St Cyprian's Greek Orthodox Primary Academy

ΠΑΝΤΑ ΙΣΧΥΩ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΕΝΔΥΝΑΜΟΥΝΤΙ ΜΕ ΧΡΙΣΤΩ ΙΝΑ ΑΡΙΣΤΕΥΩ

I AM STRONG THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

TO BE THE BEST THAT I CAN BE

Complaints Procedure

Revised: July 2026

Reviewed and ratified by Full Academy Trust:

Date: 16.7.26

Signed: A. Christou

Name: AREDI CHRISTOU

Position: Chair of Education Committee

Date of next review: July 2027

Mission Statement

The aim of St Cyprian's Greek Orthodox Primary Academy is to provide its children with primary education of the highest quality in a supportive learning environment through the national curriculum in core subjects, enriched by the progressive teaching of the Greek language and Christian Orthodox religion.

The children will be equipped with the knowledge, skills and spirituality to enable them to achieve their full potential and prepare them for transition to secondary education and to contribute positively to the challenges of a diverse multicultural society.

The term 'parents' in this policy also refers to carers.

This policy applies to all employees of St Cyprian's Greek Orthodox Primary Academy (permanent, fixed term and casual).

Aims
General Principles of complaints

Dealing with Complaints – Initial concerns

It is important to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints.

The policy which follows deals with complaints but the underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases the class teacher or the individual delivering the service in the case of extended academy provision, will receive the first approach. It would be helpful if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.

Dealing with Complaints – Formal procedures
The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

Framework of Principles

Our Complaints Procedure:

- encourages resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;
- is easily **accessible** and **publicised**;
- is **simple** to understand and use;
- is **impartial**;
- is **non-adversarial**;
- allows **swift** handling within agreed **time-limits** for action and keeping people informed of progress;
- ensures a full and **fair** investigation;
- respects people's desire for **confidentiality**;
- addresses all the points at issue and provides an **effective** response and **appropriate** redress, where necessary;

- provides **information** to the Academy's senior leadership team so that services can be improved.

Investigating Complaints

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint makes sure that they:

- establish **what** has happened so far, and **who** has been involved;
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
- meet with the complainant or contacts them (if unsure or further information is necessary);
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right;
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- conduct the interview with an open mind and is prepared to persist in the questioning;
- keep notes of the interview.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure the Academy will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- an undertaking to review Academy policies in light of the complaint.

It would be useful if complainants were encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the Academy could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

Vexatious Complaints

This procedure should limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Academy Trust is able, under this policy, to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Time-Limits

Complaints need to be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible using time limits published in this policy. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

The Governing Body will publicise the complaints policy and procedure in

- the home-academy agreement;

• the Academy website.

St Cyprian's Greek Orthodox Primary Academy Complaints Procedure

Stage One: Complaint Heard by Staff Member

1. It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the Academy can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. To that end, staff will be periodically made aware of the procedures so that they know what to do when they receive a complaint.

2. Parents should never feel or be made to feel that a complaint made in a reasonable and appropriate way will be taken amiss or will reflect adversely on the student or his/her opportunities at the Academy. The Academy will try to investigate and try to resolve every complaint in a positive manner and will treat every complaint as an opportunity to improve our service.

3. The Academy will try to respect the views of a complainant who indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a complaint with a particular member of staff. In these cases, the matter will be referred to the Headteacher who may, if they feel it appropriate, refer the complainant to another staff member. Alternatively they may not feel this is necessary. Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the complainant can be referred to the Chair of the Academy Trust.

   • Put right any matter which may have gone wrong
   • Review our systems and procedures in the light of the relevant circumstances

4. NB complaints brought by staff should be investigated using the Code of Practice and Procedure for Resolving Individual Grievance and not this Complaints Policy.

5. Only complaints received in writing (preferably using the Complaints form) will be considered. If you have difficulty in putting your complaint in writing, you are asked to make an appointment with the Complaints Coordinator who will help you do that. The Complaints Co-ordinator may appoint a member of staff to deal with the paperwork but not the decisions taken.

6. Anonymous complaints will not be considered.

7. Complaints must be made within 3 months of the event. Complaints after this period will not be considered.

8. A senior teacher will investigate the complaint.

9. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with a complaint, the Headteacher may consider referring the complainant to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

10. Where the first approach is made to a Director, the next step would be to refer the complainant to the appropriate person which would be the Headteacher. Directors should not act unilaterally on an individual complaint outside the formal procedure or be involved at the

early stages in case they are needed to sit on a panel at a later stage of the procedure.

11. The Deputy Headteacher will ensure that a written or oral acknowledgement is provided to the complainant within 5 working days of receiving a complaint. The acknowledgement will give a brief explanation of the Academy's complaints procedure and will give a target date for providing a response to the complaint which should normally be within 10 working days. If the target cannot be met a letter should be written within 10 working days explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised target date.

12. The Deputy Headteacher will seek to meet or speak with all of the appropriate people in order to establish the facts relating to the complaint, if the information given on the complaints form necessitates this. This may include the complainant, staff and any other person.

13. Once all of the facts have been established the Deputy Headteacher will then produce a written response to the complainant, or may wish to meet the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter directly.

14. A written response should contain an outline of the complaint and a summary of the response to the complaint including the decision reached and the reasons for it. Where appropriate this should also include what response the Academy will take to resolve the complaint. This may be by way of a general description eg 'Action taken within the Disciplinary Procedure.

15. When the investigation has been concluded the complainant and the member of staff concerned will be informed in writing of the outcome. This may be to the effect that:
    - There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, so the complaint cannot be upheld
    - The concern was not substantiated by the evidence
    - The concern was substantiated in part or in full. Some details may then be given of the action the academy may be taking to review procedures etc but details of the investigation or of any disciplinary procedures will not be released.
    - The matter has been fully investigated and that appropriate procedures are being followed which may be strictly confidential (eg where staff disciplinary procedures are being followed)

16. This letter or report must be endorsed by the Headteacher. It should also inform the complainant that should he/she wish the complaint to progress to the second stage of this procedure then he/she should send a written request stating this to the Headteacher within 10 working days of receiving the response.

17. If no further communication is received from the complainant within 10 working days it is deemed that the complaint has been resolved and should end.

Stage Two: Complaint Heard by Headteacher

18. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at stage one, they may go to Stage 2 and have the Headteacher hear the complaint. The Headteacher may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken.

19. The same timings as in Stage 1 will apply.

Stage Three: Complaint Heard by Academy Trust Complaints Appeal Panel or by The Vice Chair

20. The complainant needs to write to the Clerk to the Directors as directed by the Headteacher giving details of the complaint. The Chair, or CEO, will hear the complaint and their decision is final.

21. The Clerk to the Directors should write to the complainant acknowledging receipt of the written request for the complaint to be heard. This acknowledgement must be sent within 5 working days and should inform the complainant of the arrangements for hearing the complaint within 20 working days of receiving it. The letter should explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents relevant to the complaint. These must be received within 5 working days of the date of the hearing to allow adequate time for the documents to be circulated.

22. No person involved should have previous involvement in the complaint.

23. The Academy Trust's appeal hearing is the last Academy-based stage of the complaints process, and is not convened to merely rubber-stamp previous decisions.

24. Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole Academy Trust at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any hearing set up for disciplinary purposes against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

25. The Academy Trust may nominate a number of members with delegated powers to hear complaints at that stage, and set out its terms of reference. These include:
    - drawing up its procedures;
    - hearing individual appeals;
    - making recommendations on policy as a result of complaints.

26. In the event of Vice Chair being unavailable a panel can be drawn from the nominated members and may consist of three or five Directors. In this case the panel may choose their own Chair. The Academy Trust may choose to have an independent person present depending on the nature of the complaint.

27. If the complaint is about the Headteacher a hearing by the Vice Chair of the Academy Trust becomes Stage Two. If the complainant is unhappy he/she needs to write to the Clerk of the Academy Trust whereupon a panel of three to five Directors (not previously involved) will hear the complaint. Their decision will be final.

The Remit of the Complaints Appeal Panel

28. The panel can:
    - dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
    - uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
    - decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
    - recommend changes to the Academy's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

29. There are several points which any Director sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember:

    a. It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is

seen to be so. No Director may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.

b. The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the Academy and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.

c. An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel Chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible.

30. The Clerk to the Academy Trust will write and inform the complainant and any witnesses, the panel etc of the date and location of the meeting 5 working days in advance. The notification to the complainant should also inform him/her of the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a friend/ interpreter. The letter should explain how the meeting will be conducted and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the panel. The Headteacher has the right to bring representation if so desired.

31. Intervention of parallel investigations relevant to the complaint by the Police or social services may cause variation to these time scales. Any such variation will be notified to the complainant.

Hearing the Complaint at the Meeting

- The aim of the meeting will be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the Academy and the complainant.
- In the interest of natural justice, the introduction of previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses would be a reason to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence.
- The recommended conduct of the meeting is as follows:

a. The Chair of the panel will welcome the complainant, introduce the panel members and explain the procedure.
b. The Chair of the panel will invite the complainant to explain the complaint.
c. The Committee members may question the complainant about the complaint and the reasons why it has been made.
d. The Headteacher will be invited by the Chair of the panel to question the complainant about the complaint and why it has been made.
e. The Chair of the panel will invite the Headteacher to make a statement in response to the complaint. At the discretion of the Chair of the panel the Headteacher may invite members of staff directly involved in the complaint to supplement his/her response.
f. The Committee members may question the Headteacher and/or members of staff about the response to the complaint.
g. The Chair of the panel will allow the complainant to question the Headteacher and/or members of staff about the response to the complaint.
h. Any party has the right to call witnesses, subject to the approval of the Chair of the Committee.
i. The Committee, the Headteacher and the complainant have the right to question

any such witness.

j. The Headteacher will be invited by the Chair of the panel to make a final statement.
k. The complainant will be invited by the Chair of the panel to make a final statement.
l. The Chair of the panel will explain to the complainant and the Headteacher that the decision of the panel will now be considered and a written decision will be sent to both parties within **15 working days**. The Chair of the panel will then ask all parties to leave except for members of the Committee.
m. The Committee will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and;
    i. Reach a decision on the complaint and the reasons for it.
    ii. Decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint.
n. The Directors sitting on the panel need to be aware of the complaints procedure before the meeting.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Role of the Clerk

The clerk is the contact point for the complainant and is required to:

- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;
- meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- record the proceedings;
- notify all parties of the panel's decision.

