



Complaints Policy

Date reviewed:	July 2026	
Approved by:	CEO	July 2026
Next review due by:	July 2027	

For Office Use Only:

Policy Version: 5.1

To make changes to this policy, please
email admin@lincolnshiregateway.co.uk.

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the Academy. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Lincolnshire Gateway Academies Trust (LGAT) or any of our academies about any facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

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'*.

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 of the complaints procedure. LGAT takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, LGAT or the relevant Academy will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, you will be referred to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, LGAT or the relevant Academy will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints policy.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised in the first instance with the Academy (if relevant). If the complaint is not resolved then an appointment with the Principal should be made. If the issue still remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 of the procedure.

Complaints against academy staff (except the Principal) should be made in the first instance, to the Principal either via the Academy office or by completing the Stage 1 form at the end of this policy. Please mark as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Principal should be addressed to the Chief Executive via the Academy or Trust office or via the Stage 1 form at the end of this policy. Please mark as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to the Governance Professional via the Academy or Trust office, or via the Stage 1 form at the end of this policy. Please mark as Private and Confidential.

If you require help in completing the Stage 1 form, please contact the relevant Academy office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

We know some people find Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT helpful when completing forms, but please be aware that AI-generated text can sometimes make complaints too complicated or include legal references that are not relevant or correct. This may increase the time it takes us to review your complaint or we may need to ask you to resubmit it. We want to hear about your experience in your own words. When you bring a complaint to us, we need to understand your personal experience and how the issues have affected you. Simple, clear language that explains what happened to you will always be more helpful than complicated, formal writing.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints.

Timescales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by LGAT or any of its constituent academies other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with the relevant Local Authority.

• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. <i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through this complaints policy.</i>
• Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about any of our academies should complain via this complaints policy. You may also be able to complain direct to the Local Authority or the Department for Education, depending on the substance of your complaint.
• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the Trust's grievance policy.
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the Trust's staff disciplinary policy, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
• National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against LGAT or any of its constituent academies in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, LGAT or the relevant academy wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Managing unreasonable, persistent or vexatious complaints

The Trust is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly, impartially and in a timely manner. However, there may be occasions where the behaviour of a complainant, or the frequency and nature of their contact, hinders the consideration of their complaint or has a significant impact on staff wellbeing and the efficient operation of the Trust/academy. In such circumstances, the Trust may determine that a complaint is unreasonable, persistent or vexatious. This may include complaints which are repetitious, obsessive, harassing, lack reasonable grounds, or where the complainant refuses to accept the outcome of the complaints procedure and continues to pursue the same issue.

The Trust will ensure that any such decision is based on careful consideration, that the complaint has been progressed through the appropriate stages of the procedure, and that the substance of the complaint has been addressed. Where a complaint is deemed vexatious or serial, the Trust/academy may limit contact, require communication through a single point of contact, or, in exceptional cases, decline to respond to further correspondence on the same matter. Any action taken will be proportionate, clearly communicated, and recorded, ensuring the complainant retains the right to refer their complaint to external bodies where appropriate.

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Principal (unless they are about the Principal), via the school office or via the Stage 1 form at the end of this policy. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone. The complainant should briefly set out the facts and state what it is that they consider should have been done or where LGAT or an academy has not met reasonable expectations.

LGAT or the relevant academy will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email), normally within 5 school days.

An investigation will be carried out by a member of the Senior Leadership Team in the relevant academy or by the Trust (for complaints about a Principal, the CEO, or governors) - who will speak to the relevant people involved including the complainant if required.

The investigator will put their findings in writing to the complainant and will indicate, what, if any, steps should be taken to resolve the matter. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 15 school days of receipt of the complaint. If this deadline is unable to be met, the complainant will be provided with an update and a revised response date.

A record will be kept of the outcome and whether the complaint was resolved or proceeded to Stage 2. A written record will be kept of any meetings/interviews in relation to the investigation.

Stage 2

If the complainant considers the complaint as not resolved and is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 1, they can progress it to Stage 2, preferably by completing the Stage 2 form at the back of this policy. This should be done within 15 days of receipt of the outcome of the Stage 1 complaint.

The CEO will direct a member of the Trust Executive Team to investigate the complaint.

The Executive Team investigator will put their findings in writing to the complainant and will indicate, what, if any, steps should be taken to resolve the matter. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 15 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 complaint. If this deadline is unable to be met, the complainant will be provided with an update and a revised response date. The complainant will be advised of how to escalate their complaint to the next stage, should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

Stage 3

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the investigator following the Stage 2 process, he/she may request that the complaint be considered at a Complaints Panel meeting. That request must be made in writing addressed to the Governance Professional, within 10 school days of the response being sent to the complainant and must set out briefly the reasons why the complainant is dissatisfied with the response. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Governance Professional or appointed clerk will invite the Academy to put in writing its response to the complainant's reasons. The Academy will do this within 15 school days and at the end of that period (whether or not the Academy has responded) the clerk will convene a meeting of the Complaints Panel. The Panel appointed will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. Moreover, one panel member shall be independent of the management and running of the Trust. The complainant may attend the hearing and be accompanied if they wish but legal representation will not be allowed. The meeting will be held as quickly as practicable given the need to find a date that is reasonably convenient for the complainant, the Academy and the members of the Panel. Whenever possible, the meeting will be held within 15 school days of the end of the Academy's response time. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

At least 5 school days before the meeting, the clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the Panel in good time before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The Panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The Panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

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 must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The Academy will have the opportunity to explain its position and Panel members will be able to ask questions. The complainant will have the opportunity to make final comments to the Panel. This will include action taken by the academy as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

The Panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and make recommendations to the Board of Trustees who can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the academy's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Panel will make findings and recommendations as quickly as is reasonably practicable, aiming to do so within 10 school days, the clerk will notify the complainant and where relevant, the person complained about in writing of these. A written record of all complaints made will be kept regardless of whether they are upheld. This will include action taken by the Trust/academy as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). The findings and recommendations will also be available for inspection on the academy/LGAT premises.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the Trust did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the DfE after they have completed Stage 3 of the formal procedure.

