



Complaints Policy

The Perins MAT

Approved by The Perins MAT Trust Board May 2022

Next review due May 2023

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1 Aims

- 1.1 This is the Complaints Policy of The Perins Multi-Academy Trust (“The MAT”).
- 1.2 The aims of this Policy and related procedures are to provide a framework for the resolution of complaints which:
 - 1.2.1 allows for their resolution informally and sets out The MAT’s formal procedures where this is not achievable.
 - 1.2.2 is easily accessible and publicised, simple to understand and use and impartial and non-adversarial.
 - 1.2.3 enables a full and fair investigation.
 - 1.2.4 respects people's desire for confidentiality.
 - 1.2.5 addresses all the points at issue and provides an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary.
 - 1.2.6 provides information to The MAT’s Senior Leadership Teams (“SLTs”) so that services can be improved.
 - 1.2.7 helps to create a culture of safety, equality and protection.

2 Scope and application

- 2.1 This Policy applies to the whole of The MAT which currently includes Perins School; Patchwork Pre-School and Nursery; and Sun Hill Junior School (“SHJS”).
- 2.2 This Policy applies only to complaints by parents. The MAT has separate grievance and whistleblowing policies to cover concerns that a member of staff may have.
- 2.3 This Policy applies to any expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken, or a lack of action, by The MAT where the parent seeks action by The MAT.
- 2.4 This Policy does not apply to matters for which there are separate statutory procedures (e.g. admission appeals, exclusion reviews, special educational needs appeals, etc.).
- 2.5 This Policy applies to complaints from each of the following:
 - 2.5.1 parents of current pupils.
 - 2.5.2 parents of former pupils, if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was registered as on roll at The MAT, or within three months of the pupil being off-rolled.
- 2.6 The MAT will not normally investigate anonymous complaints unless appropriate to do so.
- 2.7 Requests for financial awards, such as claims for compensation or damages are beyond the scope of The MAT’s Complaints Policy.
- 2.8 All parents should be aware that, regardless of the nature of a complaint and whether or not it is upheld, the complainant is not entitled to details of any related sanctions imposed on staff, pupils or other party, for data protection and confidentiality reasons.
- 2.9 There may be occasions when it is necessary to deviate from this Complaints Policy if this is reasonable and justified, subject to The MAT continuing to meet the statutory requirements under Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Parents will be notified

of the changes through the posting of the updated Policy on the Sun Hill Junior School and Perins School websites.

- 2.10 The MAT requests that persons other than parents who have concerns about The MAT operation or site, should raise them with The MAT. They should do so by writing to the Executive Headteacher ("EHT") setting out their specific concerns and the action sought. Any concerns raised will be investigated and responded to separately to the procedures outlined in this Complaints Policy.

3 **Time scales**

- 3.1 Whenever possible, in the interests of a prompt resolution of issues, a complaint should be raised 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 MAT will, however, consider complaints made outside of this timeframe where exceptional circumstances apply. A complaint raised outside this timeframe should therefore confirm the reasons for the delay in raising it.
- 3.2 Timescales for each stage of The MAT's Complaints Policy are set out below. It is expected that the management of every complaint will progress in a timely manner. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay to the timescales for a stage of the Complaints Policy (such as other bodies investigating aspects of the complaint), The MAT will notify the Parent and inform them of the new timescales as soon as possible.
- 3.3 Complaints which are raised in the school holidays will usually be deemed to have been received on the first school day after receipt.
- 3.4 If a parent commences legal action against The MAT in relation to their complaint, the EHT in consultation with the Chair of Trustees will consider whether to suspend the Complaints Policy until those proceedings have been concluded.

4 **Regulatory framework**

- 4.1 This Policy has been prepared to meet The MAT's responsibilities under:
- 4.1.1 Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
 - 4.1.2 Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, March 2017).
 - 4.1.3 Education and Skills Act 2008.
 - 4.1.4 Children Act 1989.
 - 4.1.5 Childcare Act 2006.
 - 4.1.6 Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR); and
 - 4.1.7 Equality Act 2010.

