (LLMAT)

MAT COMPLAINTS POLICY

(April 2019)

Mission - The Learning Link MAT will improve the life chances of all children and create a family of outstanding academies where world class leaders place children at the heart of everything.

Paul Harrison CEO September 2018

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 It is our policy to set out the procedure in which Learning Link Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) can address any concerns or complaints fairly, confidentially and without reasonable delay.
- 1.2 We recognise that on occasion, a parent/carer, academy staff member/governor or other stakeholder, may wish to raise a concern or complaint about a particular aspect of the work of one of the academies in the MAT or the central MAT team.
- 1.3 We wish to know as soon as possible about any such concerns or complaints so that the issue can be resolved appropriately and with haste.
- 1.4 We aim to investigate any formal complaint raised, hold a meeting to discuss it with the parties concerned, and inform said parties in writing of the outcome.
- 1.5 This procedure applies to all employees regardless of length of service.

2. Purpose for this policy

- 2.1 This policy can be used by:
- (a) A parent or carer whose child attends or has recently left a MAT school;
 - (b) Members of the public or other organisations;
 - (c) A Governor, Trustee or member of staff in the central MAT team; or
 - (d) Stakeholders for Data Protection and Freedom of Information related matters.
- 2.2 This policy should not be used to complain about the following areas of the MAT's work which are covered under separate policies and procedures:
- (a) Child protection procedures;
 - (b) Appeals regarding admissions;
 - (c) Complaints about fixed-term or permanent exclusions from school; or

(d) Complaints about the school premises, facilities and any other services.

2.3 If you have difficulty at any stage of the procedure because of a disability or because English is not your first language, you should discuss the situation with **The Headteacher** as soon as possible.

3. Aims and objectives

3.1 Complaints will be:

- (a) Dealt with honestly, politely and confidentially;
- (b) Investigated thoroughly, fairly and with care to resolve the issue; and
- (c) Dealt with in a reasonable timescale;

3.2 Progress with any complaint or concern raised will be communicated to all parties involved clearly and without haste, and a full clear outcome will be issued in writing in response to formal complaints within 28 days of the complaint being received.

4. Confidentiality

4.1 Our aim is to deal with complaints and concerns sensitively and with due respect for the privacy of any individuals involved. All parties must treat as confidential any information communicated to them in connection with an investigation of a complaint.

4.2 All parties (including witnesses), must not make electronic recordings of any meetings or hearings conducted under this procedure.

4.3 All names of any witnesses whose evidence is relevant to the investigation of the complaint will remain confidential, unless they are one of the concerned parties.

4.4 All complaints and concern will be dealt with to be compliant with the General Data Regulations (GDPR) 2018 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

5. Raising concerns informally

5.1 Most concerns can be resolved quickly and informally through discussion with **The Headteacher**. If you feel unable to speak to **The Headteacher** for example, because the complaint concerns him or her, then you should speak informally to **The Chair of the Governing Body or equivalent body**. If this does not resolve the issue, you should follow the formal procedure below.

6. How to raise complaints formally

- 6.1 If your concern cannot be resolved informally you should put it in writing and submit it to **the school administrator** at the school or brought to the attention of the Trust as soon possible.
- 6.2 Complaints must be submitted no later than 3 months from when the events occurred. Where the complaints is submitted more than 6 months after the initial incident occurred, the Trust reserves the right to refuse investigate the concern under this policy, with exception to any discretion made by the Trust.

7. Stage 1 – Informal Stage

- 7.1 Should a parent of carer have any concern regarding the provision of their child, in the first instance they should raise and discuss this the relevant member of staff, for example the child's class. We anticipate that most issues can be dealt with informally through this method, as all our teachers strive to ensure that each child is happy and making good progress. If there may be an issue, our teachers will always wish to know so that they may resolve this with you.
- 7.2 Any issues should be communicated directly to the class teacher. This may be by letter, by telephone, by email or in person with an appointment, which can be made via the school office.
- 7.3 Should a parent/carers feel that a situation has not been resolved appropriately through discussion with the member of staff, or where there is a concern or complaint about the school itself, the best course of action is to make an appointment to discuss this with the head teacher. He/she will then investigate the case thoroughly and as quickly as possible. However. if a complaint cannot be dealt with immediately, the head teacher will endeavour to provide you with a full response within five school working days.

8. Stage 2 – Formal Investigation – By Head teacher

- 8.1 Should the concern or complaint not be resolved appropriately at the informal stage, the complaint should be put in writing and addressed to the head teacher. They will be responsible for ensuring that the complaint is investigated properly and in a timely manner.
- 8.2 Should the complaint concern the head teacher or a governor, it should be addressed to the chair of the school's Academy Governing Board, who will determine who may be best placed to deal with the complaint in this instance.
- 8.3 The head teacher or chair of the Academy Governing Board, will respond formally in writing to acknowledge the complaint within five school working days. She/he will explain

how the complaint will be resolved, and will invite you to an optional meeting to clarify the concerns and the resolution to them, should you wish. The head teacher or chair of the Academy Governing Board will aim to notify you of the outcome and resolution within 10 school working days.

9. Stage 3 – Formal Investigation by Academy Governing Board

9.1 Should you find the outcome of Stage 2 dissatisfying or have not been resolved appropriately, you may take the complaint further by submitting a written complaint to the chair of the school's Academy Governing Board.

9.2 The written complaint should:

- state clearly the reason for the complaint.
- explain clearly what steps have been taken to resolve the complaint so far by the school and why this has not been satisfactory.
- outline the desired outcome from the complaint.

9.3 The chair of the Academy Governing Board will then arrange for your complaint to be discussed further and investigated under the arrangements approved by the Trust, which may involve a panel of at least three governors/independent individuals who have no prior knowledge of the complaint.

9.4 Should it be the case that the chair of the Academy Governing Board has previously been involved in any discussions of the complaint at an earlier stage, she/he will arrange for another governor to take charge of the investigation. The Chair will ensure that at least one member of the panel is independent of the management and running of the academy (i.e. not a governor of the school). The governor in charge of investigating the complaint may ask you to come to a meeting to discuss the concerns, and you will be given reasonable notice of the panel hearing date.

9.5 As per the formal stage procedure, you must ensure that you provide members of the governors' complaints panel with as much written information and/or evidence that you could use in a formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting. The chair of the panel may invite any person who could help establish the facts of the complaint, and you will be notified of this person before the meeting.

9.6 Should a member of staff be required by the Academy Governing Board to attend a meeting, they will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named in a complaint may also choose to attend a meeting, or alternatively, they may choose to be represented. Should this occur, all parties will be informed in advance.

9.7 Following a full investigation of your complaint, the governor in charge of the investigation will write to you to notify you of the outcome, which will then be reported to the Academy Governing Board. The chair of the Academy Governing Board will then write to you, and the subject of the complaint, confirming the outcome and any agreed ways in which the complaint can be resolved.

9.8 The Academy Governing Board will aim to deal with your complaint and inform you of the outcome within 28 school working days.

10. Appeals

10.1 If the complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction you may appeal in writing to **the Clerk of the relevant body; i.e. Clerk to the Governing Body** stating your full grounds of appeal, within one week of the date on which the decision was sent or given to you.

10.2 We will hold an appeal meeting, normally within one week of receiving your written appeal. This will be dealt with impartially by **the relevant body** who has not previously been involved in the case (although they may ask anyone previously involved to be present).

10.3 We will confirm our final decision in writing, usually within one week of the appeal hearing. This is the end of the procedure and there is no further appeal.

11. Recording complaints

11.1 Complaints made at stage 2 or 3 will be recorded in writing, whether they may be resolved or not.

11.2 All correspondence, statements and records of any kind relating to complaints will be recorded confidentially except where the Secretary of State or someone acting on their behalf requests them.

12. Review

12.1 The Academy of Governing Board of each school will monitor the complexity and the nature of complaints on a regular basis to ensure that an effective procedure is used.

12.2 The Board will report the outcomes of their reviewing to the procedure to the Learning Link MAT central team in order to recommend any amendments that could be carried out to improve the procedure.