

Parental Communication and Complaints Policy

Policy Code:	SW9
Policy Start Date:	March 2021
Policy Review Date:	March 2024

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

- [Priory Contract](#)
- Priory Staff Code of Conduct
- HR6 Data Protection Policy
- HR12 Staff Disciplinary Policy
- HR24 Allegations of Abuse Made Against Adults Policy
- HR33 Records Management Policy
- HR36 Academy Complaints Policy
- HR37 Zero Tolerance Policy
- Complaints to Ofsted about schools:
 - www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/387342/Complaints_to_Ofsted_about_schools.pdf
- Education and Skills Funding Agency's Complaints procedure:
 - www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure

1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 Parents/Carers have a vital contribution to make to their child's progress and happiness. 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 Training, Priory Apprenticeships, Lincolnshire Teaching School Alliance and Lincolnshire Teaching School Alliance SCITT.
- 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 The Trust is committed to leading a healthy organisation, which includes a commitment to and promotion of emotional wellbeing and mental health. Therefore, all Trust policies and procedures ensure this commitment is incorporated in order to support all staff and students. Members of staff are encouraged to speak to their line managers, and students are encouraged to speak to any member of staff, if they feel any part of this policy would affect their emotional wellbeing and mental health. Any such comments should be passed to the Trust's HR department (via FederationHR@prioryacademies.co.uk) for appropriate consideration at the next available point in the policy review cycle.

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 HR.
- 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 efficient and effective communication between all stakeholders. Communication should be 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, taking into account working hours;

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- 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 to their child, 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 on each day of the child's absence.

4.3 In the event that Parents/Carers have a concern they wish to discuss, their child's Form Tutor/Class Teacher (Primary) 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 (Primary). At Secondary, Parents/Carers are asked to telephone the Academy rather than email a member of staff. If the member of staff required is not available at the time of the call, they will be in contact at the earliest opportunity. Any emails identifying concerns will be responded to, but the member of staff may contact the parent/carer by telephone to discuss the matter. Parents/Carers should be aware that any emails sent in the evening or at the weekend may not be responded to until the next working day.

4.4 If parents/carers request an appointment, they will be referred, in the first instance, to an appropriate member of pastoral or senior staff, who will make the necessary arrangements.

4.5 If parents/carers urgently need to speak to someone, e.g. if there is a serious family emergency or a child protection issue, they should contact the Academy reception who will do their best to contact a senior member of staff to speak to.

4.6 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)

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- Meetings between parents/carers and a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
 - School website
 - Social media sites/blogs
 - Newsletters
 - Noticeboard outside the Academy

4.7 Each academy operates an 'open door' policy; it welcomes parent/carer involvement at every level of academy life. It is open to parents/carers at all reasonable times to discuss the progress of their child or to contribute to or ask about academy developments. Where good, clear systems of communication exist between parents/carers and teachers, parents/carers are able to raise their questions and concerns and resolve them as part of the parent-teacher relationship.

4.8 In support of this close partnership, parents/carers are invited to enter into a Student/Teacher/Parent Contract. This agreement sets out the academy's aims and values, as well as the responsibilities of the academy and parents/carers, and our expectations of students. Through our programme of meetings between parents/carers and teachers, as well as through informal contact, we provide opportunities for parents/carers to raise matters of concern – about the curriculum or more general issues. If a concern is not resolved through discussion with a teacher or other member of staff, the parent/carer or the teacher can refer it to the Academy Headteacher.

5 Responding to Parents

5.1 In all cases of communication from parents/carers, an appropriate member of staff should respond at the earliest opportunity (within working time), even if such a response instigates a 'neutral' situation where further detail is being sought to answer the parent/carer's request in full at a later point.