5 **Responsibility statement and allocation of tasks**

- 5.1 The MAT has overall responsibility for all matters which are the subject of this Policy.
- 5.2 To ensure the efficient discharge of its responsibilities under this policy, The MAT has allocated the following tasks:

Task	Allocated to	When / frequency of review
Keeping the policy up to date and compliant with the law and best practice	Perins School Senior Deputy Headteacher	As a minimum annually and as required
Monitoring the implementation of the policy	Executive Headteacher and Trust Board	As a minimum annually and as required
Seeking input from interested groups (such as pupils, staff, parents/ carers) to consider improvements to The MAT's procedures under the policy	Perins School Senior Deputy Headteacher, for both Perins School and Sun Hill Junior School	As required
Formal annual review of complaints and implementation of any recommendations, to identify trends and recommend further improvement to policies and procedures	Trust Board	Annually

6 Publication and availability

- 6.1 This Policy is published on The MAT's websites.
- 6.2 This Policy is available in hard copy on request.
- 6.3 A copy of this Policy is available for inspection from The MAT's school offices during the school day.
- 6.4 This Policy can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required and The MAT will make other reasonable adjustments required to enable complainants to access and complete this procedure, such as holding meetings in accessible locations.
- 6.5 Information regarding the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure of this Policy during the preceding school year is available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils, on request, to the Chief Inspector of Ofsted, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate. The MAT makes this available by application to the Clerk to the Trustees.

7 Definitions and interpretation

- 7.1 Where the following words or phrases are used in this policy:
 - 7.1.1 references to The MAT are references to The Perins Multi-Academy Trust (MAT).
 - 7.1.2 references to **school days** mean Monday to Friday when The MAT is open to pupils during term time. The dates of terms are published on The MAT's websites.
 - 7.1.3 references to **parent or parents** means the parent(s) of the pupil, that is the natural or adoptive parent(s) of the pupil (irrespective of whether they are or have ever been married, with whom the pupil lives, or whether they have contact with the pupil) as well as any person(s) who is/are not the natural or adoptive parent(s) of the pupil, but who has/have care of, or parental responsibility for, the pupil (e.g. carer, legal guardian).

- 7.2 Timescales for each stage of the Complaints Policy are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. It is expected that the management of every complaint will progress in a timely manner.
- 7.3 The MAT aims to resolve all complaints efficiently and promptly and parents are encouraged to bring any matter causing concern to The MAT's attention as soon as possible.
- 7.4 Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay to the timescales for a stage of the Complaints Policy, The MAT will notify the Parents and inform them of the new timescales as soon as possible.

8 **Management of complaints**

- 8.1 The MAT's Policy allows for complaints to be considered at three stages:

Stage 1: An informal raising of a complaint. Further details of this procedure are set out in **Appendix 1**.

Stage 2: A formal complaint in writing. Further details of this procedure are set out in **Appendix 2**.

Stage 3: Reference to a Complaint Panel. Further details of this procedure are set out in **Appendix 3**

9 **Expected standards of behaviour by those making complaints**

- 9.1 Attention is drawn to the information included in **Appendix 4**, which has been developed having regard to:

9.1.1 Best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures (Department for Education (ESFA), July 2020).

9.1.2 Controlling access to school premises (Department for Education (DfE), November 2018).

10 **Record keeping and confidentiality**

- 10.1 All records created in accordance with this Policy are managed in accordance with The MAT's policies that apply to the retention and destruction of records.

- 10.2 The MAT keeps a written record of all formal complaints, including the following:

10.2.1 whether they were resolved at Stage 2 or Stage 3.

10.2.2 the action taken by The MAT as a result of the complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

- 10.3 In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances in line with The MAT's data retention policy.

- 10.4 The information created in connection with this Policy may contain personal data. The MAT's use of this personal data will be in accordance with data protection law. The MAT has published privacy notices on its websites which explain how The MAT will use personal data.

- 10.5 Correspondence, statements, and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where access is requested by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required in the course of an inspection or under other legal authority or court order.

11 Complaints to the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA)

11.1 Parents who are dissatisfied with the decision of a Complaint Panel may contact the ESFA, which will consider the complaint on behalf of the Secretary of State.

