Genesis 16:13 You are the God that sees me.

Document Title	**Complaints Policy**
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Version Number	V2.1
Date Approved	December 2025
Approved By	LAAT Board

Policy Category (Please Indicate)	1	**Trust/Academies to use without amendment**
	2	Academy specific appendices
	3	Academy personalisation required (in highlighted fields)

Summary of Changes from Previous Version

Version	Date	Author	Note/Summary of Revisions
V2	December 2024	Nicky Bailey	Written using a template from the DfE.
V2.1	December 2025	Nicky Bailey	Revised links to latest guidance and addition of FOI/Data Policy exception.

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1. Who can make a complaint?

This policy sets out the complaints procedure for parents/carers of pupils at our schools as required by Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. We will also handle complaints from other members of the public professionally and fairly; while these may not be covered by Part 7, we will aim to resolve them using the same principles.

2. 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 stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. The LAAT takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, you will be referred to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, you will be referred 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.

Please refer to each schools' Raising a Concern' protocol which can be found on the websites.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the school will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

3. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

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

Complaints that involve or are about the head teacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

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

Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or a trustee of the Trust, should be addressed to the Director of Governance and Compliance, via the trust office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

A Stage 1 informal complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Stage 2 and 3 Formal complaints involve the complainant putting the complaint in writing. For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask a third-party organisation, for example Citizens Advice, to help you. If you choose not to use the form, please ensure that the complaint answers all of the questions detailed on the complaints form.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing

information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

4. Anonymous complaints

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

5. Complaint Campaigns

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

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

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

6. Duplicate Complaints

If the school/trust has resolved a complaint under this procedure and received a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, the school/trust will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information that needs to be taken into account.

If the school/trust is satisfied that there are no new aspects, it will:

- Tell the new complainant that the issue has already been investigated and responded to, and that the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with the original handling of the complaint

If a duplicate complaint is raised which in the view of the Trust warrants further consideration, the complaints procedure will be repeated.

7. Persistent, Vexatious or Harassing Complaints

A small number of complainants may be deemed unreasonably persistent complainants. This means that, in complaining about issues, the complainant behaves unreasonably, for example:

- Are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious.
- Use prolific correspondence, excessive email or telephone contact about a concern or complaint.
- Use social media to make comments in relation to the complaint, the Academy/Trust or individuals that work with the Academy/Trust.
- Insist on pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes.
- Insist on pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable or disregarded if the complainant:

- Is anonymous.
- Refuses to articulate their complaint or to specify the grounds of the complaint.
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing for 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 complaints procedure or good practice.

- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information, raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions to be dealt with 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 the complaint, where the Trust complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed at the appropriate stage, including referral to the Education Skills and Funding Agency.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on Academy / Trust time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint, in person, in writing, by email and/or by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

In addition, a complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the complainant does so in any of the following manners or circumstances:

- Maliciously.
- Aggressively.
- Using threats, intimidation or violence.
- Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language.
- Using falsified information.
- Publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as social media websites and newspapers

We are committed to treating all complaints fairly. If a complainant's behaviour (or the way they pursue a complaint) has become unreasonable and impacts staff and school operations, this will be addressed under the relevant separate policy.

8. Time scales

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

9. Complaints received outside of term time

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

10. Scope of this complaints procedure

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

11. Exceptions Who to contact

Admissions	Admissions to schools Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the local authority.
Statutory Assessments of SEND	Complaints relating to SEND can be addressed within this policy. If the complaint relates to Statutory Assessments, these should be addressed with the relevant agency/provider.
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer

	(LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
Exclusion of children from school	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. *complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
Freedom of Information/Data Protection	Requests for information, subject access requests and data protection issues are handled under UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

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 this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action against the school/Trust in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

12. Complaints about our fulfilment of early years requirements

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements, and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The school will keep a record of the complaint (see section 10) and make this available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers can notify Ofsted if they believe that the school is not meeting Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, by:

- Calling 0300 123 4666
- Emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- Using the online contact form available at https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted#org-contacts

We will notify parents and carers if we become aware that the school is to be inspected by Ofsted. We will also supply a copy of the inspection report to parents and carers of children attending the setting on a regular basis.

13. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the Trust wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

14. Withdrawal of a complaint

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

15. Stage 1 – Informal complaints

It is to be hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher, year head / subject head or head teacher. Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 of the procedure.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

16. Stage 2 – Formal complaints

Formal complaints must be made to the head teacher (unless they are about the head teacher), via the school office. This involves submitting the complaint in writing (as outlined in section 3 of this policy).

The head teacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 school days.

Within this response, the head teacher may seek further clarification of the nature of the complaint. The head teacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The head teacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the head teacher (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 head teacher will provide a formal written response within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the Investigating officer 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/Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

The head teacher 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 head teacher, or a member of the academy committee (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor/member of Trust staff will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

Complaints about the head teacher or member of the academy committee must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire academy committee or
- the majority of the academy committee

Stage 2 will be escalated to the CEO of the Trust or their representative.

17. Stage 3 – 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 panel hearing consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint with one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school. 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 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response.

The escalation to Stage 3 should include details of the original complaint and why the complainant is not satisfied with the response.

The purpose of the panel hearing is to consider whether the complaint was investigated fairly and objectively at stage two. The panel may recommend a review of the decision at stage two if it decides that the complaint was not investigated fairly, e.g. if an essential witness was not interviewed. Alternatively, it can uphold the decision at stage two or find if not upheld or partially upheld based on what is heard at the panel hearing.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 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 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 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.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire academy committee or
- the majority of the academy committee

Stage 3 will be heard by the trustees and an independent panel member.

A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

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.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under (Colleague Services) staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

Prior to the meeting, the Clerk will:

- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 8 school days before the meeting.

At least 5 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

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 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 15 school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education (DfE) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled.

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/Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

18. Complaints escalated to / about the Trust, CEO or Trustee

If a complaint is escalated to Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust "the trust" or if a complainant wishes to complain directly about the trust, then the complaint should be sent to the CEO to be investigated.

The CEO will write to the complainant acknowledging the complaint within 3 school days of the date that the written request was received. The acknowledgement will confirm that the complaint will now be investigated under this Complaints Policy and will confirm the date for providing a response to the complainant.

Following the investigation, the CEO will write to the complainant confirming the outcome within 15 school days of the date that the letter was received. If this time limit cannot be met, the CEO will write to the Complainant within 10 school days of the date that the letter was received, explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised date.

If the complaint concerns the CEO or a Trustee, the complaint should be investigated by the Chair of the Trust Board. If a formal complaint form is received about the Chair, the complaint will be referred to the Vice Chair for investigation

NB. Where the Chair of the Trust Board has investigated the complaint, they will write the letter of outcome to the Complainant and provide a copy to the CEO.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the previous stage, the complainant should write to the Clerk to the Trust Board asking for the complaint to be heard before a Complaint Panel, within 5 school days.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 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 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 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.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire trust board or
- the majority of the trust board

Stage 3 will be heard by a completely independent committee panel.

The Complaint Panel will consist of three members. None of the three members of the Complaint Panel will have been involved in the incidents or events which led to the complaint, or have been involved in dealing with the complaint in the previous stages, of have any detailed prior knowledge of the complaint.

One of the Complaint Panel members will be independent of the management and running of the Academy Trust. This means that the independent Complaint Panel member will not be a Trustee or an employee of the Trust.

A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

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

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

Prior to the meeting, the Clerk will:

- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 8 school days before the meeting.

At least 5 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

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 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 with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 15 school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education (DfE) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the Trust.

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 LAAT will take to resolve the complaint.

The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

19. Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school / trust did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the DfE after they have completed Stage 3.

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the Trust. They will consider whether the Trust's procedure is compliant and has been followed. The complainant can Contact DfE **via the Customer Help Portal or at gov.uk/contact-dfe.** Postal: Complaints Team, Department for Education, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT

Complaints Form – Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

Please complete this form and return it to the relevant person as outlined in the Complaints Policy.

Note: If you need assistance completing this form, please contact the school office.

What is the nature of your complaint? (Please provide as much detail as possible, including dates, locations, and names of anyone involved.)	
Have you raised this issue informally? If yes, who did you speak to, and when?	
What outcome are you seeking to resolve your complaint?	
Are you attaching any additional documents or evidence to support your complaint? If so, please list them here.	
Name and contact details	

Complaints Form – Stage 3 – Panel Hearing Request

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, you may escalate your complaint to Stage 3. Please complete this form and return it to the relevant person as outlined in the Complaints Policy.

Note: This form must be submitted within 5 school days of receiving the Stage 2 response, unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Note: If you need assistance completing this form, please contact the school office.

What is the nature of your complaint? (Please provide as much detail as possible, including dates, locations, and names of anyone involved.)	
Have you raised this issue at Stage 2? If yes, who did you speak to, and when?	
Why are you unsatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 complaint? (Please provide as much detail as possible, including dates, locations, and names of anyone involved.)	
Name and contact details	