5.2 Responding to telephone calls from parents/carers:

- All calls from parents/carers are received through the main switchboard by the academy receptionist, who will attempt to connect callers to the appropriate extension.
- **Urgent calls:** If the member of staff asked for is not available, the call will be put through to the most appropriate or available member of staff.
- **Non-urgent calls:** If the member of staff asked for is not available, the receptionist will normally take details of the parent/carer's name, telephone number and reason for calling. This information will be given to the member of staff concerned who will respond at the earliest opportunity.
- **Messages for students:** In emergencies or at other times when it is unavoidable, reception staff will help parents/carers by taking messages for students. Normally, this will be done by making a written note and a staff member delivering the message. Parents/Carers are asked, therefore, not to abuse this system.

- **Telephone calls made at arranged times:** If members of staff have arranged with parents/carers to receive calls at particular times of the academy day, those staff will try to ensure that the receptionist knows where they will be and they will try to make themselves available at those times.

5.3 Responding to letters and emails from parents/carers:

- The Academy will always try to acknowledge letters and emails received from parents/carers on the same or the next Academy day.
- If more time is required to provide a fuller response or to arrange a meeting, staff will try to include in the acknowledgement details of when these will take place.
- Staff will aim to respond to the most pressing concerns of parents/carers as quickly as possible. It is our intention to try to respond to any letter or email as soon as we can.

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 the 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.

6.2 The definition of a complaint is as follows:

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

6.3 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.

6.4 The complaints procedure is summarised in the flow chart in Appendix 1 within this Policy. A copy can also be accessed through the Academy Admin Office and on the Trust's website.

6.5 The general complaints procedure will be used to consider any complaints about the Academy, except those which relate to the following areas which have their own procedure:

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- (i) Admissions;
 - (ii) Exclusion of students;
 - (iii) Special Education Provision;
 - (iv) Academy Re-organisation Proposals;
 - (v) Curriculum and Religious Worship;
 - (vi) Complaints covered by the Children Act 1989;
 - (vii) Complaints which are the subject of Legal Proceedings or which have been previously dealt with;
 - (viii) Complaints being considered by the Secretary of State for Education under any statutory power;
 - (ix) Complaints about the allocation of resources according to agreed criteria, such as awards and benefits.

6.6 The guiding principles behind our Complaints Procedure include:

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| 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. |
| Fair | - treating the complainant impartially, and without unlawful discrimination or prejudice. |

6.7 In considering a complaint, if it appears that staff conduct should be investigated, then it may be appropriate for disciplinary or capability procedures to be used. It will be the decision of the Academy Headteacher to invoke such a procedure, following referral from the member of staff leading the complaints enquiry. It should be added that invocation of a disciplinary or capability procedure does not diminish the responsibility to ensure that this complaints procedure is followed 'in tandem' with the disciplinary or capability procedure. 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.

- 6.8 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.
- 6.9 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.
- 6.10 All complaints are to be recorded in accordance with the academies' monitoring procedure and acknowledged without delay.
- 6.11 If the complaint is an allegation of abuse made against an adult, the Trust's HR24 Allegations of Abuse Made Against Adults Policy will be adhered to.

7 General Complaints Procedure - 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 the Disciplinary Procedure, 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 the Disciplinary Procedure. At the same time, the Academy Headteacher will inform the Director of Student Welfare and Director 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 (including any Academy Complaints Committee meeting).
- 7.3 Nothing in this Complaints Procedure precludes an Academy's Complaints Committee deciding to refer the complaint back to the Academy Headteacher to deal with under the Disciplinary Procedure.

7.4 If the Academy Headteacher decides that a complaint about staff conduct should be dealt with according to the Disciplinary Procedure, 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. Please refer to HR12 Staff Disciplinary Policy for further information.

8 Dealing with a Complaint

8.1 In the first instances, complaints received by the Academy will be dealt with informally by the Academy Headteacher or their representative (Stage 1); if the complaint is not resolved then it will be dealt with formally (Stage 2); and then referred to the Academy Complaints Committee (Stage 3) if the complainant remains dissatisfied.

9 Complaints dealt with informally by the Academy Headteacher or their Representative (Stage 1)

9.1 Should parents/carers consider that a concern raised 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 Headteacher, the complaint should be addressed to the Director of Human Resources.

9.3 In order to best deal with any complaints, they should be raised within three 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'.

9.4 The Academy Headteacher or appropriate person will attempt to deal with any complaint as quickly as possible. The Academy will acknowledge a complaint either in writing or orally within 48 hours and will respond to a complaint within five working days. If it is not possible to meet these deadlines, then the complainant will be informed when they will receive a response.

9.5 Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Academy Headteacher may arrange a meeting with the complainant.

9.6 If a complainant remains unsatisfied with the resolution offered, or the Trust considers that a more in-depth investigation is required, the Trust will move on to Stage 2 of this procedure.

9.7 If the complaint cannot be resolved immediately informally, then it may be necessary to apply Stages 2 and 3 of this procedure.

9.8 The Academy Headteacher will be made aware of any complaint that cannot be immediately resolved. Any oral complaint will be summarised in writing by the member of staff who receives it and will include the name and address of the complainant.

10 Complaints dealt with formally by the Academy Headteacher or their Representative (Stage 2)

10.1 The written complaint or written summary of the complaint will be promptly referred to the Academy Headteacher or appropriate person.

10.2 The Academy Headteacher, or appropriate person, will decide whether to delegate the investigation of the complaint to another member of staff or whether to undertake the investigation themselves.

10.3 In exceptional circumstances, such as an incident that could have resulted or has resulted in personal injury, the Academy Headteacher must be informed immediately and may consider referring the matter for investigation direct to representatives of the Academy's Complaints Committee (Stage 3). In cases of a serious complaint against the Academy Headteacher, it may be appropriate for the Chair of the Academy Complaints Committee to seek further guidance from the Director of Student Welfare and the Director of Human Resources.

10.4 Another body may be commissioned by the Academy 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.

10.5 The person investigating the complaint will ensure that a written acknowledgement is provided to the complainant within five working days of Stage 2 commencing. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the Academy's Complaints Procedure 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.

10.6 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.

10.7 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.

10.8 A written response 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. This letter or report must be endorsed by the

Academy Headteacher, and a copy shown to the Director of Student Welfare and Director of Human Resources. If Stage 2 highlights any recommendations of changes in working practice the complainant must allow 60 working days for these recommendations to be embedded fully.

- 10.9 The outcome letter will also inform the complainant that, if they are not satisfied by the results of Stage 2, then the complainant 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 Academy Headteacher, 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.
- 10.10 If no further communication is received from the complainant within 10 working days (or 70 working days where necessary), it will be assumed that the complaint has been satisfactorily resolved.

11 Complaints Referred to the Academy's Complaints Committee (Stage 3)

- 11.1 Upon receipt of a written request from the complainant for the complaint to proceed to Stage 3, the Academy will first ascertain whether Stages 1 and 2 have been followed. If not, the appropriate Stage will be commenced. If Stages 1 and 2 have been observed, the procedures outlined below will be followed.
- 11.2 The Clerk to the Academy Complaints Committee will write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written request for the complaint to be heard by representatives of the Academy Complaints Committee (ACC). The acknowledgement must be sent within five working days and should also inform the complainant that the complaint is to be heard by the ACC within 20 working days of receiving the complaint. The letter should also explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint. These must be received within five working days of the date of the hearing to allow adequate time for the documents to be circulated.
- 11.3 The Clerk to the Academy Complaints Committee will request that the Chair convene the hearing. The panel must consist of at least three people. No member of the panel should have had any prior involvement in the complaint. As required by The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the Panel must include at least one member who is independent of the management and running of the school (e.g. a parent or local business person).
- 11.4 The Panel should include the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Local Governing Body (LGB). It is not appropriate for the Academy Headteacher to have a place on this panel. The composition of the ACC should, as far as possible, be sensitive to issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.
- 11.5 The Chair/Vice-Chair will ensure that the complaint is heard by the panel within 20 working days of receiving the request for a stage 3 hearing. All relevant

correspondence regarding the complaint will be distributed to each panel member as soon as the composition of the panel is confirmed.

- 11.6 The Chair/Vice-Chair will write and inform the complainant, Academy Headteacher, any relevant witnesses and members of the Panel, at least five working days in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting. The notification to the complainant will also inform them of the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend. The letter will also explain how the meeting will be conducted and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the panel.
- 11.7 The Chair/Vice-Chair of the Academy Committee will invite the Academy Headteacher to speak to the panel and/or prepare a written report for the panel in response to the complaint. If the Academy Headteacher prepares a written report, a copy of this report will be sent to the complainant at least five working days before the date of the meeting. The Academy Headteacher may also invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant, to respond in writing or in person to the complaint. Any relevant documents relating to the complaint should be received at least five working days prior to the hearing.
- 11.8 The involvement of staff, from establishments other than the Academy, is subject to the discretion of the Chair of the Panel.
- 11.9 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 Academy and the complainant.
- 12.2 The panel should remember that many parents/carers 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.

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- (iii) The Panel may question the complainant about the complaint and the reasons why it has been made.
 - (iv) The Academy Headteacher 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 Academy Headteacher to make a statement in response to the complaint. At the discretion of the Chair of the Panel, the Academy Headteacher may invite members of staff directly involved in the complaint to supplement their response.
 - (vi) The Panel may question the Academy Headteacher and/or members of staff about the response to the complaint.
 - (vii) The Chair of the Panel will invite the complainant to question the Academy Headteacher and/or members of staff about the response to the complaint.
 - (viii) Any party has the right to call witnesses, subject to the approval of the Panel.
 - (ix) The Panel, the Academy Headteacher and the complainant have the right to question any such witnesses.
 - (x) The Academy Headteacher 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 Academy Headteacher 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. .
 - (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;
 - c) Where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the Academy's 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 Academy Headteacher. 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 Academy must ensure a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept on file in the Academy's records.

13 Outcomes

13.1 At any of the three 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 complainant's complaint;
- An acknowledgement that the Academy, Trust or LTSA could have handled the situation differently or better;
- An apology;
- An explanation of steps which have been taken to ensure the circumstances which led to the complaint will not happen again;
- 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 or Stage 3 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 3, 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.
- The findings and recommendation of the panel will be available at the Academy for the Academy Headteacher's and the Trust's 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 Education and Skills Funding Agency

- 14.1 If the parent is not satisfied with the ACC's response to their complaint at Stage 3, the parent can complain to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).
- 14.2 The procedure for complaint to the ESFA can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy>

15 Ofsted

- 15.1 Ofsted will not consider a complaint unless the parent has first followed the Academy's and Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA) complaints procedures. The ESFA is responsible for funding and monitoring academies, university technical colleges, studio schools and free schooling.
- 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, 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
 - mediate between a parent or 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
 - 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 Unreasonable Complainants

- 16.1 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 Academy 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.
- 16.2 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*'.
- 16.3 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 a 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 school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to the Department for Education;
 - Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
 - 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.

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- 16.4 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):-
- maliciously;
 - aggressively;
 - using threats, intimidation or violence;
 - using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;
 - knowing it to be false;
 - using falsified information;
 - publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.
- 16.5 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.
- 16.6 Whenever possible, the Academy Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.
- 16.7 If the behaviour continues the Academy Headteacher 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 specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.
- 16.8 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 the Academy premises.