11.2 The ESFA's contact details are as follows:

Online: Via the ESFA's [School Complaints Form](#)

By post: Ministerial and Public Communications Division
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

12 Training

- 12.1 The MAT ensures that regular guidance and training is arranged on induction and at regular intervals thereafter so that staff and volunteers understand what is expected of them by this Policy and have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their roles.
- 12.2 The level and frequency of training depends on the role of the individual member of staff, or volunteer.
- 12.3 The MAT maintains written records of all staff and volunteer training.

13 Version control

Date of adoption of this Policy	May 2022
Date for next review of this Policy	May 2023

Appendix 1 Stage 1 - Informal complaint

1 Informal resolution of a complaint

- 1.1 The MAT hopes and expects that most complaints can be resolved informally without the need to use the formal stages of the Complaints Policy. For example, dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care or a billing error should be able to be resolved by the relevant member of staff.

2 Who to contact.

- 2.1 Where appropriate, complaints should initially be raised as follows:

- 2.1.1 **Educational issues:** if the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, the complaint should be raised either orally or in writing with the pupil's subject tutor. The complaint may be passed to a more senior member of staff if appropriate.
- 2.1.2 **Pastoral care:** for complaints relating to matters outside the classroom, the complaint should be raised either orally or in writing with the pupil's form tutor who may opt to refer this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) if the complaint relates to a specific safeguarding issue. Serious Child Protection issues should be raised with the DSL immediately.
- 2.1.3 **Disciplinary matters:** a problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised first with the relevant Head of House at Perins or with a member of the SLT at SHJS or Patchwork.
- 2.1.4 **Financial matters:** a query relating to fees or extras should be addressed in writing to the MAT Chief Financial Officer (CFO).

- 2.2 An informal complaint will be acknowledged by telephone, email, or letter within **two school working days** of receipt, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescales. Such action may include an investigation and/or a meeting with the parent.

- 2.3 Wherever appropriate, The MAT will ask the parent at the earliest stage what they think might resolve the issue.

- 2.4 The parent will receive a response to the complaint within **15 school days**.

- 2.5 If the parent is dissatisfied with the response to the informal complaint or in the event that the complaint cannot be resolved by informal means, the parent may make a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this procedure as set out in **Appendix 2**.

3 Complaints about the Headteacher or the Executive Headteacher or the Chair of Trustees

- 3.1 The procedure for dealing with an informal complaint about a Headteacher is set out below:

- 3.1.1 Parents may choose to raise the complaint directly with the Executive Headteacher or Chair of Trustees if they feel that the matter is capable of resolution informally. The complaint may be raised orally or in writing. If in writing, The MAT will not automatically treat the complaint as a formal (Stage 2) complaint and the Headteacher will endeavour to resolve the complaint informally under Stage 1.
- 3.1.2 the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees will acknowledge informal complaints within **three school days** and will seek to resolve the matter under this Stage 1 by means

of direct conversation or a meeting with the parents, to be held within **15 school days** of the initial complaint.

- 3.1.3 If the parent is dissatisfied with the Headteacher's or Chair of Trustees' response to the informal complaint or in the event that the complaint cannot be resolved by informal means, the parent may make a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this procedure as set out in **Appendix 2**.
- 3.2 The procedure for dealing with an informal complaint about the Executive Headteacher and Chair of Trustees is set out below:
 - 3.2.1 Parents may choose to raise the complaint directly with the Executive Headteacher if they feel that the matter is capable of resolution informally. The complaint may be raised orally or in writing. If in writing, The MAT will not automatically treat the complaint as a formal (Stage 2) complaint and the Executive Headteacher will endeavour to resolve the complaint informally under Stage 1.
 - 3.2.2 the Executive Headteacher will acknowledge informal complaints within **three school days** and will seek to resolve the matter under this Stage 1 by means of direct conversation or a meeting with the parents, to be held within **15 school days** of the initial complaint.
 - 3.2.3 If the parent is dissatisfied with the Executive Headteacher's response to the informal complaint or in the event that the complaint cannot be resolved by informal means, the parent may make a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this procedure as set out in **Appendix 2**.
 - 3.2.4 Alternatively, parents may choose to make their complaint about the Executive Headteacher in writing to the Chair of Trustees via the Clerk to the Trustees. In this case, the complaint will be treated as a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this procedure as set out in **Appendix 2** Section 4.

Appendix 2 Stage 2 - Formal complaint

1 How to make a formal complaint

- 1.1 Complaints will usually only progress to Stage 2 after first being considered at the informal stage (see Appendix 1 Stage 1 – Informal complaint), and where the parent indicates that they intend to escalate a matter to the formal stage.
- 1.2 The formal complaint must be in writing addressed to the Executive Headteacher and should include:
 - 1.2.1 a copy of any relevant documents and the parent's name and full contact details.
 - 1.2.2 details of all the grounds of the complaint and the outcome desired; and
 - 1.2.3 an outline of why the parent was dissatisfied at the outcome of the informal stage 1.
- 1.3 The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone, email, or letter within **three school days**, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescales.

2 Investigation

- 2.1 The subject matter of the complaint will be investigated in the most appropriate manner, which may include some or all the following steps:
 - 2.1.1 delegation of the investigation to a senior member of staff or third-party Investigating Officer (IO).
 - 2.1.2 involvement of one or more Trustees.
 - 2.1.3 request for additional information from the parent, including what they think might resolve the issue (if not already requested at Stage 1); and
 - 2.1.4 request for a conversation and/or a meeting with the parent personally and/or others with relevant knowledge of the circumstances to define the scope of the complaint and/or assist in the investigation.
- 2.2 Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. Where the investigation has been delegated to a senior member of staff or third-party IO, he/she will prepare a report on the investigation which will be considered by the Executive Headteacher. Personal data may be redacted, and names anonymised or cyphered in line with data protection principles.

3 Decision

- 3.1 The Executive Headteacher will notify the parent by email or letter of his/her Stage 2 decision and the reasons for it within **15 school days** from receipt of the formal complaint.
- 3.2 If the parent is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response to the complaint, the parent can request that the complaint be referred to a Complaint Panel under Stage 3 using the procedure set out in **Appendix 3**.

4 Complaints about the Executive Headteacher or Chair of Trustees

- 4.1 The procedure for dealing with a formal complaint about the Executive Headteacher (either because the parent was dissatisfied by the outcome of the informal stage 1 or because the parent has moved straight to this formal stage 2) is set out below:
 - 4.1.1 the complaint should be put in writing to Chair of Trustees via the Clerk to the Trustees. The written complaint should include a copy of all relevant documents and full contact details and details of all the grounds of the complaint and the outcome desired.
 - 4.1.2 The Chair of Trustees via the Clerk to the Trustees will acknowledge the complaint by telephone, email, or letter within three school days of receipt and indicate the action that is being taken and the likely timescale. Such action may include an investigation and/or a meeting with the parent. The parent will receive a response to the complaint within **15 school days**: and
 - 4.1.3 if the parent is dissatisfied with the response to the complaint, the parent can request that the complaint be referred to a Complaint Panel under Stage 3 using the procedure set out in **Appendix 3**.

Appendix 3 Stage 3 - Complaint Panel Hearing (Hearing)

1 Complaint Panel Hearing

- 1.1 If a parent is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response to the complaint, the parent can request a Complaint Panel Hearing (**Hearing**).
- 1.2 A Hearing is held to consider those elements of the Stage 2 response to the parent's complaint with which the parent remains dissatisfied. The Complaint Panel is not obliged to consider any new complaints which have not been previously raised.

2 How to request a Complaint Panel Hearing

- 2.1 A request for a Hearing must be put in writing to the Clerk to the Trustees and will usually only be considered if the procedure at Stage 2 has been completed.
- 2.2 The written request should usually be made within **15 school days** from receipt of the Stage 2 decision and include:
 - 2.2.1 a copy of any relevant documents and full contact details.
 - 2.2.2 details of all the grounds of the complaint about which the parent remains dissatisfied and the outcome desired.
 - 2.2.3 a list of the documents which the parents believe to be in The MAT's possession and wish the Complaint Panel to consider; and
 - 2.2.4 whether the parent proposes to be accompanied to the Hearing (see paragraph 3.4 below).
- 2.3 If assistance with the request is required, for example because of a disability, the parent should inform the Clerk to the Trustees who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.
- 2.4 The Clerk to the Trustees will acknowledge the request for a Hearing in writing within **three school days** of receipt.
- 2.5 Every effort will be made to enable the Hearing to take place within **15 school days** of receipt of the request.
- 2.6 Parents may withdraw their request for a Hearing at any point up to and including the intended date of the Hearing.

