



Westbourne Academy Trust

Managing Complaints Policy

Date policy last reviewed: September
2025

Signed by:

DM Headteacher Date: March 2024

Bernie Higgins Chair of trustees Date: March 2024

Statement of intent

Westbourne Academy Trust is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain.

There is a clear and comprehensive Complaints Procedure which is available on the website. It can be emailed or a hard copy provided upon request to the school office.

We will deal with complainants politely and calmly; respecting their views and listening to their concerns.

We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school; however, we do not expect staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

We will follow government guidance currently contained in: Best practice guidance for academies complaints procedure:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-up-an-academies-complaints-procedure/best-practice-guidance-for-academies-complaints-procedures>

Updated 12 March 2021.

Aims

- To build and maintain positive relationships and good communication in the interests of the whole school community
- To try to resolve all concerns and complaints informally or through the use of the complaints procedure available on the school website.
- If this is not successful we will use this policy to ensure the smooth operation of the school and the safety and wellbeing of all members of school staff

Practice

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages 2 and 3 of the complaints procedure.

Westbourne Academy Trust takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

Concerns and complaints will be dealt with according to the procedure set out.

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important, for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

Unreasonable behaviour or complaints & serial complaints

Unreasonable behaviours may be defined as *'that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the individual or complainant's contact with the school'*.

For the purposes of this policy, “**unreasonable complaints**” include:

A complaint may also be regarded as unreasonable when the complainant:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeks to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed.
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the trust's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to the ESFA.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- Acts maliciously or aggressively.
- Uses threats, intimidation or violence.
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language.
- Knows the complaint to be false
- Uses falsified information.
- Publishes unacceptable information in media such as social media websites, newspapers or other public forums.

The above applies regardless of the method the complaint is made, e.g. face-to-face, by telephone, in writing or electronically.

Complainants should limit the number of communications with the trust while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent, either by letter, phone, email or text, as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the trust causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from the premises.

Complaints campaigns

Where the trust becomes the subject of a complaints campaign from complainants who are not connected with the academy, **a standard, single response will be published on the academy's website.**

If the academy receives a large number of complaints about the same subject from complainants who are connected to the academy, e.g. parents, each complainant will receive an individual response.

If complainants remain dissatisfied with the academy's response, they will be directed to the ESFA.

Barring from the premises

School premises are private property and, therefore, any individual may be barred from entering the premises.

If an individual's behaviour is cause for concern, the Headteacher will ask the individual to leave the premises.

The Headteacher will notify the parties involved in writing, explaining that their implied licence for access to the premises has been temporarily revoked and why, subject to any representations that the individual may wish to make. The individual involved will be given the opportunity to formally express their views regarding the decision to bar them.

This decision to bar will be reviewed by the Chair of Trustees where escalated, taking into account any discussions following the incident. If the decision is made to continue the bar, the individual will be contacted in writing, informing them of how long the bar will be in place, and when the decision will be reviewed.

Anyone wishing to make a complaint regarding a barring order can do so in writing, including via email, to the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees.

Monitoring and review

The complaints procedure will be reviewed annually, taking into account any legislative changes and the latest guidance issued by the DfE or ESFA. The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2026.

Responsibility for reviewing the procedure belongs to the Trust Board. All projected review dates will be adhered to.

Information gathered through reviewing the complaints procedure will be used to continuously improve and develop the process. Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.