

Unity SP summary complaints process

Our procedure has 3 stages:

1. **Informal stage.** This is often a meeting between the complainant and the subject of the complaint, most relevant person, or headteacher
2. **Formal stage – contact the director of education and log with trust secretary.** This usually involves the complaint being put in writing to the headteacher, who will investigate and try to resolve the issue
3. **Panel stage – contact the head of governance.** The complaint progresses to a hearing where the matter is discussed in front of a panel who make a judgement

The panel stage

The panel must consist of:

- At least 3 governors who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint
- 1 of these must be independent of the management and running of the school

The independent panel member can be from a local governing body at another school within our MAT, who has no conflict of interest or prior knowledge of the complaint.

You also must allow the parent(s) to attend the hearing and be accompanied if they wish.

It's good practice to:

- Give parents 'reasonable notice' of the panel hearing
- Clarify in advance what you'll consider to be unacceptable behaviour from complainants, and what you'll do if this happens
- Consider if staff involved in handling the complaint are well-equipped to do so

Communicating the outcome

Provide written notification to complainants that includes:

- The panel's decision and reasoning
- Any further rights of appeal to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
- Copies of the minutes

If the complainant appeals, the ESFA will look for any:

- Unnecessary delays in the process
- Instances where the academy didn't comply with its procedure
- Places where the academy is breaching its funding agreement
- Places where the academy isn't complying with any other legal obligation

The ESFA is the organisation that regulates academies.

Recording the complaint

You must record:

- The progress of the complaint and the final outcome
- Whether the case progressed to a panel hearing
- The action taken by the school or the trust, regardless of outcome

*******Ensure you follow the trust's complaints procedure, guidance and toolkit*******