17 Barring from the Academy Premises

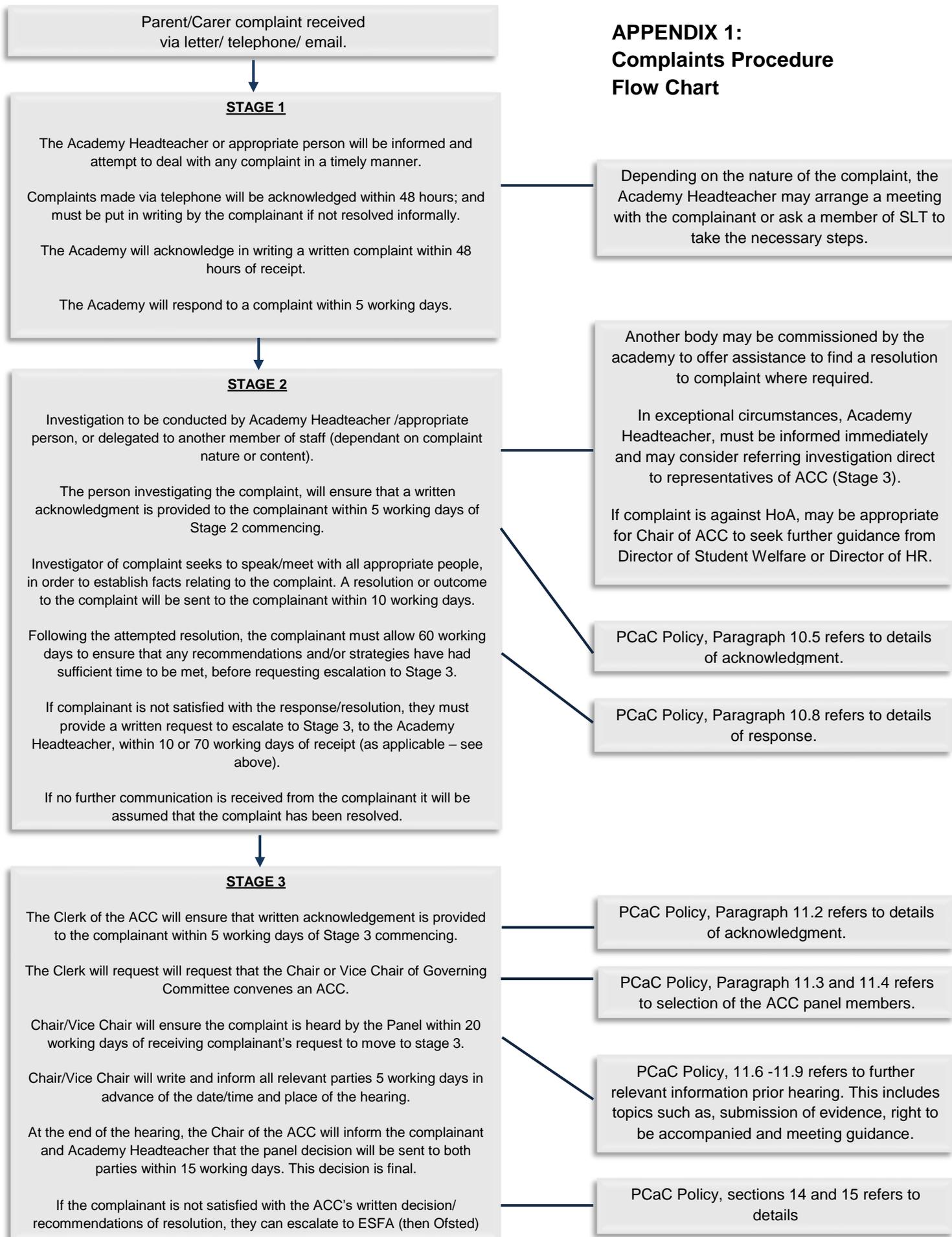
- 17.1 Although fulfilling a public function, Academies within the Trust are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. The Trust will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.
- 17.2 If a parent/carer's behaviour is a cause for concern, an Academy within the Trust can ask them to leave school premises. In serious cases, the Academy Headteacher, after discussion with the Director of Student Welfare, can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the parent/carer may wish to make.

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- 17.3 The Academy will always give the parent/carer 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 parent/carer, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the parent/carer should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place.
- 17.4 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.

18 Policy Changes

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

APPENDIX 1:
Complaints Procedure
Flow Chart





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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