

# **JOHN TAYLOR MULTI ACADEMY TRUST**



## **Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedures**

Implementation date:	January 2020
Reviewed:	June 2025
Next review date:	June 2026
LGB procedures:	No
Policy Author:	M Donoghue

For overall summary of the Process see flow chart on page (Appendix D)

1.This policy covers compliments and complaints of a general nature, including those raised by parents.\* The purpose of this policy is to establish a procedure for dealing with complaints relating to the school as required by section 45 (1 and 2)) of the Education Act 2011. In addition, this policy outlines how stakeholders can express support for the school via a compliment or make a suggestion to the school in the form of a comment.

At John Taylor MAT we are committed to providing a high-quality service for all pupils.

2. For pupils in our schools, there are a diversity of ways in which they can compliment, comment and complain about any aspect of their provision. This variation is determined by the pastoral systems present in the school (e.g. Head of House systems, Head of Year systems) and the importance of age appropriate structures that allow children of all ages to engage in a manner that makes them feel comfortable, safe, empowered and heard.

3.Typically, our schools will regularly undertake pupil voice activities that should generate quantitative information (e.g., questionnaires and surveys) and qualitative information (e.g., group workshops, school and group councils, 'exit' interviews for school leavers).

4.The outcomes of this information should be shared with the local governing body and other stakeholders – including the pupils themselves – together with any responses to the issues that school would wish to share. This is particularly relevant when the school will look to amend its provision as a result of feedback or introduce a new initiative or approach.

5.We would like to hear from parents and other stakeholders if:

- they are happy with the service we provide and would like to compliment the staff and pupils;
- they have any suggestions about how we can improve the quality of our provision – at school or Trust level
- they have complaints relating to the actions of staff and application of school procedures where they affect individual pupils, except matters directly related to a particular exclusion, child protection, special needs statementing or an admission issue, all of which are dealt with under separate procedures; details of these procedures are available from the individual schools but are also outlined below (see "Scope").

### **Expressing approval or making a comment**

6.When things go well, it is helpful if stakeholders express their approval. Maintenance of high levels of staff commitment, morale and motivation are important in ensuring the provision of the best possible education for all pupils. Stakeholders can express their approval or make a comment or suggestion through a telephone call, email, in writing (see form at Appendix A) or by speaking personally to staff concerned or the Headteacher or the CEO of the Trust.

\*For the purpose of this policy, "**Parents**" refers to parents and carers and all those with parental responsibility of children currently educated within one of our schools.

## Complaints: Definitions and scope

7. For the purpose of this policy, a “complaint” can be defined as an ‘expression of dissatisfaction’ which can be regarding actions taken or a perceived lack of action.

- Complaints can be resolved formally or informally dependent on the complainant’s choice.
- Any complaint will be taken seriously, whether formally or informally, and the appropriate procedures detailed in this document shall be followed.
- All meetings with complainants would typically be held in person. However, the complainant may request the meeting be held via remote link (e.g. Teams or Zoom). In exceptional circumstances (such as the complainant being banned from accessing a school site), the school may determine that holding the meeting remotely is required.

For the purpose of this policy, “school” refers to any school within the John Taylor Multi Academy Trust.

Scope: All matters relating to the actions of all staff and applications of school procedures, except matters relating to the exceptions detailed below – all of which are subject to separate procedures (see below):

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools	Concerns about admissions should be handled through the Local Authority’s appeals process. Please see the John Taylor Multi-Academy Trust’s Admissions Arrangements.
Matters likely to require a child protection investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our Child Protection & 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). For our academies in Staffordshire, Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board procedures apply ( <a href="http://staffsscb.org.uk">Home - Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board (staffsscb.org.uk)</a> ). For further information, contact the Staffordshire County Council (SCC) on 0300 111 8004. For our academies in Derbyshire, Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures apply ( <a href="http://ddscp.org.uk">Derby Safeguarding Children Partnership (ddscp.org.uk)</a> ). For further information, contact Derbyshire Children’s Services on 01629 535353.
Exclusion of children from school	Please see the JTMAT’s Behaviour Policy. Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline/exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline/exclusions/exclusions</a>
Statutory Assessment of Special Educational Needs and	For our academies in Staffordshire, please refer to the Staffordshire Local Offer website ( <a href="http://Local offer - Staffordshire County Council">Local offer - Staffordshire County Council</a> ). For our academies in Derbyshire, please refer to the Derbyshire Local Offer website ( <a href="http://Home -">Home -</a>

