

Character Education Trust

Schools within the Character Education Trust

COMPLAINTS POLICY For Parents and Carers

Ratified/Reviewed by...	Date	Date to be reviewed
Trust Board	May 2025	May 2026

Equality Statement

Schools within the Character Education Trust strongly promotes equality of opportunity under all circumstances and in all contexts. We actively seek to ensure that all members of our community and all visitors to the school are treated equally. This includes actively ensuring that discrimination or inequality of any kind does not occur on the basis of the following: - Race - Nationality - Gender (including transgender). - Sexual Orientation - Disability - Age - Mental Health - Marital Status.

Discrimination and in equality can be experienced in the following ways, not exclusively: - Inappropriate or offensive language and terminology. - Cultural misrepresentation - Violence/ physical harm. - Bullying - Online Abuse - Disadvantage in all aspects of progress, care and opportunity.

When inequality or discrimination is seen or reported the school will strongly challenge and will work to resolve the issue. All concerns will be taken seriously and investigated fully and without prejudice.

The school will promote and teach the recognised British values of tolerance and respect throughout our school community. The school will monitor, evaluate and develop strategy in response to all incidents of discrimination or inequality. The school community and its leaders will maintain a current awareness of how discrimination and prejudice is experienced and will adjust its approach appropriately.

Introduction

This policy is based on guidance from the Department for Education and aligns with best practices from similar trusts. It considers all aspects of equality, including gender, disability, ethnicity, sexuality, belief, and age.

At The Character Education Trust, we are committed to providing all students with the highest standard of education while ensuring their health, safety, and wellbeing. We believe in a strong partnership between the school and parents, with each party fulfilling their responsibilities to support students in making the most of their time at The Character Education Trust.

If you have concerns about any aspect of the school's operations, whether it is something we are doing or not doing, we encourage you to share your concerns with us through the structured complaints process outlined below.

Raising a Concern or Making a Complaint

1. Informal Resolution

- Parents/carers should first discuss concerns informally with their child's Form Tutor or the relevant teacher.
- If the concern is not resolved, parents should contact their child's Head of Year.

2. Formal Complaint Process

- If dissatisfaction remains, the complaint should be directed to a senior member of staff at the individual school.
- The school will review the matter and respond within 10 school working days. This response may include an invitation to a meeting to discuss a resolution.
- If the issue remains unresolved, the complaint can be escalated to the Headteacher (or, in their absence, the Deputy Head). The Headteacher will conduct an independent review and respond within 10 school working days.
- If further escalation is necessary, a formal complaint may be submitted to the Governors, addressed to the Clerk to the Governors of the individual school. The complaint should outline the concerns, the attempts made to resolve them, and the reasons for continued dissatisfaction.

Stages of the Complaints Process

1. Stage One: Complaint Heard by a Staff Member

- Most complaints can be resolved informally.
- If the complainant prefers, they may request to speak with a different staff member.
- If the complaint is about the Headteacher, it will be referred to the Chair of Governors of the individual school. If about the Executive Headteacher, it will be referred to the Chair of The Trust Board.
- If the complaint is made to a Governor, they will refer the complainant to the appropriate senior staff member at the school.

2. Stage Two: Complaint Heard by the Headteacher

- If the issue is not resolved at Stage One, it will be escalated to the Headteacher of the individual school.
- The Headteacher may delegate aspects of the investigation but will make the final decision.
- A response will be provided within 10 school working days.

3. Stage Three: Complaint Heard by the Chair of Governors

- If the complaint remains unresolved, the complainant can escalate it to a committee of at least two governors of the individual school via the Clerk to the Governors.
- The complaint should be submitted in writing, detailing the concerns and previous steps taken.

4. Stage Four: Complaint Heard by Trustees' Complaint Appeal Panel

- If the complainant is still dissatisfied after following the individual school's process, a formal appeal can be made to the Trustees' Complaint Appeal Panel.
- A panel will be convened within 20 school working days, including at least one independent member, which may include a member of the executive leadership team.
- The hearing will be conducted privately and fairly, aiming for resolution and reconciliation. The complainant will be invited to the hearing and may bring a friend or adviser, this person is not able to speak without prior consent from the chair of the panel, giving at least five days' notice for the request.
- The panel's decision will be communicated in writing within 20 school working days.

This is the final stage of hearings within the school trust. Following this, no further escalation of the complaint can be made to either school or the trust.

Roles and Responsibilities

Clerk to the Governors

- Schedules hearings, ensures accessibility, collates written materials, records proceedings, and communicates decisions.

Chair of Governors

- Ensures the correct procedures are followed and convenes a panel if necessary.

Chair of the Complaints Panel

- Ensures fair proceedings, allows both parties to state their case, and maintains impartiality.
- Ensures one panel member is independent of school management.
- Ensures all written materials are reviewed and discussed fairly.

Unreasonable Complainants

The Character Education Trust aims to deal with complaints fairly and efficiently. However, we do not tolerate abusive, offensive, or threatening behaviour. We define unreasonable complaints as those that:

- Lack clear grounds or are repetitive.
- Relate to matters outside the school's remit.
- Seek confidential information about other students.
- Are based on political or personal viewpoints that contradict legal requirements.
- Refuse to engage in the complaints process but expect resolution.
- Make excessive demands on staff time.
- Introduce new, irrelevant issues during the investigation.
- Change the basis of the complaint frequently.
- Repeatedly challenge resolved matters.
- Seek unrealistic outcomes.
- Use aggressive, threatening, or abusive language.

If a complainant's behaviour is deemed unreasonable:

- The Headteacher will issue a written warning.
 - A communication plan may be implemented to limit interactions with the school.
 - In severe cases, the school may involve the police or ban individuals from the premises.
- For unresolved complaints, parents may escalate the matter to the Department for Education.

This policy ensures that all complaints are handled transparently, fairly, and efficiently, with the primary goal of resolving concerns in the best interests of students and the school community.

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