

Complaints and Concerns Policy

Sixth Form College

Policy Family	Student Experience
Reference	SFC-01
Responsible Manager	Deputy Principal
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Aim

The Potteries Educational Trust (PET) is committed to ensuring the high quality of its provision and the satisfaction of all members of the trust community. Concerns and complaints are welcomed as a means to ensure this commitment is met. The CEO takes a personal interest in the resolution of complaints.

The Trust aims to;

- Have a clear, easily accessible Complaints Procedure which is understood and accepted as a Code of Practice by all members of the Trust, and which operates consistently across the organisation.
- Resolve formal complaints fairly and efficiently, with an acknowledgement and an initial response made within a maximum period of ten working days of receiving the complaint;
- Maintain confidentiality wherever reasonable.
- Compile a recording system for all formal complaints which is reliable and comprehensive.
- Inform the appropriate managers so that improvements can be made in the future.

Scope

The Trust defines

- **Concerns** as issues where a person wishes to register unease about a situation without (at least initially) proceeding to make a formal complaint. Concerns will normally be raised with, or passed to, the appropriate manager. Concerns may not lead to an investigation.
- **Complaints** as issues which are formally documented, with a written record of the complaint, an investigation and a written response to the complaint. All complaints are reported to the CEO.

Complaints could be made by any member of the community or visitor. They are likely to be:

- Students
- Applicant students
- Parents of students
- Staff (also see governance procedure)
- Contracted staff not directly employed
- Businesses with a contractual relationship to the trust.
- Visitors to the college.

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Policy

Each institution within the Trust will publish clearly the procedure to make a complaint or raise a concern.

- initial responses are made within ten working days.
- under normal circumstances, the complaint is fully investigated and resolved within four weeks of the receipt of the complaint.
- appropriate documentation (including summary of action taken and response made) is retained by the CEO's PA office.

Whistleblowing Procedure

Staff who suspect fraud, financial irregularities, corruption, bribery, dishonesty, acting contrary to the staff and Trust Codes of Conduct, criminal activities, or failing to comply with a legal obligation, a miscarriage of justice, or creating or ignoring a serious risk to health, safety or the environment, should follow the Potteries Educational Trust Whistleblowing Procedure. Copies are available from the Clerk to the Trust and PA to the CEO. The purpose of this policy is to provide individuals with a means of raising concerns about suspected malpractice at an early stage without recourse to the media.

Complaints about the Principal, Chair of Trustees or Trust.

Complaints about the Trust, the CEO or the Chair of the Trust should be made via the Clerk of the Trust.

There are three possible outcomes from a complaint

Upheld – the investigation finds that [a substantial] complaint is 'true' and agrees with the complainant.

Rejected – the investigation does not find sufficient evidence to uphold the complaint and it is therefore rejected.

Partially upheld – a [substantial] part of the complaint is upheld, while other elements or parts are rejected.

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Procedure

When concerns are first raised by a student, parent or member of the public, they will be supported to discuss the nature of their concerns with the appropriate member of staff or Team Leader. This may include Progress Coaches, Teachers or support staff teams. The student may be supported by helping them to approach a member of staff sensitively, or framing the concern in a particular way for example. Concerns may be referred to team leaders and additional colleagues may be asked to provide support or advice where they have relevant knowledge or experience.

Complaints will be raised when the seriousness of the concern necessitates moving straight to a formal complaint or when the engagement with the appropriate team has failed to resolve the concern.

1. Complaints should be made in writing to the head of institution, in the case of the Sixth Form College this would be the College Principal. To make a complaint please write or e-mail the Principal's PA detailing the nature of the complaint.
2. The Head of Institution will appoint an appropriate senior leader to investigate the complaint. They will make contact with the complainant as quickly as possible and ensure that they fully understand the nature and content of the complaint as explained in the written complaint. They will also explain how the complaint will proceed, the stages of the investigation, and what will happen next.
3. The senior leader investigating the complaint will summarise the complaint, the stages of the investigation, the evidential findings and any recommendations to the Trust CEO / head of institution, so that they may respond within 10 working days.
4. If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint they may appeal in writing within 14 calendar days / 10 working days, to the Head of Institution.
5. An annual report on complaints is provided to the Local Governing Body of each institution annually. The report will identify any trends, including any designated characteristics.

The timescales described are the quality standards that the Trust evaluates itself against. They may be subject to change due to circumstances that affect the investigation. For example, vacations, complexity, ill health of staff, witnesses or the complainant. If there is a delay in the resolution of a complaint that should be clearly understood by all parties and next steps agreed, before the quality standards are breached.

Complaints about the Trust, CEO or Chair of Trustees will follow the procedures outlined above, but be supervised by the Clerk to Trustees. The Clerk will report annually to the Trustees and Members regarding complaints. The Clerk may refer issues or seek guidance from appropriately qualified and experienced Trust employees (for example the CFO), and external advisors (for example Auditors).

Malicious and repeated complaints that are not substantiated will not be investigated. This will be explained in writing to the complainant.

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Implementation

The policy and procedures have operated successfully for a number of years and this update is not a significant change to previous operations.

Communication

The policy and procedures will be available from the institution and Trust website. They will be available on request by students, parents and members of the public in an audience appropriate format.

Monitoring

The PA to the head of Institution and Clerk to the Trustees will maintain appropriate records and compile an annual report for the Local Governing Body / Trustees. The report will identify any trends and designated characteristics.

Associated Information and Guidance

Related Documents

Whistleblowing procedure
Staff Grievance Policy

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