Exceptions	Who to contact
Disability (SEND)	<a href="#">Derbyshire Local Offer</a> ). Alternatively, please contact the Local Authority where you live.
Whistleblowing	We have a Whistleblowing Policy 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: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a> . Volunteer staff who have concerns about any of our academies should complain through the procedure outlined in this policy. 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. Please see JTMAT's Whistleblowing Policy.
Staff Grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under JTMAT's Grievance Procedure.
Staff Conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under JTMAT's Discipline Procedure., 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.
Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests	Please see JTMAT's GDPR Policy or contact the Trust's Data Protection Officer at <a href="mailto:dpo@jtmat.co.uk">dpo@jtmat.co.uk</a>
Complaints regarding Discrimination and Harassment based on Protected Characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010	The Academy Complaints Policy applies but the Complainant has a further right of appeal to SENDIST (Special Educational Needs and Disability First Tier Tribunal) for complaints about disability discrimination, or to the County Court for all other unresolved disputes regarding protected characteristics.
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use academy premises or facilities	Where a complaint concerns a third party used by the academy, or a third party which uses the academy premises, please complain directly to the third party themselves. In the event that there is uncertainty in relation to the contact details of third parties, please contact the school's Office or Business Manager who may be able to assist.
Complaints in relation to national policy – the national	Such complaints, whilst relating to provision in our schools, fall outside our direct control and thereby we cannot resolve them. Therefore, complaints should be directed to the Department

Exceptions	Who to contact
curriculum, public examinations, school funding or industrial relations.	for Education or other relevant body within HM Government.

The policies referred to above are available on individual academy or the JTMAT websites. Copies are also available from an academy or JTMAT central office.

### **Raising a complaint – informal stage.**

8. In the first instance complainants should raise their complaint with the most relevant member of staff. It is anticipated that at this stage the complaint would be raised verbally or in writing e.g. email. If the Headteacher is contacted at this stage it is likely that the complaint will be passed to an appropriate member of staff for them to respond because they have a particular responsibility or are familiar with the circumstances of the complaint. Response from an appropriate member of staff will be within ten school working days as a maximum, but ideally the school would wish to expedite possible resolutions as soon as possible. Most complaints will be successfully resolved at this stage. In all cases it is expected that the member of staff will inform their line manager of the complaint at the earliest opportunity and then subsequently advise them of the outcome.

Please note that anonymous complaints cannot be resolved as any complaint involving our schools' children can only be discussed with an individual's parents. Please also note neither John Taylor MAT nor any of its schools will engage directly with complaints logged via social media. If the complainant is a parent, John Taylor MAT does not accept engagement in a dispute as any justification for pupil absence, and any such absence will be recorded as "unauthorised".

### **Use of Artificial Intelligence in Complaints**

The Trust recognises the increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to generate written content. To ensure that all complaints reflect genuine concerns and can be appropriately investigated, the Trust will not accept complaints that are generated wholly or predominately by AI.

All complaints must be submitted by a real individual with direct knowledge of the matter. Without this, the content of a complaint may include information generated via an algorithm as opposed to the reality of the matter in dispute. Complaints may be subject to AI detection software to confirm authenticity. Complaints identified by AI-generated will not be progressed, and the complainant may be asked to resubmit the complaint in their own words.

John Taylor MAT will always endeavour to manage the complaints process in a fair and sensitive manner. It is for this reason that complainants should be aware that the contents of their complaint will typically be shared – verbatim – with the member of staff about whom the complaint refers. In order to investigate fully, and in order that a member of staff has a right to reply, the Trust cannot withhold material information from an employee who is the subject of a complaint.

### **Making a formal complaint**

#### **Step 1 - the Headteacher**

9. If the complainant is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved informally then they should inform the Headteacher of the school in writing that they wish to make a formal complaint. The context of the complaint should then be submitted in full, in writing. Appendix A in this policy should be used for this purpose. Dependent upon the nature of the complaint

and its context, the Headteacher may seek further clarification of the complaint or even seek to resolve it via a meeting, a telephone call or through email correspondence. This in no way compromises later steps of the process, including those outlined below in Step 1. The Headteacher will take appropriate action and respond in writing with a summary of the action taken within 10 school working days. The response will specify whether the complaint has been upheld, upheld in part, or rejected (see paragraph 11).

10. Any complaint should be brought to the attention of the school at the earliest opportunity. Any matter raised more than 90 days after the event will only be considered in exceptional circumstances although records will be kept on file for later reference.

11. Possible outcomes for a complainant at this stage may include:

- a. There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion so the complaint cannot be upheld.
- b. The complaint is not substantiated by the evidence.
- c. The matter has been investigated fully and substantiated in part or in full and the appropriate action has been taken. Where appropriate, this action will be communicated to the complainant. Should the action include any formal process relating to staff regarding their conduct or capability, details will not be shared with the complainant. The Trust will protect the professional confidentiality of its employees regarding private employment matters, consistent with its legal obligations under their contract of employment.

After consideration of the complaint by the Headteacher, the matter is now concluded. If dissatisfied with the outcome, the complainant may consider taking the complaint to Step 2, and should advise the school in writing of their intention to escalate the complaint within 30 school working days.

12. If the complaint is directly about the Headteacher, it should be referred to the Chair of Governors through the school's Clerk to Governors and the process outlined above will be followed with the role of Headteacher substituted by the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will respond within 10 school working days. If the complaint is about a governor of a Local Governing Body, it should be referred to the Chair of JT MAT through the Trust's Clerk.

### **Step 2 – Governor reconsideration**

13. Upon receipt of notification that the complainant remains dissatisfied beyond Step 1, all correspondence and information relating to the complaint will be considered by a member of the school's governing body who has been designated to serve in this function. This will not be the Chair, as the Chair may have considered the complaint at Step 1 (see paragraph 12 above). They may contact the complainant or the school for clarification of details of the complaint if they deem it necessary in order for them to issue findings and recommendations in relation to it. The complainant will receive a response with findings and recommendations within ten school working days.

### **Step 3 – the Local Governing Body**

14. In the unlikely event that neither the Headteacher nor a designated governor can resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the complainant then the complaint can be escalated to the Local Governing Body. Again, the form at Appendix A should be used for this purpose. As with previous Steps, the request to escalate should not be any later than 30 days after the outcome of Step 2. This can be done by writing to the Chair of Governors at the school address or via email to the Clerk to the Governors (the address of which appears on the school's website), attaching Appendix A. Upon receipt of this correspondence, the Clerk will work to convene a panel of governors to hear the complaint and determine whether the complaint is valid in whole or in part. The panel hearing will take place within 10 school working days of receipt of the complaint by the governors. You will receive a written response from the governing body detailing its findings and recommendations, via the clerk, within 10 school days of the meeting date.

15.If the Panel is held remotely all participants must agree to the use of remote access and have access to the technology which will allow them to hear throughout the meeting and to see and be seen, if using a live video link. The meeting will be minuted as if it was held live. Meetings must not be recorded by any party present. The Clerk is not a party, and can record the meeting for the purpose of constructing the minutes. The Panel will consist of at least three people (typically governors) not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom will be completely independent of the management and running of the school. The independent panel member will typically be a member of another Local Governing Body within the Trust. The complainant may attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish. The Headteacher will attend the panel and may be accompanied if they wish. All information shared with the panel by the school will be shared with the complainant also, and all information shared with the panel by the complainant will be shared with the school. The panel will make findings and recommendations a copy of which shall be provided to the complainant and, if relevant, the person complained about. Minutes will be taken by the Clerk to the Governors and will be available on request. Details of the findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by John Taylor MAT and the Headteacher. Written records will be maintained of all complaints including details of how they are resolved and the action taken by the school as a result of the complaint. Records relating to individual complaints will remain confidential except under certain circumstances including Secretary of State request and inspection. (Records relating to complaints will remain confidential for the current year + 6 years, if negligence is involved the term will be the current year + 15 years and for child protection or safeguarding issues the term will be the current year + 40 years). This information will not be used to the detriment of any pupil when leaving school and/or applying for college/university or employment.

#### **Step 4 – John Taylor MAT**

16.In order to escalate the complaint to Step 4 the complainant must articulate clearly why the findings and recommendations at Step 3 are improper or unreasonable or based on a flawed process. The complaint may be escalated to John Taylor MAT. As with Step 3, this should not be any later than 30 days after the outcome of Step 3. However, it should be noted that John Taylor MAT will not, unless circumstances are truly exceptional, overturn a decision of the Local Governing Body when due process has been applied.

17.Complainants should write to the Chair (or email the clerk via [office@jtmata.co.uk](mailto:office@jtmata.co.uk)) of John Taylor MAT, Branston Locks Primary & Nursery School, Shire Way, Branston, Burton on Trent, DE13 9WU. Upon receipt of this correspondence, the Clerk will work to convene a panel of Directors. A panel hearing will take place within 10 school working days of receipt of the correspondence from the complainant. The form in Appendix A should again be used, with the additional section (section 8) for Step 4 complaints completed in full.

18. If the Panel is held remotely all participants must agree to the use of remote access and have access to the technology which will allow them to hear throughout the meeting and to see and be seen, if using a live video link. The meeting will be minuted as if it was held live. The meeting must not be recorded by any party present. The Clerk is not a party, and can record the meeting for the purpose of constructing the minutes. The Panel will consist of at least three panellists, including Directors of the Trust, who will have no prior knowledge of the matters detailed in the complaint. The focus of attention for the panel will be to consider any issues presented that relate to the process by which the complaint was considered in previous Steps. The complainant should not seek to present new information or have the details of the complaint re-heard.

19.The Headteacher and/or Chair of the Local Governing Body may also be invited to attend the panel meeting to provide them with an opportunity to respond to the additional issues raised by the complainant. The complainant may attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish. The panel will make findings and recommendations a copy of which shall be provided to

the complainant and, if relevant, the person complained about, via the Clerk and within 10 working school days of the meeting date. Written records will be maintained of all complaints including details of how they are resolved and the action taken by the school as a result of the complaint. Records relating to individual complaints will remain confidential except under certain circumstances including Secretary of State request and inspection. (Records relating to complaints will remain confidential for the current year + 6 years, if negligence is involved the term will be the current year + 15 years and for child protection or safeguarding issues the term will be the current year + 40 years).

This information will not be used to the detriment of any pupil when leaving school and/or applying for college/university or employment.

### **Compliments and Complaints relating to Employees of John Taylor MAT's Core Team**

20.JTMAT includes employees whose work is not directly connected with one school. Should a stakeholder wish to make a comment or compliment that relates to a colleague from the JTMAT Core Team, this can be done by emailing [office@jtmat.co.uk](mailto:office@jtmat.co.uk)

21.Regarding complaints, the process above is replicated at Trust level for the informal step, and Steps 1 and 2.

22.To seek redress informally, the complainant should contact the most relevant member of staff. The CEO or COO may seek to attend to the matter at this stage. At Step 1, the CEO will look to address the matter with the complainant. If the issue relates to the actions or conduct of the CEO, it will be referred to the Chair of the Trust Board. Should a resolution not be achieved, and the complainant wishes to pursue the matter further, a designated Director of the Board will reconsider the complaint as per Step 2 of the school-based process. Subsequently if required, a panel of directors, supported by an independent and external colleague, will be constituted as per Step 4 of the school-based process.

23.Should a complainant remain dissatisfied with the outcome at Step 4, their final opportunity for redress will rest with the ESFA - see Step 5 below. As stated in that section, the ESFA will focus on whether the Trust (in this instance) has followed the correct procedure in the management of the complaint.

### **Investigating Complaints**

24.At whatever stage, the person investigating the complaint should:

1. Establish **what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
2. Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
3. Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
4. Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
5. Engage with the subject of the complaint regarding any support they may feel to be beneficial to their wellbeing whilst the complaint process is ongoing and in its immediate aftermath.

25.Any person interviewed as part of an investigation is entitled to be accompanied by a friend or representative and/or a translator and is entitled to agree any notes taken, particularly if the investigation is part of the formal process.

26.The Trust has a separate process for the management of complaints that it considers to be vexatious in nature. (See Vexatious Complaints Policy).

## **Resolving Complaints**

27. At each Step, the person(s) dealing with the concern or complaint should endeavour to find a resolution but whether this is possible will depend on the nature of the concern or complaint and the resolution the complainant is seeking.

28. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstanding that might have occurred as such clarification can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

29. Complainants should be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage – though this should be on the understanding that it may not be possible or reasonable for us to deliver them.

30. It may be appropriate and sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. An admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission that the school has failed in its duties.

31. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an expression of regret for any distress, etc.
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that every effort will be made to ensure that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to try to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

32. Use of the formal procedures means that all attempts at an informal resolution of the concern have failed; resolution will then depend upon any recommendations based on the judgements made from the evidence uncovered in the investigation.

33. An investigation may find no evidence in support of the complaint or that the complaint is otherwise groundless.

### **Step 5 The Role of the Department for Education.**

34. Should the complainant still remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint after Step 4, the complainant is able to refer the matter to the Department for Education, who will consider whether the school followed an appropriate procedure in dealing with the complaint:

Department for Education, Cheylesmore House 5 Quinton Road Coventry CV1 2WT

In your letter please explain:

- (a) what your complaint was;
- (b) what response has been made to it;
- (c) why you think that proper procedure was not followed in considering your complaint, and/or;
- (d) why you think that consideration of it was unreasonable.

### **Recording of Complaints:**

All formal complaints, including those managed by the Headteacher at Step 1, will be recorded as having been received and will be communicated to the school's Local Governing Body (via the Headteacher's Report to Governors) and the Trust Board (via the CEO's Trust Update). This will enable the school's governors and the Trust Board to

monitor the number and frequency of complaints made to the school. The recording of complaints will not include specific details of the nature of the complaint itself, the identity of the complainant or the steps undertaken to resolve the matter.

**Retention of Records:**

The school will retain a copy of all complaints typically for a period of six years or, if they relate to the provision of a current pupil at the school, for six years after the child has left the school. After that time has elapsed, records of the complaint will be destroyed in line with the Trust's retention of records practices.

**Notes:**

- 1) This policy does not apply where the complaint may lead to disciplinary proceedings against a teacher or child protection procedures. These matters have separate procedures.
- 2) Whilst it is appreciated that matters may not come to light immediately, the Trust and its schools may be unable to effectively investigate and therefore resolve complaints relating to historical matters (i.e. those over 90 days)
- 3) All parties have a responsibility to act with civility and rationality before, during and after they raise a complaint. The Trust can invoke its Vexatious Complaints Policy in the event that a complainant falls short of these expectations.

**Appendix A (This form should also be used if escalating to the MAT (see paragraph 16))**

**Complaints Form**

Please complete this form this form and return it to the Clerk to the Governing body at the school who will then forward it to the Chair of the Local Governing Body. Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

1. Name: .....

2. Address: .....  
.....  
.....

3. Telephone number(s) .....

4. Email address .....

5. Name of child (parents only) .....

6. Complaint Step (please circle) 1 2 3 4

7. Details of the complaint (please include the date or period of time to which complaint relates and confirm whether you have already expressed your concerns informally, and to whom and when).

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

8 (Step 4 only) Details of why the process and decision at Step 3 was flawed.

.....

.....  
.....

9. Do you have a suggestion for change? .....

Please attach copies of any more information you have to back up your complaint such as letters or report.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Signed: ..... Date: .....

## Appendix B

### Template letter acknowledging receipt of a complaint.

Date:

Dear .....

#### **Re: Complaint**

Thank you for your (letter/complaints form) dated .....,  
received by us on ..... relating to your complaint (brief summary) .....

In line with the school and Trust's Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy,  
a copy of which can be viewed here [Compliment, Comments and Complaints Policy and  
Procedures for Parents \(jtmat.co.uk\)](#), a hard copy being available upon request,  
we acknowledge receipt.

We will endeavour to address your complaint fairly, transparently and  
briskly. The process for the management of your complaint is detailed within the policy,  
and summarised in a flow chart at the end of the document. You will appreciate that we may  
need to investigate this matter further, but it would be our intention – as outlined  
in this policy – to respond to you within ten working days.

Thank you once again.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

**New Step 2 letter (designated governor reconsideration)**

Dear .....

**Re: Invitation to engage in a governor reconsideration process (Step 2)**

Thank you for your letter dated .... in which you have indicated your intention to progress your complaint regarding (brief summary) ..... further.

In relation to your complaint, we have shared all documentation relating to your complaint with... (name of governor) our designated governor, in line with Step 2 of the school and Trust's Compliment, Comments and Complaints Policy, a copy of which can be viewed here [Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedures for Parents \(jtmat.co.uk\)](#)

.... (name of governor) will consider the complaint and the school's response. Via the clerk to the school's local governing body, they may contact you for further information or clarification should they deem this helpful to their considerations.

We will continue to endeavour to address your complaint fairly, transparently and briskly and to this end you will receive the findings and recommendations via the Clerk within ten school working days.

Thank you once again.

Yours sincerely

Clerk to the Local Governing Body

## **Appendix C**

### **Template letter inviting complainant to panel meeting with school LGB (Step 3 – can be adapted for Step 4 [JTMAT])**

Dear .....

#### **Re: Invitation to attend a panel meeting to hear complaint (Step 3)**

Thank you for your letter dated .... in which you have indicated your intention to progress your complaint regarding (brief summary) ..... further.

In relation to your complaint, we invite you to present your complaint to a panel comprising members of the school's Local Governing Body in line with Step 3 of the school and Trust's Compliment, Comments and Complaints Policy, a copy of which can be viewed here [Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedures for Parents \(jtmat.co.uk\)](http://jtmat.co.uk)

The meeting is scheduled to take place on ..... (date). Please confirm your acceptance of this date, and whether you wish to attend the meeting in person or make a written submission. If you choose to attend in person, you may be accompanied if you wish. Please also indicate if it is your intention to be accompanied at the meeting and, if so, by whom.

The format and details of the panel are found in paragraphs 14 and 15 of the Policy.

We will continue to endeavour to address your complaint fairly, transparently and briskly.

Thank you once again.

Yours sincerely

Clerk to the Local Governing Body

## **The composition of a panel hearing**

- It is important that any hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so: No member of a local governing body or director of the Trust may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. However, should a Chair of Governors be approached by a complainant regarding their issue and an informal dialogue take place in order to ascertain the nature of the issue further or attempt resolution outside formal process, this should not automatically preclude the involvement of the Chair in a formal process unless the complainant articulates opposition to their involvement. Should this opposition be expressed, an alternative Chair for the panel will be found from amongst the number of the Local Governing Body.
- In deciding the composition of the panel, members of the local governing body and directors of the Trust should try to ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor/director and, as far as is practicable, sensitive to the issues of race, gender, sexual orientation and religious affiliation.

## **Conveying the outcome of a panel hearing**

- If the outcome of a panel might lead to action under another procedure, e.g. disciplinary, then the complainant need only be told that appropriate action will be taken.
- Further, there may be occasions when a panel would wish to resolve an issue by means which are clearly within the responsibility of the internal management of the school: governors (and Headteachers) need to be mindful of their roles and responsibilities in regulation – see the Governance Handbook 2022.
- Only in exceptional circumstances should governors/directors consider taking a decision that may undermine the authority of a Headteacher or other staff, governors, and directors.
- The outcome of an upheld complaint – in full or in part – may be that the Trust makes changes in policy or practice, that it is necessary for the full Governing Body/Trust Board to receive a short report regarding the details and findings of the complaint. (Please note: this should not mention names).
- The Chair of Governors/Chair of the Trust Board is responsible for ensuring that the correct procedures have been followed.  
There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the Chair of the Trust will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed but that the complainant may take their complaint to the EFSA or to the appropriate body. Their remit is to review due process, so there is no onus on them to re-open an investigation: they may only decide to do so if they judge those procedures have not been correctly followed.

## APPENDIX D: Flow chart through the Stages

Through constructive and supportive discussions, undertaken in a timely manner, it is hoped that most complaints can be dealt with in the INFORMAL STEP. Should the person making the complaint (the complainant) wish to move to the FORMAL STEPS, this flowchart summarises each step. Full details can be found within the body of this policy.

If the complainant is not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved informally then they should inform the Headteacher of the school in writing that they wish to make a formal complaint. The full details of the complaint should then be submitted in full, in writing. Please use the form in Appendix A for this purpose.

**The Headteacher will act and respond within 10 school days.**

### Formal Step 2 – Governor Reconsideration

If the complainant is not satisfied by the action(s) and response of the Headteacher, a Designated School Governor (not the Chair of Governors who may be involved if the complaint goes beyond Step 2) will consider all details of the complaint.

**The Designated School Governor will respond with findings and recommendations within 10 school days.**

### Formal Step 3 – The School’s Local Governing Body

In the unlikely event that neither the Headteacher nor a Designated School Governor can resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant then the complaint can be escalated to the Local Governing Body. Please use the form in Appendix A for this purpose, it should then be sent to the Chair of Governors at the school address or via email to the Clerk to the Governors (the address of which appears on the school’s website)

**A Governor Panel Hearing will take place within 10 school days of Governors receiving the complaint. The Governor Panel will respond with findings and recommendations within 10 school days.**

### Formal Step 4 – John Taylor MAT

In order to escalate the complaint to Step 4, the complainant must explain clearly why the findings and recommendations at Step 3 are improper, unreasonable or based on a flawed process (a fault or mistake in the process). Please use the form in Appendix A for this purpose, it should be sent to the John Taylor MAT at the address provided. It should be noted that John Taylor MAT will not, unless circumstances are truly exceptional, overturn a decision of the Local Governing Body when due process has been applied – i.e., the process has been found to **not be flawed**.

**The JTMAT appointed panel will respond with findings and recommendations within 10 school days.**