



Little Way Catholic  
Educational Trust

# Complaints' Policy

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## Purpose

This policy sets the processes and procedures for raising and responding to complaints received by all the Little Way Catholic Educational Trust (LWCET) schools in accordance with relevant legislation and best practice, including guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

LWCET's complaints' procedure is compliant with the requirements of the [Education \(Independent School Standards \(England\) Regulations 2014](#) Schedule 1, Part 7.

## Scope

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

## Exclusions

This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to: Admissions, Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN), Safeguarding matters, Exclusion or Whistle-blowing. Please refer to related policies for the process for managing complaints in relation to these areas.

This policy also does not cover complaints from LWCET employees which should be dealt with under the MAT Grievance Policy or Whistleblowing procedures.

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 Gloucestershire Local Authority, or the relevant authority in which the school is located.  For admissions, please also refer to <a href="#">published guidance</a>
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under the safeguarding/child protection policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, complainants 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: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/schooldiscipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/schooldiscipline-exclusions/exclusions</a> *complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.
Whistleblowing	Please refer to The LWCET's Whistleblowing Policy, which relate to matters raised by employees, including temporary staff and contractors.  A whistle-blower is deemed to be someone with privileged knowledge. These may be:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Members of staff</li> <li>2. Volunteers (e.g. trustees, LGCs)</li> </ol> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Concerns can be raised with ESFA using our <a href="#">contact form</a></p> <p>You can read further information about <a href="#">how ESFA handles whistleblowing disclosures</a></p>
Staff grievance	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the LWCET internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the LWCET 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: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>

### Third Party Involvement

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 LWCET in relation to their complaint, LWCET will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

### Introduction

The Little Way Catholic Educational Trust (LWCET) values everyone's voice. We treat everyone with respect, acknowledging that we are all equal as we are all made in God's image and likeness.

The LWCET will ensure it meets its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils and others. When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary

- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality wherever possible
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Ensure that any decisions made are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process.

The LWCET and its schools try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The LWCET will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full. To support this, The LWCET will ensure their schools publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the LWCET and EACH school's website. Throughout the process, the LWCET and its schools will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

### **Who can make a complaint?**

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at one of our schools. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to any one of our schools about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

### **The difference between a concern and a complaint**

- A **concern** may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.
- A **complaint** may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible opportunity. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints' procedure. All LWCET schools take concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

If a complainant has difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, our schools will respect the complainants' views. In these cases, the Headteacher will refer the complainant to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer complainant to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

The LWCET understands, however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, schools will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints' procedure.

## **How to raise a concern or make a complaint**

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

The complaints procedure consists of three stages:

1. Informal complaint
2. Formal complaint
3. A panel hearing

## **Resolving Complaints**

At each stage in the procedure, LWCET schools want 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.

### ***Stage 1: informal complaint***

Generally, it is expected that where the matter relates to a child/young person the complainant should raise the concern informally first with the child's/young person's class teacher or appropriate member of staff. LWCET schools welcome the opportunity to informally meet with complainants to try to understand concerns or complaints and resolve them informally through discussion and, where appropriate, action.

Sometimes the complainant may still feel dissatisfied with the outcome of their discussions and want to discuss the matter further with a Senior Member of staff or the Headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

### ***Stage 2: formal complaint***

Complaints against our school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher via the school office or specified email address, as determined by the school. Please use the Complaint Form (see appendix 1). Please place the completed form in a sealed envelope marked F.A.O. Headteacher, Private and Confidential. Alternatively, the completed form can be emailed (clearly marked as Private and Confidential) to the school's specified email address for such matters.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of the Local Governance Committee (LGC), via the school office. Please use the Complaint Form (see appendix 1). Please place it in a sealed envelope marked F.A.O. Chair of the Local Governance Committee, Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of the Local Governance Committee, any individual governor or the whole LGC should be addressed to the Clerk to the Local Governance Committee via the school office. Please use the Complaint Form (see appendix 1). Please place it in a sealed envelope marked F.A.O. Clerk to the LGC Private and Confidential.

If you require help in completing the Complaint Form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

Complainants should not approach individual LGC 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 3 of the procedure.

In accordance with equality law, LWCET 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.

Formal complaints must be made in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form – see appendix 1).

The Headteacher/recipient of the complaint will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days.

Within this response, the Headteacher/recipient will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headteacher/recipient can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

*Note: The Headteacher or chair or LGC may delegate the investigation to another member of the school or LWCET's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.*

During the investigation, the Headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher/recipient will provide a formal written response within fifteen school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the school is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The Headteacher/recipient will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the Local Governance Committee (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

Complaints about the Headteacher or member of the Local Governance Committee must be made to the Chair of the LGC or to the Clerk (respectively), via the school office. If the complaint is about:

- the Chair and Vice Chair (or jointly) or
- the entire Local Governance Committee, or
- the majority of the Local Governance Committee

Stage 2 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the LWCET or Clifton Diocese. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school or LWCET will take to resolve the complaint. The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

### ***Stage 3: A panel hearing***

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a meeting with members of the LGC complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints' procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within ten school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response. The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within twenty school days of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from the school available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through the LWCET, Gloucestershire Catholic Schools' Partnership, another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 3.



The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, the LWCET does not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. All parties must be informed in advance if legal representation will be sought at any meeting.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least ten school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least three school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least five school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and school with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within five school days.

If the complaint is about:

- the Chair and Vice Chair (or jointly) or

- the entire Local Governance Committee, or
- the majority of the Local Governance Committee

Stage 3 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint if they remain dissatisfied. The letter will therefore include details of how to contact the Education, Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA).

### **Anonymous Complaints**

LWCET will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of the Local Governance Committee, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

### **Duplicate Complaints**

If LWCET have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, the school will assess whether there are aspects that they hadn't previously considered, or any new information the school need to take into account.

If the school is satisfied that there are no new aspects, they will:

- Tell the new complainant that the school has already investigated and responded to this issue, and that the local process is complete
- Direct the complainant to the ESFA if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint. If there are new aspects, the school will follow this procedure again.

### **Timescales**

Complainants 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. The LWCET and its schools will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

### **Complaints Received Outside of Term Time**

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

### **Appealing to the Educational Skills and Funding Agency**

At the end of the process, if the complainant is still not satisfied with how the school or LWCET has handled the complaint, the complainant may be able to appeal to the Education skills and Funding Agency (ESFA). The ESFA will investigate complaints regarding non-compliance with published complaints procedures or allegations that the school has acted unlawfully or failed to comply with a legal obligation or contractual duty imposed on it under its Supplementary Funding Agreement.

Before escalating an academy complaint to the ESFA, complainants must have exhausted the LWCET complaints' own process. A complainant can contact the ESFA for general assistance on complaint handling by using ESFA's [contact form](#) or writing to them at the address below

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit  
Education and Skills Funding Agency  
Cheylesmore House  
Coventry  
5 Quinton Road  
Coventry

The role of the ESFA is to make sure the complaint is handled properly by following a published procedure that complies with part 7 of the [Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Complainant**

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- 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.

### **Investigator**

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
  - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
  - Interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
  - consideration of records and other relevant information
  - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the Headteacher or Complaints Committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The Headteacher or Complaints Committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

**Complaints Co-ordinator** (this could be the Headteacher / designated complaints governor or other staff member providing administrative support)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, Headteacher, Chair of the Local Governance Committee, Clerk and the LWCET's CEO (as appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- be aware of issues regarding:
  - o sharing third party information
  - o additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

### **Clerk to the LGC**

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale

- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

### **Committee Chair**

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

### **Committee Member**

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial and should be seen to be so, so no LGC governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting

Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

### **The LWCET Board**

The LWCET Board will:

- Establish and review the LWCET's complaints' policy and procedures
- Monitor complaints across the LWCET
- Ensure the Central Team offer effective support to LGCs in the management of complaints

### **Managing Serial & Unreasonable Complaints**

LWCET is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. The LWCET does not normally limit the contact complainants have with schools. However, the LWCET does not expect staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

LWCET defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders the consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- 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 complaint's investigation process
- 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 complaints procedure or with good practice

- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- 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 LWCET's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the ESFA
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the 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.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of the Local Governance Committee will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, LWCET may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the school will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from a school.

### **Stop responding**

LWCET may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- The school believe they have taken all reasonable steps to help address concerns
- The school has provided a clear statement of their position and their options
- The complainant contacts the school repeatedly, and the school believe

their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

Where LWCET stop responding, the school will inform the individual of the intention. The correspondence will also explain that new complaints will be considered.

### **Information Sharing**

LWCET is a member of a number of partnerships, including, but not limited to, the Gloucester Schools Partnership (GSP), which is an alliance of schools. Should a pupil transfer to another school, which is also a member of the GSP, we reserve the right to share the details of any complaints that it has deemed to be serial, unreasonable, or vexatious, as part of the 'Standardised School Transfer Form' process.

### **Complaint campaigns**

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

### **Record Keeping**

The school, on behalf of the LWCET, will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls. For monitoring purposes, the school will share procedural information (as required) with the LWCET, who are ultimately accountable for monitoring that the complaint's policy has been followed.

This material will be treated as confidential by the LWCET and school and held centrally. The information will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint, on the review panel or review LWCET compliance.

This is except where the ESFA (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request (SAR) under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and data management and retention procedures.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the LGC in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the LGC is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the school will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the LGC, who will not unreasonably withhold information.



### **Learning Lessons**

The LGC will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Headteacher, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

The LWCET Board will undertake an equivalent process across the organisation as a whole, working with LGCs and Headteachers to secure improvements, as required.

### **Monitoring Arrangements**

The LWCET will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in making sure that complaints are handled properly. This includes tracking the nature and number of complaints.

Individual schools will keep their own complaints record.

This policy will be reviewed by the LWCET Board at least every three years.

### **Related Policies**

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Exclusions policy
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- Whistleblowing

## APPENDIX 1: Complaint Form

Please refer to page 5 of the Policy, 'How to raise a concern or make a complaint' to find out to whom you should address your complaint who will acknowledge receipt your complaint and explain what action will be taken. Please mark your complaint as 'Private and Confidential.'

Your name:	School:
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:**

## APPENDIX 2: Summary Complaint Flowchart