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decision made. They will consider whether the Trust has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed Part 7 of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the DfE online at www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

Any complaints which are related to Data Protection concerns, can be sent to our DPO at support@gdprsentry.com or can be made by telephone on: 0113 804 2035

SUMMARY

Background: This policy outlines our commitment to dealing with complaints. It provides information on how we manage and respond to complaints



This policy will not be used where more appropriate policies are available. For example, admissions, exclusions, safeguarding, staff grievances.



What you can expect from us

LGAT will treat complaints seriously and ensure that concerns, complaints and issues raised by parents/carers and stakeholders are properly investigated in an unbiased, non-judgmental, transparent, timely and appropriate manner. The outcome of any investigation, along with any resulting actions will be fully explained to the complainant.



How to raise an initial concern

We understand a concern to be 'an expression of worry or doubt for which reassurances are sought'. Usually concerns are communicated directly with the Academy concerned, by letter, telephone or in person. If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a staff member, please contact the Academy and ask to make an appointment with the Principal. You may be referred to another senior staff member. Many concerns can be resolved informally in this way and we hope to resolve most issues by this approach.



Formal complaints procedure - Stage 1

If a concern cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint can be submitted verbally or in writing. The Trust's preferred method is via the Stage 1 complaints form at the end of this policy.



How to take a complaint further - Stage 2

If you are still unhappy following the investigation and response at Stage 1 of the process, you may request a Complaint Panel hearing of the Trust - the Stage 2 complaints form can also be found at the end of this policy.



How to take a complaint further - Stage 3

If you are still unhappy following the investigation and response at Stage 2 of the process, you may request a Complaint Panel hearing of the Trust - the Stage 3 request for a panel hearing form can be found at the end of this policy.

Formal Procedure Stage 1**COMPLAINT FORM**

Please complete and return to the Principal's PA at the relevant Academy who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Waltham Toll Bar Academy	enquiries@tollbaracademy.co.uk
Cleethorpes Academy	enquiries@cleethorpesacademy.co.uk
Somercotes Academy	enquiries@somercotesacademy.co.uk
Louth Academy	enquiries@louthacademy.co.uk
Kirton Academy	enquiries@kirtonacademy.co.uk
Reynolds Academy	enquiries@reynoldsacademy.co.uk
Pilgrim Academy	enquiries@pilgrimacademy.co.uk
Theddlethorpe Academy	enquiries@theddlethorpeacademy.co.uk
Waltham Gateway Academy	enquiries@walthamgatewayacademy.co.uk
Scartho Gateway Academy	enquiries@scarthogatewayacademy.co.uk
Kidgate Academy	enquiries@kidgateacademy.co.uk

If your complaint is regarding the Principal, the CEO or a member of the governing body, please return this form to: enquiries@lincolnshiregateway.co.uk.

1. Complainant name:

Pupil/student's name (if applicable):

Your relationship to the pupil/student (if applicable):

Address:

Postcode:

Daytime telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

2. Please give details of your complaint:

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

3. What action has been taken by you or the Academy so far to try and resolve your complaint? (Please include who you have spoken to/contacted by email, etc with their response.)

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

4. What resolution are you looking for as a result of this complaint? What action do you wish the Academy/Trust to take?

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

5. Please give details of any further paperwork you are including.

Signature:

Date:

Official use only

Date acknowledgement sent:
By whom?

Complaint referred to:
Date:



Formal Procedure Stage 2

COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete this form if you are not satisfied with the response from Stage 1.
Please return the completed form to Lincolnshire Gateway Academies Trust,
enquiries@lincolnshiregateway.co.uk.

1. Complainant name:

Pupil/student's name (if applicable):

Your relationship to the pupil/student (if applicable):

Address:

Postcode:

Daytime telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

2. Please give details of your complaint:

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

3. What action has been taken following the Stage 1 process?

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

4. What resolution are you looking for as a result of this complaint? What action do you wish the Academy/Trust to take?

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

5. Please give details of any further paperwork you are including.

Signature:

Date:

Official use only

Date acknowledgement sent:
By whom?

Actions:

Formal Procedure Stage 3**COMPLAINT - REQUEST FOR A PANEL HEARING**

Please complete this form if you are not satisfied with the response from Stage 2.
Please return the completed form to the Governance Professional,
enquiries@lincolnshiregateway.co.uk.

1. Complainant name:

Pupil/student's name (if applicable):

Your relationship to the pupil/student (if applicable):

Address:

Postcode:

Daytime telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

2. Please give details of your complaint:

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

3. What action has been taken following the Stage 1 and Stage 2 processes?

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

4. What resolution are you looking for as a result of this complaint? What action do you wish the Academy/Trust to take?

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

5. Please give details of any further paperwork you are including.

Signature:

Date:

Official use only

Date acknowledgement sent:
By whom?

Actions: