



PARENT GUIDE TO THE TRUST'S COMPLAINT POLICY

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Director of Governance and
Compliance

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Version	Date Approved	Amendments (Briefly Detail Changes and section/page number)	Substantive or Operational Amendment	Approved By: Substantive – Trust Board Operational – Head of Function/CEO
<i>Example 1.0</i>	<i>06.01.2026</i>	<i>Page 4 – update to the relevant legislation Page 6 – update to the role holder in the Trust</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>CEO</i>
1.0	15 07 26	New – to align with the EMAT Complaint and Procedure Policy	Substantive	Trust Board

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Parent Guide to the EMAT Complaint Policy

Something gone wrong? Let us Know

How We Resolve Concerns and Complaints If Something Has Gone Wrong

Your child's experience is important to everyone at our school. We want to work together with you to ensure that your child is happy at school, and that they achieve their best. If you feel something has gone wrong, we want to hear from you.

Step one: Talk to us

It's always best to begin by speaking with your child's teacher as soon as you can, letting them know what has happened and what you would like us to do to make it better. They will get back to you as soon as they can, usually within 5 school days.

If there is still more for us to do after an informal conversation, you can make a formal complaint.

Step two: Write to us

If you still have concerns, you can write to us with a formal complaint. This should be done within 15 days of your discussion with the school. When you write, include brief details of what happened, who was involved, who you've already spoken to, and what you would like us to do next.

You don't need to write a long letter – in fact, keeping it short usually helps us reply more quickly. We have a form that asks for the details we need (appendix A).

We will let you know we have received your query within 5 school days. If your letter is unclear to us, we may request a meeting or call first to ensure we have understood your concern before responding in writing. We will tell you if we need any more information, and who will look after your enquiry. Wherever possible this will be someone not involved in the issues you've asked about.

After considering your complaint, we will then give you a formal reply setting out our response and any actions we have taken or plan to take, usually within another 20 school days.

For more complex concerns we may suggest an additional step of a joint meeting with someone from either within the school or the Trust to discuss the issue, to help understand and resolve your concerns.

Step three: Meet with a review panel

Where we can't reach agreement, you can ask for a formal meeting to discuss your complaint, called a panel hearing. This should be requested within 15 school days of receiving the reply to your formal complaint (step two).

The panel will include at least three people not directly involved in the complaint, including one person who is independent of the management and running of the school.

You don't have to attend but if you want to we will do our best to agree a time and date with you for the meeting, usually within 20 school days. The meeting will usually be in person, but it can be held online if that is more convenient for everyone. You can bring someone to the meeting to help you, for example a friend or relative.

After the meeting, the review panel will send their recommendations to you and to anyone you have complained about. The headteacher and the trust will also get a copy.

There are more details about how panels run in our Parent Guide to Complaint Panels, Appendix C.

A panel hearing is the end of the trust's complaints procedure. If you are still not happy, you can complain to the Department for Education using the complaint form on [their website](#). The Department can look at whether we have handled your complaint properly, but it won't investigate the details of any underlying complaint.

Other things that are good to know

Who can raise concerns:

The policy applies to parents of children at the school. If you are not a parent at the school you can still get in touch but we may consider your concerns outside of the policy.

The type of concerns we can consider:

This policy is for general concerns about how our school is run. Some areas have particular processes required by law or regulations. This includes admissions, exclusions and suspensions, safeguarding concerns, staff grievances, disciplinary matters, and whistleblowing.

If your concern would be better handled through one of these processes we will let you know and explain the alternative process to you.

Time scales:

You should let us know about any problem within three months of it happening; we cannot normally look into older problems. We will always try to keep to the time scales set out here, but for complex queries it may take longer to reply. We will let you know if this is the case.

If at any point we haven't heard from you for four weeks after our reply, we will write to you to close your enquiry – but you can ask us to re-open it if there are special circumstances.

Help from other organisations:

We understand you might want to raise concerns with other organisations that oversee the work we do, such as the Government or Ofsted. It is best to talk to us first and go through the steps in this guide because it helps us put things right more quickly and avoids duplicating work for you and for us.

In most cases external organisations will expect you to have completed our complaints policy before getting involved.

Duplicate enquiries:

We will usually consider and reply to concerns individually. If we receive lots of similar concerns at the same time – for example from a campaign group – we may decide to deal with them together and send you a shared reply that responds to common concerns.

Mutual respect:

In most cases, we work well with parents to resolve concerns. We recognise that emotions can run high, but we expect communication to remain respectful. Where behaviour becomes unreasonable, abusive, or intimidating, or where there is a refusal to engage with the policy and process, it can be harder for us to support a resolution. In these cases, we may suspend consideration of a complaint, or place proportionate restrictions on how we manage contact.

Confidentiality:

Some complaints may involve confidential details of pupils and staff. We will share as much information as possible with you, while respecting their privacy and legal rights. We will keep a written record of written complaints and review panels, and actions we take as a result.

We will keep details confidential but we may need to share them with the Secretary of State for Education or an inspection organisation like Ofsted if they ask to see them.

If you need help raising concerns

We want this process to be easy for everyone to use. If you need help to set out your concern or complaint, the school office can give advice or suggest sources of independent support. We will consider requests for things like interpreters, accessible venues, and alternative formats.

Using AI

Some people like to use AI tools to help organise their thoughts.

We recommend against using public AI tools because they can store and republish personal information, such as sensitive details about your child. AI tools can also introduce inaccurate information, like old rules or laws from other countries. This can delay us responding to you. You should always carefully check the output to make sure it is accurate.

If we are finding it difficult to clearly identify the key concerns from what you have shared, we may suggest a meeting or call to help us focus on what matters most and respond as accurately and helpfully as possible.

If you choose to use AI tools please refer to Appendix D in the EMAT Complaints Policy and Procedure for further guidance to support you using the tools effectively in relation to making a complaint.

Help with special educational needs

We work together with the local authority to provide support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). We will always try to help, but for some things that are outside of our control we will refer you to the local authority.

- **What we are responsible for:** We provide teaching, with reasonable adjustments to help your child, and support from our own resources (known as SEN support). We monitor your child's progress, put support plans in place, and review these with you.
- **What the local authority is responsible for:** The local authority decides whether to assess a child for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), issues and maintains the EHCP, and provides the funding and services specified within it.
- **What an EHCP sets out:** An EHCP describes your child's needs, the provision required to meet those needs, and who must deliver it. Schools must implement the parts of the plan that fall within their control, and the local authority must provide the provision it is responsible for.

Some support depends on national or local funding decisions that are outside our control. We will always do our best within the resources available to us. If you are unsure about who is responsible for a particular aspect of SEND support, please ask.

The EMAT Complaints and Procedure policy meets the requirements of Part 7 of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and follows the Department of Education's expectations for school trusts to have a clear and accessible way for parents to raise concerns.

Should you require further detailed information please refer to the EMAT Complaint and Procedures Policy on the website.

Appendix A – Formal Complaint Form

Your Name	
Pupil/Student Name	
Pupil/Student Date of Birth	
School/Academy	
Your relationship to the pupil/student	
Address and Postcode	
Daytime phone number	
Evening phone number	
Email	
What are you concerned about? Include the names of any people involved and the dates and times of relevant events.	
Who have you spoken to at school or Trust about your concerns?	
What can we do to help put things right?	
Signature	
Date	

Please send completed form via email to the school office or hand in to the school office in a sealed envelope. Alternative forms can be submitted directly to the Trust Central Office at <mailto:governance@esteemmat.co.uk>

Appendix B - Request for Complaints Review Panel

Your Name	
Pupil/Student Name	
School/Academy	
Date of Stage 2 Response	
Reason for dissatisfaction	
Outcome requested	
Additional evidence	
Signature	
Date	

Please send completed form via email to the Governance and Compliance Team, EMAT Central Office using <mailto:governance@esteemmat.co.uk>

Appendix C – Parent’s Guide to Complaint Panels

We encourage parents to talk to us informally about any concerns to begin with. If we can’t agree on a way forward you can then raise a formal written complaint and we will give you a written response. If we still can’t agree, you can ask for a panel hearing.

This summary gives you more information about what you can expect at a hearing as part of our complaints policy.

Meet with a review panel

If you don’t agree with our written response from step two, you can ask for a formal meeting to discuss your concerns. This is called a panel hearing.

To ask for a panel hearing contact the person dealing with your complaint and given them a brief explanation of why you are not happy and what you would like us to do to resolve your concern. This should normally be within four weeks of our reply, unless there are special circumstances. This helps ensure events are fresh in everyone’s minds and we can put things right quickly.

The panel hearing will look again at your original complaint and any concerns you have about how we have handled it. It won’t consider any new complaints.

What to expect next

You don’t have to attend the panel if you don’t want to. If you do want to attend, we will do our best to agree a time and date with you for the meeting, usually within 20 school days of you asking. The meeting will usually be in person, but it can be held online if that is more convenient for everyone.

Please let us know if you need help to attend, like an accessible meeting room or an interpreter. Around a week before the meeting we will provide you and the panel members copies of letters and other relevant information.

Who will be at the meeting

The panel will have at least three people not directly involved in the complaint, including one person who is independent of the management and running of the school. The panel will be assisted by a member of staff who will take notes and provide advice on procedures.

People involved in the complaint may also attend, or they may give their views in writing. We will not normally ask pupils to attend.

You can bring someone, like a friend or relative, to the meeting to help you. If your complaint is about a member of staff, they may bring a friend or colleague to support them.

The meeting is confidential and is not open to the public or the media.

What will happen at the meeting

The meeting will be led by one of the panel members. If you choose to attend, they will ask you to outline your concerns. They and the other panel members may ask you questions. They may also talk to other people involved in the complaint.

The meeting is not a legal hearing and you don't need to bring legal representation. There is no 'cross examination' of witnesses and you will not be able to ask other people questions directly.

Before the hearing ends, you will have another chance to share your views.

In most cases the panel will not give an instant decision. Instead they will meet again separately to discuss your concerns and what they have heard from other people, and write to you later with their recommendations.

After the meeting

After the meeting, the panel will send their recommendations to you and to anyone you have complained about. The headteacher and the school trust will also get a copy.

A panel hearing is the end of the trust's complaints procedure. If you are still not happy, you can complain to the Department for Education using the complaint form on [their website](#). The Department can look at whether we have handled your complaint properly, but it won't investigate the details of any underlying complaint.