3 Planning the Complaint Panel Hearing

- 3.1 The Clerk to the Trustees will endeavour to send written notification to each party of the date, time and place of the Hearing at least **10 school days** before the date of the Hearing.
- 3.2 Copies of any additional documents that the parent wishes the Complaint Panel to consider should be sent to the Clerk to the Trustees to be received at least **7 school days** prior to the Hearing.
- 3.3 The Clerk to the Trustees will endeavour to circulate a copy of the bundle of documents to be considered by the Complaint Panel to all parties at least **three school days** prior to the Hearing. The bundle of documents will include all records

held in the complaint file following Stage 1 and/or 2, together with all correspondence and documents received from the Parent following notification of the formal response at Stage 2.

- 3.4 If the parent wishes to be accompanied by a relative or friend who is legally qualified, the parent is required to notify the Clerk to the Trustees in the initial request for a Hearing. The parent should note that the Complaint Panel will wish to speak to that person directly prior to the Hearing, and they will not be permitted to act as an advocate or address the Complaint Panel at the Hearing unless invited to do so by the Chair of the Complaint Panel.
- 3.5 A person will be appointed to take a minute of the Hearing.

4 **Composition of the Complaint Panel**

- 4.1 The Complaint Panel will comprise at least three individuals who have no detailed prior knowledge of the circumstances of the complaint, including at least one person who is independent of the management and running of The MAT (i.e. they will not be a Trustee, a Local Representative at any of The MAT's schools, or an employee of The MAT at any of its schools).
- 4.2 The parent may ask the Clerk to the Trustees to inform them who has been appointed to sit on the Complaint Panel ahead of the Hearing. Fair consideration will be given to any reasonable objection to a particular member of the panel.
- 4.3 The Complaint Panel members will appoint one of their number to be the Chair of the Complaint Panel throughout the proceedings.

5 **Role of the Complaint Panel**

- 5.1 The role of the Complaint Panel is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering:
 - 5.1.1 the documents provided by both parties; and
 - 5.1.2 any representations made by the partiesand to review the decision reached at Stage 2 and to consider, on a balance of probabilities, as to whether or not to uphold the complaint.

6 **The Complaint Panel Hearing**

- 6.1 Unless, prior to the commencement of the Hearing, a parent confirms they are satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, the Hearing will proceed notwithstanding that the parent may decide not to attend. In these circumstances, the Complaint Panel will consider the parent's complaint in his/her absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint.
- 6.2 The Panel will usually hear representations from the Stage 2 decision-maker and the parent(s).
- 6.3 During the Hearing, the parties will have the opportunity to ask questions and make comments in an appropriate manner. The Hearing is not a legal process and the Complaint Panel will be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account.

- 6.4 All statements made at the Hearing will be unsworn. The parties will be entitled to write their own notes for reference purposes.
- 6.5 All those present during the Hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the Hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chair. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the Hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and his/her comment will be minuted.
- 6.6 The Chair may, at his/her discretion, adjourn the Hearing if he/she considers it appropriate to do so. This may include an adjournment for welfare reasons, to enable additional information to be obtained and/or considered or for the parties to take legal advice on a specific issue arising.
- 6.7 A Hearing before the Complaint Panel is a private proceeding. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in or arising from the proceeding shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media (including social media).
- 6.8 When the Chair of the Complaint Panel is satisfied that sufficient consideration has been given to the documentation provided and any representations made by the parties, he/she will conclude the Hearing.

7 **Decision**

- 7.1 The Complaint Panel will make findings about each complaint on the balance of probabilities and may make recommendations.
- 7.2 It is not within the powers of the Complaint Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on The MAT's staff, pupils or other party, although the Complaint Panel may make recommendations.
- 7.3 The minutes of the Complaint Panel Hearing, together with the Complaint Panel's findings and any recommendations will be provided in writing to the parent and, where relevant, the person complained about, within **5 school days** of the Hearing.
- 7.4 The Complaint Panel's findings and any recommendations will also be made available for inspection on The MAT's premises by The MAT and the Executive Headteacher.
- 7.5 The decision of the Panel is final. There will be no further opportunity within The MAT for consideration of the complaint. The completion of Stage 3 represents the conclusion of The MAT's Complaints Policy.
- 7.6 If a duplicate complaint is received by a new complainant following completion of the Stage 3 procedure, The MAT will inform the new complainant that the matter is closed.

Appendix 4 Unreasonable complaints

- 1 The MAT is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. The MAT will not normally limit the contact complainants have with The MAT. However, The MAT 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.
- 2 The MAT adopts the Department for Education definition of unreasonable complaints as those made by persons who, because of the frequency or nature of their contact with The MAT, hinder The MAT's consideration of their own or other people's complaints.
- 3 Unreasonable complaints are taken seriously by The MAT as they put a strain on valuable resources and hinder the progress of proper investigations. The MAT may judge that a complaint is unreasonable by assessing several factors, including those that are outlined below.
- 4 A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:
 - 4.1 refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
 - 4.2 refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
 - 4.3 refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
 - 4.4 insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
 - 4.5 introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be considered and commented on.
 - 4.6 raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
 - 4.7 makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and/or seeks them replaced.
 - 4.8 changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
 - 4.9 repeatedly makes the same complaint, or makes complaints which are obsessive, harassing or prolific in nature (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
 - 4.10 refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where The MAT's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed (including where a complaint has been referred to the Education & Skills Funding Agency).
 - 4.11 seeks an unrealistic outcome.

- 4.12 makes excessive demands on The MAT's 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.
- 5 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:
 - 5.1 using threats to intimidate.
 - 5.2 using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence.
 - 5.3 while knowingly providing false information.
 - 5.4 while publishing unacceptable information on social media, other public forums or in the newspapers.
- 6 Parents should try to limit their communication with The MAT about the complaint while it is being progressed, as it is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email, or text) which is likely to delay an outcome being reached.
- 7 A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if it is manifestly unjustified, inappropriate, or an improper use of the formal procedure. In assessing this, The MAT shall have regard to all the circumstances of the case and the nature of the complaint itself, rather than the nature and character of the complainant. In assessing all the circumstances of the case, The MAT will consider a range of factors including:
 - 7.1 whether a complaint has a reasonable foundation.
 - 7.2 the history and context of the complaint (and any evidence, where relevant);
 - 7.3 whether the time and cost of investigating the complaint is proportionate to the issue(s) complained of.
 - 7.4 whether an investigation of the complaint is likely to cause a disproportionate or unjustified level of disruption, irritation or distress.
 - 7.5 any unexplained delay in raising a complaint or issue.
 - 7.6 if the purpose of the complaint is to obtain an outcome which is unavailable via the complaint's procedure, such as a claim for compensation.
 - 7.7 any evidence of a complaint being brought for an improper purpose.
- 8 Whenever possible, the Executive Headteacher will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally, before dismissing a complaint as unreasonable. The dismissal, and the reasons for it, will be notified to the parent in writing.
- 9 Where a complaint has been dismissed as unreasonable, the parent may ask for this decision to be reviewed by the Chair of Trustees by writing to the Clerk to the Trustees within **ten school days** of the date of the letter confirming the dismissal, setting out their reasons for making the request.
- 10 The Chair of Trustees will review the decision and write to the parent with the outcome of their review within **ten school days** of receipt of the request. Where the decision is reversed, the complaint will be referred for action under the relevant stage of the procedure

outlined above. Where the decision is confirmed, there will be no further right of challenge under this Policy.

- 11 If the parent's unreasonable behaviour continues after warnings are given, the Executive Headteacher will write to the parent to inform them that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it.
- 12 For parents who excessively contact The MAT causing a significant level of disruption, The MAT may specify particular methods of communication, provide a single point of contact and/or limit the number of communications which may be made with The MAT in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after six months.
- 13 In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, The MAT will immediately report this to the police for criminal investigation. The MAT may also withdraw the parent's implied permission to enter or be on The MAT's site(s).