



Mulberry UTC complaints policy

Key staff members:	All staff
Responsible body:	Project Steering Group/Local Governing Body
Adopted:	June 2017
Last reviewed:	n/a
Next review:	June 2018

Rationale

This policy has been produced by the governors of Mulberry UTC and is based on the policy in place at Mulberry School for Girls. It sets out the way in which this school will deal with complaints from parents/carers, staff or other stakeholders in the school.

It is in the interest of everyone that all parties involved in any complaint conduct themselves in a professional, courteous and respectful manner at all times.

It is in the interest of everyone that complaints and responses are dealt with promptly, at all stages.

1. Aims

- To underpin the school’s aims and objectives by giving due consideration to complaints.
- To ensure that all complaints are considered fully, fairly, promptly and confidentially and, in the first instance, on an informal basis.
- To ensure that there is an effective partnership between all parties involved - school, staff and/or parents/carers.
- In the absence of a resolution to the satisfaction of the complainant, to issue a clear decision which will enable the complainant, the Principal, the Local Governing Body or the Trust Board to consider who, if at all, the matter should be taken further.
- To ensure that all members of the school community can have their points of view heard.

2. Definition of a complaint

A complaint is an expression of significant dissatisfaction, however made, by a person or persons with a legitimate interest in the school about the practices or policies of the school, the conduct, action or omissions of members of staff employed at the school or about the standard of teaching.

Complaints may be written or oral. It is not always appropriate to ask for complaints to be put in writing as this might unnecessarily formalise the situation, resulting in the complainant taking a more defensive or entrenched position and making the conflict more difficult to resolve.

For a complaint to merit serious consideration it should meet at least one of the following criteria:

- it is first hand
- it relates to recent events
- the events in question can be dated
- there is independent corroboration of the allegations

It is important to bear in mind that every expression of concern is not a complaint. Discretion will be applied in determining whether action over and above the normal day to day discussions on concerns is needed. All senior management team members are expected to exercise such discretion before referring matters to the Principal.

Problems and expressions of concern will be dealt with as far as is possible, at the point of first contact. If it cannot be resolved at this level then the teacher/support staff should refer the matter to the appropriate senior member of staff including clearly documented details of the complaint and any informal discussions and action taken.

3. Responsibilities

The conduct of the school is under the direction of the UTC Local Governing Body and the Mulberry Schools Trust Board. The Principal is responsible for the internal organisation and management of the school.

- This makes the Principal responsible for investigating complaints in the first instance and, if appropriate, referring complaints to other members of staff to deal with.
- The Local Governing Body may be called upon to consider, resolve and or adjudicate if complaints are referred to them by the Principal or by a complainant who is not satisfied with the result of the informal process.
- If the complaint is not resolved at school level, the interested parties have recourse to the Mulberry Schools Trust Board or to the legal process.

In the event of a complaint being made to a member of the Local Governing Body, the complainant should be advised to speak to the Principal, so that an attempt can be made to resolve the matter informally. Governors must not prejudice themselves by discussing the complaint as this would prevent their participating in a panel at a later stage. If at any point it appears that there are issues regarding school staff which may need to be dealt with under the disciplinary or other staffing procedures, personnel advice will be sought.

4. Referral structure

In most cases the referral structure will be as follows:

- i. Class teacher/support staff
- ii. Director of Learning/Director of Progress
- iii. Vice Principal
- iv. Principal

On some occasions it will be appropriate to by-pass levels in the referral structure.

- When a complaint is made to the Principal (s)he may decide to deal with it or to refer it to an appropriate level in the structure. When the Principal has asked a colleague to deal with a complaint, written feedback will be given to the Principal.

- Where a teacher other than the Principal receives a complaint (as opposed to an expression of concern) and deals with it, the Principal will be notified in writing of the complaint and how it was resolved.
- If all informal channels have been exhausted and there is still dissatisfaction, the complainant will be made aware of how formal procedures can be initiated.

5. Possible outcomes at the informal stage

- The matter is resolved.
- When informal procedures have been exhausted, complainants will be informed clearly by the Principal within 10 working days that the matter about which they complained has been dealt with appropriately by staff within the context of the school policies and procedures.
- The complaint has been found by the Principal to be valid and that the Principal, within his/her responsibility for the overall internal management of the school will take appropriate action.
- The Principal or the complainant will refer the matter to the Local Governing Body for their consideration.

6. Complaints made to the Local Governing Body

In the event of a complaint being received directly by the Local Governing Body from a parent or other stake holders in the school, governors will have regard to the following:

- Any complaint to the Local Governing Body or one of its members will be passed to the Principal for investigation. The Principal, if (s)he has not already done so, will follow the informal procedure outlined above to attempt to resolve the matter and report the outcome to the complainant and details taken to the Chair of Governors.
- If the Chair of the Local Governing Body is satisfied that the informal procedures have been exhausted and the complaint is still not resolved, (s)he may, after further discussions with the Principal, decide to initiate the formal procedure.
- In the event of the complaint being about the Principal, the Chair of the Local Governing Body will inform the Principal of the complaint and then attempt, through an informal approach, to resolve the matter.

7. The formal procedure

- i. If informal attempts to settle the complaint have failed to satisfy the complainant, (s)he should set out the complaint fully in writing and submit this to the Chair of the Local Governing Body within 10 working days of notification that the complaint has been dealt with. Where this is not possible because of literacy or second language considerations, the complaint should be made orally and where necessary arrangements for interpretations should be made.
- ii. Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged in writing by the Chair of the Local Governing Body, the Vice Chair, if the Chair is not available or the Clerk to Governors. A copy of this complaints procedure will be enclosed with the acknowledgement.

- iii. The Local Governing Body will arrange for the complaint to be heard by the panel of three governors who have not had involvement with the matter at an earlier stage within 20 working days of receiving the letter of complaint. This panel will, where possible, reflect a cross section of governors who have no direct interest or involvement in the case.
- iv. The panel will be provided with copies of the complaint and all other relevant documentation.
- v. At least five working days' notice of the hearing by the panel will be given to all concerned.
- vi. All parties involved in the dispute may be accompanied, if desired, by a friend, representative or an interpreter and may call witnesses.
- vii. The Principal (or the Chair of Governors if the complaint is against the Principal) will explain what has already been done to attempt to resolve the complaint and the outcome of any investigation.
- viii. The complainant will then present his or her case and call any witnesses.
- ix. The panel and Principal will have an opportunity to question the complainant and witnesses.
- x. The Principal will have the opportunity to respond to the complainant and call witnesses if appropriate.
- xi. The panel and the complainant will have the opportunity to question the Principal and the witnesses.
- xii. The Principal, followed by the complainant, will summarise their positions.
- xiii. All but the members of the panel will withdraw while the panel reach a decision.

When the evidence has been fully considered and a decision made, the panel will notify in writing the complainant and the Principal of the outcome, giving an explanation of the conclusion, the reason for it, and any action taken, including details of any request made of those complained against to take particular actions in respect of the complaint. This will be done as quickly as possible but within a maximum of 10 working days. The letter to the complainant will explain whether a further appeal can be made, and if so, to whom.

The Local Governing Body will be informed at their next meeting that a complaint has been received and dealt with. Details will not be divulged to the full Local Governing Body, nor to any other party not directly involved, as to do so would violate confidentiality.

8. Taking it further

If the complainant is not satisfied by the outcome of the Local Governing Body panel investigation they can write to the Mulberry Schools Trust Board with copies of relevant correspondence. The Trust Board will look into the matter and give a written reply.

Appendix 1: Complaints form

Mulberry UTC Complaints Report Form	
Details of complaint:	
Action taken:	
Member of staff receiving complaint:	Date:
Investigation/Any further action taken:	
By whom:	Date: