



## COMPLAINTS POLICY

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This document applies to all schools and operations of the Galileo Multi Academy Trust:  
[www.galileotrust.co.uk](http://www.galileotrust.co.uk)

## Policy Review Sheet

<b>Date of changes:</b>		<b>19.05.2024</b>
Page/ Section	Changes to note	Reason for change <i>e.g., change in legislation</i>
Section 1	Defined scope of the policy.	Improved clarity.
Section 4	Added section on Roles and Responsibilities, and the role of the Trust Complaints Committee.	Clarity in line with revised terminology.
Section 5.1	Amended timescales for complainant to raise a concern and provided greater clarity.	Improved clarity.
Section 5.2	New section to include complaints relating to fulfilment of early years requirements.	New section.
Section 6	Provided much greater clarity on the 4 stages of a complaint.	Improved clarity.
Section 7	New section to define how to raise complaints about the Trust, CEO, CFOO, or Trustees.	New Section.
Section 8	New section to explain what happens on completion of the school and Trust complaints procedures.	Improved clarity.
Section 9	Added further clarity to how the Trust deals with persistent, serial, or vexatious complainants.	Improved clarity.
<b>Date of final approval:</b>		09.09.24

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## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure any general concerns against a member of staff, school, or the Trust as a whole, relating to aspects of the provision, facilities, or services are addressed. This policy sets-out the formal procedures should the concern not be resolved informally. The policy is not intended to cover complaints regarding those aspects of school life for which there are specific statutory requirements:

- School Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Suspension and permanent exclusions.
- Whistle-blowing.
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline
- Withdrawal from the curriculum (parents and carers can withdraw their child from any aspect of religious education, including the daily act of collective. They do not have to explain why)

Please see separate policies for procedures relating to the aforementioned issues.

## 2. Introduction

Galileo Multi Academy Trust prides itself on the quality of teaching provided for all pupils. If parents or carers have concerns, they will be treated seriously by the Trust. A complaint can be brought by a parent or carer of a registered child at any school within the Trust or any person who has been provided with a service at any school within the Trust. This person is referred to as the complainant.

- School's may have a nominated member of staff with responsibility for the operation and management of the complaint's procedure. The class teacher will be the first point of contact unless the concern relates to the teacher in which case the first point of contact should be the Headteacher.
- A concern becomes a complaint only when the complainant asserts that the school or the Trust has acted wrongly in some significant decision, action, or failure to act.
- Even when a complaint has been made it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.

## 3. Aims

This policy aims to reassure complainants that any complaints raised will be dealt with in a fair, open, and responsive way with the aim of achieving a speedy and satisfactory resolution. The Trust recognises a willingness to listen to questions, criticisms and to respond positively in a way in which improvements can be made to school and/or Trust practices.

In line with the Education Act 2002, the Trust will:

- Encourage the resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible.
- Allow easy access and publication of complaints procedure
- Be impartial.
- Ensure the procedure is simple to understand and use.
- Be non-adversary.

- Allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of any progress.
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Address all the points at issue, provide an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary.
- Provide information to the senior management team so that services can be improved.

## 4. Roles and responsibilities

### **The complainant**

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Follow these procedures.
- Co-operate with the school or Trust throughout the process and respond to deadlines and communication promptly.
- Ask for assistance as needed.
- Treat all those involved with respect.
- Do not publish details about the complaint on social media.

### **The investigating Officer**

An individual will be appointed to look into the complaint and establish the facts. They will:

- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes.
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely.
- Prepare a comprehensive report to the headteacher, CEO, CFOO, or complaints committee, which includes the facts, potential solutions, and may recommend a course of action.

### **The complaints co-ordinator**

The complaints co-ordinator can be:

- The headteacher, CEO, or CFOO of the Trust.
- A designated member of the complaints committee.
- A nominated staff member providing administrative support.

The complaints co-ordinator will:

- Keep the complainant up to date at each stage in the procedure.
- Make sure the process runs smoothly by liaising with staff members, the headteacher, designated complaints committee member (s), clerk, and the CEO and CFOO of the Trust.
- Be aware of issues relating to:
  - Sharing third-party information
  - Additional support needed by complainants; for example, interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person.

- Keep records.

### **The Clerk**

The clerk will:

- Be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings.
- Arrange the complaints hearing.
- Record and circulate the minutes and outcome of the hearing.

### **Committee chair**

The committee chair will:

- Chair the meeting, ensuring that everyone is treated with respect throughout.
- Make sure all parties see the relevant information, understand the purpose of the committee, and are allowed to present their case.

## 5. Principles for Investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened.
- Who was involved.
- What the complainant feels would put things right.

### 5.1 Timescales

Complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly, and efficiently as possible.

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this timeframe in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If at any point we cannot meet the timescales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant.
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay.

### 5.2 Complaints about our fulfilment of early years requirements

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the trust's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. Schools will keep a record of the complaint (see section 10) and make this available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers can notify Ofsted if they believe that a school is not meeting Early Year Foundation Stage requirements, by:

- Calling 0300 123 4666

- Emailing [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)
- Using the online contact form available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted#org-contacts>

Schools will notify parents and carers if they become aware that they are to be inspected by Ofsted. Schools will also supply a copy of the inspection report to parents and carers of children attending the setting on a regular basis.

## 6. Complaints Procedure (not complaints against the Trust, CEO, CFOO, or Trustees)

### 6.1 Stages of Complaint

We have adopted a 4-Stage process for dealing with complaints:

- Stage 1 – Informal resolution
- Stage 2 – Formal investigation
- Stage 3 – Complaints committee panel hearing
- Stage 4 – Review by the Trust Board

### 6.2 Stage 1: Informal resolution

(Raising your concern with a staff member).

- The Trust recognises that a vast majority of complaints and concerns can be resolved informally.
- It is expected that in most cases a member of staff will be able to resolve concerns without the need to go any further and it is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage.
- The complainant must feel able to raise concerns and complaints with members of staff, either in person, by telephone or in writing.
- A preliminary discussion may be undertaken to help clarify if he or she is making a complaint or expressing an opinion. The discussion is to:
  - establish what has happened so far and who has been involved,
  - clarify what remains unresolved,
  - establish what the complainant feels would put things right,
  - determine whether they wish to take it further.
- The member of staff dealing with the concern should make sure that they conduct any interviews or meetings at a convenient time and in a positive atmosphere. Interviews and meetings should be conducted with an open mind and the staff member should be prepared to persist in the questioning and keep notes of the meeting/interview or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting.
- The member of staff dealing with the concern should make sure that any misunderstandings that may have occurred are clarified and that the complainant is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been identified and agreed.
- The process should be completed speedily and concluded in writing with appropriate detail.

- Where no satisfactory solution has been found, the complainant should be informed that he or she will need to consider whether to make a formal complaint in writing to the school Headteacher.
- To assist in this process a complaint form is provided. (See Appendix A)

Please note that the staff member will require time in order to investigate the matter further themselves and an unreasonable refusal to allow your concern or complaint to be addressed informally may result in the school being unwilling to take the issue any further.

The complaints co-ordinator i.e., the school Headteacher should be informed of any outcome.

If, having raised your concern with the member of staff concerned you are still dissatisfied or, the member of staff concerned is the subject of your complaint, then you should move on to the next level of the procedure, Stage 2, contacting the school Headteacher.

### 6.3 Stage 2: Formal Investigation

(Complaint heard by school Headteacher).

At this point, the complainant may be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled at Stage 1 after pursuing their initial complaint.

The school Headteacher may ask you to put your concerns in writing or to complete a formal complaints form – see Appendix A but will usually be able to deal with your concerns face-to-face.

The school Headteacher will acknowledge receipt within 5 working days of the complaint and will attempt to resolve your concerns using any reasonable means that are felt appropriate: this may involve meeting with you to discuss the matter further or delegating another senior member of staff to investigate and collate the information but not the decision on the action to be taken.

The school Headteacher should be allowed reasonable time to investigate the concern or complaint and gather any information that is required, this may be via discussions with all parties involved. This may involve talking to staff members, interviewing witnesses, and taking statements from those involved. The school Headteacher will keep reasonable written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation. The school Headteacher will investigate fully and communicate findings and/or resolutions to the complainant(s) verbally or in writing depending on the nature of the issue.

On this basis you should expect to receive feedback regarding the decision reached and the reasons for it. Where appropriate it should include what action, the school will take or has taken to resolve the complaint.

As far as is reasonable, except in more complex cases, a written response will take place within 30 days of the initial complaint being received by the school Headteacher.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome from the school Headteacher, or if the school Headteacher is the subject of your concern or complaint, then you may within 10 working days of the response, put your complaint in writing to the Clerk to the Local School Board. Their email address will be provided by the Headteacher upon request.

### 6.4 Stage 3: Panel hearing

(Complaint heard by a review panel).

The clerk to the Local School Board will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days of receipt.



The panel will be appointed by or on behalf of the Trust and must consist of at least 3 people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one panel member must be independent of the management and running of the school. Panel members will consist of members of the Trust's Complaints Committee which is made up of local school governing body members and members of the Trust Board.

The Complaints Committee has responsibility for ensuring that any complaints formally notified to them are addressed. If you have not raised your concern or complaint with the school Headteacher, the chair may advise you to do so, but otherwise, if you have a complaint and have not already put the details in writing, the committee chair will ask you to do so. There is a form to complete (Appendix A).

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the panel hearing. The clerk will aim to find a date within 10 working days of the request, where possible.

If the complainant rejects the offer of 3 proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will set a date. The hearing will go ahead using written submissions from both parties.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 working days before the date of the meeting unless there is mitigating circumstances.

### **At the meeting**

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending will be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied by one other individual if they wish. We don't encourage either party to bring legal representation but will consider it on a case-by-case basis. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by their union.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the school representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and school representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave, and evidence will then be considered.

The panel will then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide copies of the minutes of the hearing and the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint, and make a copy available for inspection by the Trust.

The designated panel members will hear your complaint on an impartial basis via a panel hearing that must be held in private and will aim to resolve the complaint and reconcile any differences between you and the school.

### **The Outcome**

The committee can:

- Uphold the complaint, in whole or in part.
- Dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld, the committee will:

- Decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint.
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The school will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 10 working days.

### 6.5 Stage 4: Review by the Trust Board

Where the school-based complaints procedure has been completed, and the complainant does not feel their complaint has been addressed to their satisfaction, they may contact the trust in writing to request a review of the complaint investigation.

They can do this by:

- Email: [info@galileotrust.co.uk](mailto:info@galileotrust.co.uk)
- Post: Galileo Multi Academy Trust, The Innovation Centre, Vienna Court, Kirkleatham Business Park, Redcar, TS10 5SH.

The written request should include a summary of the complaint, along with any relevant dates, times, and evidence.

The Trust cannot overturn decisions on complaints made during the school's complaints procedure. However, it can assess whether the school considered the complaint appropriately.

This is the final step of the process for the school (except for carrying out agreed actions) and there is no more that the school can do – trying to raise the issue further through the school may lead to your complaint being treated as persistent or vexatious (see section 9).

## 7. Complaints about the Trust, CEO, CFOO, or Trustees

### Stage 1: informal

We make every effort to address any concerns or complaints early through informal measures.

The complainant should raise any concerns as soon as possible with the relevant member of the trust's Executive Team, which is either the chief executive officer (CEO) or Chief Financial and Operating Officer (CFOO).

If the concern regards the CFOO the complainant should contact the CEO. If the concern regards the CEO, the complainant should contact the chair of the Board of Trustees.

If the complainant is unsure who to contact or needs to contact the chair of the board of trustees, they should contact the trust office for advice by emailing: [info@galileotrust.co.uk](mailto:info@galileotrust.co.uk) or by phone at: 01642 777963.

The process for responding to and investigating an informal complaint about the Trust or central staff is the same as that set out in section 6.

### Stage 2: Formal Investigation

If the complaint is not resolved satisfactorily at the informal stage, the complainant must submit a formal complaint in writing.

The complainant will receive written acknowledgement of their complaint within 5 working days.

The investigating officer will then investigate, in line with the process set out in section 6 above, providing a written response to the complainant within 15 working days.

### **Stage 3: Panel hearing**

Complaints will be escalated to the panel hearing stage if the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint at the second, formal stage.

A panel will be appointed by the Trust and will consist of 3 members of the board not involved in investigating the complaint in the formal stage.

If the complaint is:

- Jointly about the chair and vice-chair or
- The entire trust board or
- The majority of the trust board

The panel will be entirely made up of independent members.

The complainant will have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel. The clerk will aim to find a date within 10 working days of the request, where possible.

If the complainant rejects the offer of 3 proposed dates without good reason, the clerk will set a date. The hearing will go ahead using written submissions from both parties.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 working days before the date of the meeting unless there are mitigating circumstances.

The complainant and representatives from the Trust, as appropriate, will be present at the panel hearing. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.

The complainant must be allowed to attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish.

The Board will ensure that the hearing is properly minuted.

#### **At the meeting**

At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called, as appropriate, to present their evidence.

The panel, the complainant and the Trust representative(s) will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and trust representative(s) have presented their cases, they will be asked to leave, and evidence will then be considered.

The panel must then put together its findings and recommendations from the case. The panel will also provide a copy of the findings and recommendations to the complainant and, where relevant, the individual who is the subject of the complaint, and make a copy available for inspection by the Trust.

The panel will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 10 working days.

## **8. Referring complaints on completion of School and Trust Procedures**

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the School or Trust complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the ESFA.

Complainants are advised to write to: Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit, Education and Skills Funding Agency, Cheylesmore House, 5 Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT.

The ESFA will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly. The ESFA will not overturn the school or trust's decision about a complaint but will intervene if a school or trust has:

- Breached a clause in its funding agreement.

- Failed to act in line with its duties under education law.
- Acted (or is proposing to act) unreasonably when exercising its functions.

If the complaints procedure is found not to meet regulations, the Trust will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

Further information on what the Education and Skills Funding Agency can do is available from:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-up-an-academies-complaints-procedure/best-practice-guidance-for-academies-complaints-procedures](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-up-an-academies-complaints-procedure/best-practice-guidance-for-academies-complaints-procedures)

## 9. Persistent, serial, or vexatious complaints

### 9.1 Unreasonably persistent or serial complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following this complaints procedure.
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory, or repetitive.
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaint's procedure, beyond all reason.
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner, e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaint's procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the timeframes it sets out.
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance, or excessive demands on school time.
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value.

#### **Steps the School/Trust will take.**

The school/trust will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns and give them a clear statement of the school's/trust's position and their options. The school/trust will maintain the role of an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when meetings are held with individuals. The school/trust will follow this complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school/trust in a disruptive way, communication strategies may be put in place. The school/trust may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address.
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term.
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#)
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary.

#### **Stopping responding**

The school/trust may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- The school/trust has taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns.

- The complainant has received a clear statement of the school's/trust's position and their options.
- The complainant contacts the school/trust repeatedly, and the school/trust believes their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience.

The school/trust will inform the individual that they intend to stop responding and explain that any new complaints will still be considered.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the school/trust will immediately inform the police and communicate these actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school/trust site.

Additionally, any abuse of staff members, including verbal, written, online, or physical abuse will not be tolerated and may be reported to the appropriate authority.

### 9.2 Duplicate complaints

If the school/trust has resolved a complaint under this procedure and received a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, the school/trust will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information that needs to be taken into account.

If the school/trust is satisfied that there are no new aspects, it will:

- Tell the new complainant that the issue has already been investigated and responded to, and that the process is complete.
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with the original handling of the complaint.

If there are new aspects, this procedure will be repeated.

### 9.3 Complaint campaigns

Where the school/trust receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school/trust may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school/trust website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's/trust's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

### 9.4 Anonymous complaints

The Trust and its schools encourage all complainants to follow the complaints process detailed in this policy. If an anonymous complaint is received and includes allegations around safeguarding issues, we will look to address all concerns. However, anonymity may hinder any investigation.

Any anonymous complaints will be retained, and the number reported to the Trust Board and Local School Board to enable Trustees and Governors to monitor any patterns of complaints.

## 10. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

The school/trust will record the progress of all complaints, including information about:

- Actions taken at all stages.
- The stage at which the complaint was resolved.
- The final outcome.

The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes related to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and stored securely and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

In the case of complaints about the trust or central staff, these records will be managed by the Executive Team, and will be stored securely in the trust's offices under restricted access.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and records retention policy.

## 11. Monitoring of policy

This policy will be reviewed annually (or updated sooner if required). The Trust will also monitor the number of complaints received, how these were addressed, and any action taken.

## Appendix A – Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the school Headteacher (complaints co-ordinator) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>	
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant)</b>	
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant)</b>	
<b>Address (including postcode)</b>	
<b>Telephone number</b>	
<b>Please give details of your complaint</b>	
<b>What action, if any have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (who did you speak to and what was the response)</b>	

**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:**