The Role of the Chair of the Panel

The Chair of the Panel has a key role, ensuring that:

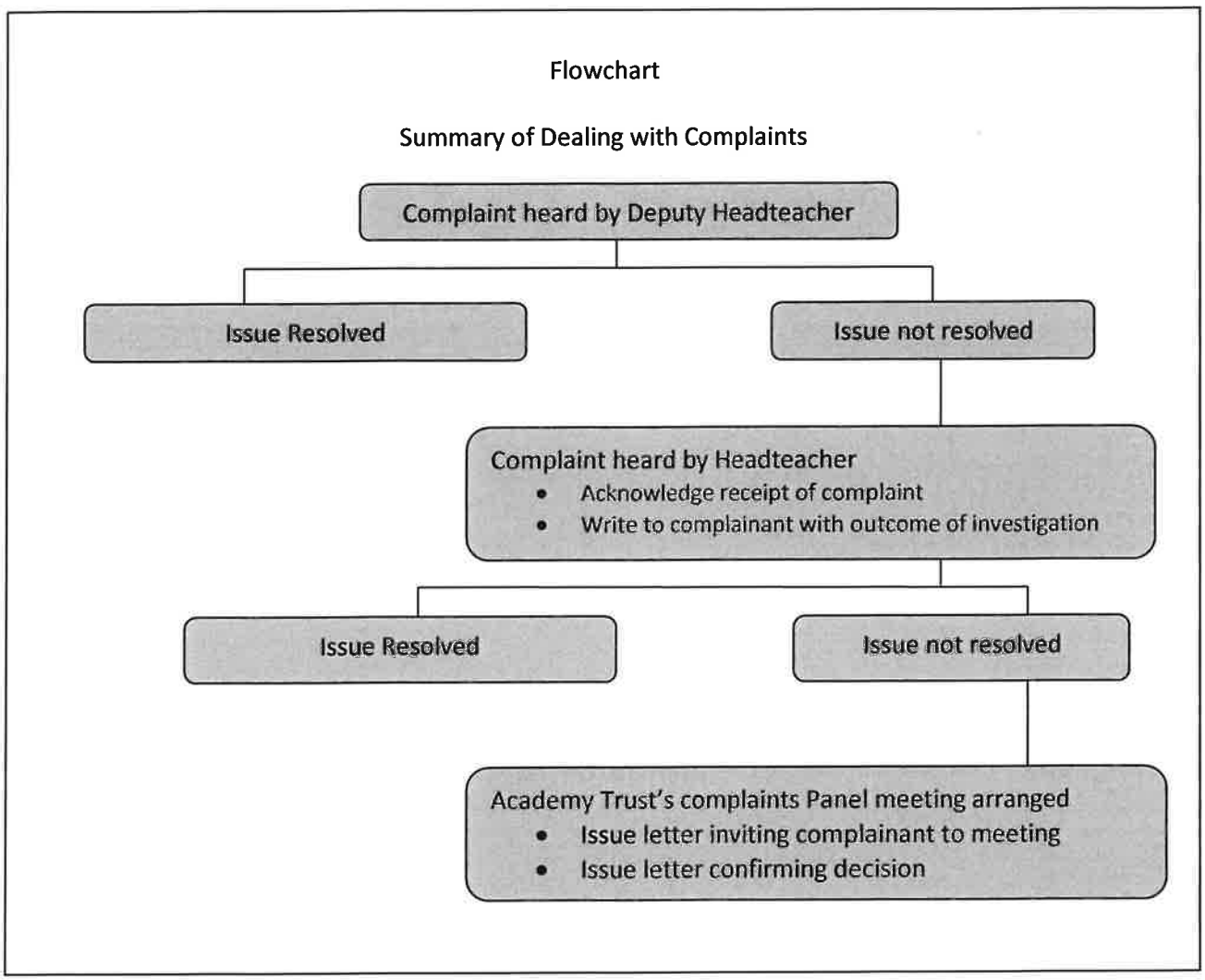
- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are made;
- parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- the panel is open minded and acting independently;
- no member of the panel has any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
- written material is seen by all parties.

Checklist for a Panel Hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence. Students may not appear as witnesses, but they may provide statements.
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The Headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.

- The Headteacher is then invited to explain the Academy's actions and be followed by the Academy's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the Headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel may ask questions at any point.
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Headteacher is then invited to sum up the Academy's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues.
- The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.



Complaint Form

Annex B

Please complete and return to the Headteacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Student's name:

Your relationship to the student:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (To whom did you speak and what was the response?)

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date: