



MARK
Education
Trust

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Policy document provenance

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Unless there are legislative or regulatory changes in the interim, this policy will be reviewed every three years.

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1. The trust's mission

MARK Education Trust's aim is to provide the best possible education for our students, preparing them for life in the 21st century, so they can stand equally alongside their peers, locally, nationally and globally. This is underpinned by an ambitious vision and clearly stated values.

2. The purpose of this policy

The trust's commitment to providing the very best education to all the students in all its schools includes welcoming any feedback about the education the trust provides as this enables the trust to improve. The trust recognises that at times, this feedback will not always be positive and could amount to a concern or complaint. This policy outlines how the trust deals with negative feedback, concerns and complaints. The Complaints Procedure in [Appendix A](#), explains how to raise a concern or make a complaint.

3. Guiding principles

All feedback, concerns and complaints will be dealt with in a straightforward, impartial, non-adversarial manner, and allow for a full and fair investigation. Confidentiality will be respected and an effective response with appropriate redress will be delivered.

Families are expected to engage with schools effectively and respectfully to support the two-way partnership between families and the school. The DfE supports this expectation. Any instances of parents or carers displaying inappropriate behaviour will be managed in a variety of ways as set out in the code of conduct for parents and carers (see [Appendix D](#)) which is also available to view on the trust's and each school's website. The trust will continue to provide the highest quality of education possible throughout.

In nearly all cases, communicating face to face, between the appropriate member of staff and parent/carer is the most effective way to address concerns or complaints. A good discussion, when all parties are listening to each other and seeking resolutions, will frequently be the most effective and quickest way of resolving issues.

4. Definitions

The difference between feedback, a concern and a complaint is defined as follows:

- Feedback may be defined as any comment or information provided in order to help the trust understand how its services are received and if necessary, could be improved.
- 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 any negative feedback, concern or complaint is resolved at the earliest possible stage. Most negative feedback and concerns can be resolved informally through established communication channels and without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. However, for any concern that cannot be resolved informally (stage 1), the complaints procedure should be followed.

If there is any difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, the PA to the Headteacher will refer you to a member of the school or trust's senior leadership team.

There are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the school or trust will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

5. Who can make a complaint

Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to the trust about any provision of facilities or services that is provided. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to suspension and exclusions or admissions: see table 1), the procedure described below will be used to resolve the complaint.

The trust will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher in discussion with the executive headteacher, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Concerns or complaints raised on social media will not receive a response unless raised through the complaints procedures as set out below.

Complaints should be submitted in the complainants' own words. Help in preparing a concern or complaint, can be provided: contact the school reception who will arrange for a member of staff to assist.

Complainants should consider that the use of AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini or similar) can be effective in helping organise thoughts and structure concerns or complaints clearly, however they have significant limitations and must be used with care. It could change the tone of the concern or complaint and therefore the nature of the relationship a complainant has with the school and risks obscuring the actual issue. Excessively repetitive, lengthy or AI generated submissions may be summarised by the school for the purpose of any resulting investigation.

Recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded will not be accepted by the school or trust.

6. Timescales

Complaints must be made within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. Complaints made outside of this time frame will be considered only if exceptional circumstances apply.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If this happens, you will be informed of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action against a school or the trust in relation to their complaint, the complaints procedure may be suspended until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Complaints made outside of term time will be considered to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If at any point the school or trust cannot meet the timescales set out in the complaint procedure, all parties will be contacted to explain and arrange new timescales.

7. Scope of the complaints procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by the trust, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed in the table below.

Area of concern	Relevant policy	Where to find the policy
Admissions	The trust's Admission's Policy	The school and trust's website
Exclusions and suspensions	The trust's Behaviour Policy Further information about raising concerns about a suspension or exclusion can be	The school and trust's website

	found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions .	
Whistleblowing	<p>The trust's Whistleblowing Policy</p> <p>NB The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about the school or trust should complain through the trust's complaints procedure.</p> <p>Complaints may also be possible direct to the local authority or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of the complaint.</p>	The trust's website
Safeguarding and child protection	The trust's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy	The school and trust's website
Staff grievance, conduct, capability, discipline	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the trust's HR policies; outcomes will not be shared with complainants	The trust's internal policy library
Special Educational Needs and Disability	Concerns about statutory assessments should be directed to the local authority	
Data Protection	Data Protection Complaint Process	https://www.rsimmonsltd.com/making-a-complaint
Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school or trust premises or facilities.	The school or trust will direct complainants to follow the external provider's own complaints procedure.	

8. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the school and trust want to resolve the complaint and if appropriate, there will be acknowledgement that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, one or more of the following may be offered:

- An explanation
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- An assurance that every effort will be made 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 or trust policies in light of the complaint
- An apology

9. Complaints campaigns

For the purposes of this policy, “complaints campaigns” are where the school or trust receives large numbers of complaints that are all based on the same subject. Where the school or trust becomes the subject of a complaints campaign from complainants who are not connected to the school or trust, a standard, single response will be published on the school or trust’s website.

10. Serial, vexatious and unreasonable complaints

The trust and its schools are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. The contact complainants have with the school or trust will not usually be limited. 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.

Unreasonable behaviour is that which hinders consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant’s contact, such as, if 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
- Submitting excessively long or repetitive or AI generated complaints, and the refusal to consider a more proportionate submission
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- 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 Department for Education
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Makes excessive demands on school or trust time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- Uses threats to intimidate
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- Knowingly provides falsified information
- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school or trust to that which relates to their complaint, while the 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 executive headteacher, headteacher or chair of the trust will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the complainant will be written to explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask for it to be changed. For complainants who make excessive contact and so cause a significant level of disruption, a communication plan outlining specific methods of communication and limited contacts may be implemented. This will be reviewed after six months.

Any serious incident of aggression or violence will result in the police being informed and actions (which may include barring from school or trust premises) will be communicated in writing.

11. Withdrawal of a complaint

A complaint can be withdrawn at any point in the process, but if it is a formal complaint (i.e. a complaint in writing), confirmation in writing will be sought.

12. The complaints procedure and further recourse

The trust's procedure is described in [Appendix A](#). The DfE expects complainants to have completed the trust's complaints procedure before directing a complaint to them. If the complainant believes that their complaint has not been handled in accordance with this published procedure or that the trust has acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, after stage 3 has concluded, the complainant may contact the DfE.

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the school or trust. They will consider whether education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint have been adhered to, and whether they have followed, as set out in [Part 7 of the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

The complainant can refer the complaint to the DfE online at: [Complaints procedure - Department for Education - GOV.UK](#), by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to: Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit, Education and Skills Funding Agency, Cheylesmore House, 5 Quinton Road, Coventry CV1 2WT

13. Policy monitoring and review

A summary complaints report is provided to the board of trustees annually. The effectiveness of this policy is monitored via the annual report, with a full policy review every three years.

Appendix A: Complaints procedure

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

Any general concerns or queries about your child should in the first instance be raised with either the tutor, Head of Year, Assistant Head of Year or subject teacher.

Unresolved issues which amount to a complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. It may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so. Complainants are encouraged to complete the complaints form ([Appendix B](#)) as this will allow the trust or school to establish the nature of the complaint and the resolution sought by the complainant.

The nature of the concern or complaint will determine to whom the concern or complaint should be addressed as described in table 1.

Table 1			
Nature of complaint		Addressed to	Send
1	Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher)	Should in the first instance be made to your child's headteacher, marked Private and Confidential	Via the PA to the Headteacher: Beacon Academy Uplands Academy Hailsham Academy
2	Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher	Should be addressed to the chair of the Local Governing Committee (LGC), marked Private and Confidential	Via the trust's governance manager
3	Complaints about the chair of the LGC, any individual who sits on the LGC or the LGC itself	Should be addressed to the governance professional, marked Private and Confidential	Via the trust's governance manager
4	Complaints about the executive headteacher, CEO or a trustee of the trust	Should be addressed to the chair of trustees, marked Private and Confidential	Via the trust's governance manager
5	Complaints about the chair of the trust	Should be addressed to the vice chair or the governance professional, marked Private and Confidential	Via the trust's governance manager
6	Other complaints	Should in the first instance be made to the headteacher of the school in question, marked Private and Confidential	Via the PA to the Headteacher: Beacon Academy Uplands Academy Hailsham Academy

In accordance with equality law, if required, reasonable adjustments will be considered 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.

Stage 1 – Informal

The aim is that most negative feedback, concerns and complaints are resolved on an informal basis. The headteacher will investigate the issue and report back with an informal response within five school days.

In order to prevent any later challenge or disagreement over what was said, brief notes of meetings and telephone calls are kept and a copy of any written response is added to the record. These records will be kept securely on the school or trust's ICT system.

Complainants should not approach individual Local Governing Committee (LGC) members or trustees as 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.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to move to stage 2.

Stage 2 – Formal

1. If the issue is unresolved informally, a request to escalate to stage 2 (formal) must be made within five school days of receipt of the stage 1 response.
2. Formal complaints must be made to the appropriate person – see table 1. The complaints form ([Appendix B](#)) must be completed; if necessary, the schools PA to Headteacher can help with this.
3. The PA to Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days. Within this response will be acknowledgement of the nature of the complaint, what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see.
4. In most cases the starting point will be a face-to-face meeting to explore all avenues and determine if the complaint can be resolved.
5. Where reasonable attempts have been made to accommodate the complainant with dates and time for a complaint meeting and the complainant refuses to or is unable to attend, the meeting will be convened in their absence and a conclusion will be reached in the interests of drawing the complaint to a close.
6. If necessary, the complaint will be investigated. The investigation may be delegated to a member of the senior leadership team or to an independent investigator; however, any decision rests with the person to whom the complaint is addressed.
7. During the investigation, the investigator will:
 - If necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
 - Keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation
 - Not express opinions in words or attitude, so as not to influence the interviewee
 - Ensure students interviewed are fully aware of what the interview concerns and their right to have someone with them, and will conduct the interview in the presence of another member of staff or, in the case of serious complaints, e.g. where the possibility of criminal investigation exists, in the presence of their parents/carers
 - Allow staff to be accompanied by a colleague not involved in the complaint to support them
 - Ensure a friendly and relaxed environment which is free from intimidation.
8. At the conclusion of the investigation, a formal written response will be provided within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the written complaint.
9. If the complaint is complex and results in this timescale being unable to be met, a revised response date will be agreed this with the complainant.
10. The response will detail how the complaint was investigated and provide a full explanation of any resulting decisions made, with reasons. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school or trust will take to resolve the complaint and advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

Stage 3 – Panel meeting

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, the complaint can be escalated to stage 3 of the process. A panel meeting will be convened that will be made

up of three trustees or local governors, and at least one panel member will be independent of the management and running of the trust and school.

Stage 3 is the **final stage** of the trust’s complaints procedure.

1. A request to escalate to stage 3 must be made to the trust’s governance manager ([email here](#)), within five school days of receipt of the stage 2 response.
2. The governance professional will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days. Requests received outside of this time frame will be considered only if exceptional circumstances apply.
3. The governance professional will liaise with the complainant to arrange a mutually convenient date for the panel meeting to be held, within 15 school days of receipt of the stage 3 request.
4. If the initial date agreed for the panel meeting is subsequently rejected by the complainant, the governance professional will offer two further dates and/or times for it to be rearranged, subject to the availability of the panel members. If the complainant rejects both the alternative dates, then the panel chair, in collaboration with the governance professional, will decide when to hold the meeting. The meeting will then proceed in the complainant’s absence on the basis of the written submissions from both the complainant and the school or trust, and with neither party present.
5. It is the preference that panel meetings are held in person. However, in the interests of drawing the complaint to a close, the complainant may request that the meeting be held remotely (via an online meeting platform), but this will only be agreed at the discretion of the panel.
6. The panel will be made up of three people as follows in table 2:

Nature of complaint		Panel members
1	Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher or other member of staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An LGC member 2. A trustee or LGC member from another school 3. An independent panel member
2	Complaints about the chair of the LGC, or any individual governor who sits on the LGC or the LGC itself	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An LGC member from another school 2. A trustee 3. An independent panel member
3	Complaints about the executive headteacher, CEO, chair of the trust, another trustee or the trust itself	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An independent panel member 2. An independent panel member 3. An independent panel member
4	Other complaints	Will vary according to the nature of the complaint but will include an independent panel member.

7. The complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Legal representatives are not encouraged except in exceptional circumstances. However, if an employee is called as a witness, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.
8. As soon as the date for the panel meeting has been agreed, the governance professional will:
 - Confirm in writing the date, time and venue of the meeting, and if necessary that any special arrangements have been made
 - Request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the panel at least seven school days before the meeting so that these can be circulated to all parties at least five school days before the date of the meeting. Please note that 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.

9. The panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider any additional evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. Any new complaints must be dealt with from stage 1 of the procedure.
10. The panel meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings are **not** permitted. Minutes will be taken and can be provided to you as a record of the meeting.
11. The panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The meeting will be structured as follows:
 - The chair will make introductions and explain how the meeting will work
 - The complainant will outline the nature of their complaint
 - The school or trust is invited to ask questions
 - The panel asks questions
 - The school or trust outlines the actions they have taken to address the complaint
 - The complainant is invited to ask questions
 - The panel asks questions
 - The school or trust sums up
 - The complainant sums up
 - The panel accompanied only by the governance professional withdraw to deliberate
12. The panel 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, the panel will:

- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
 - Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school or trust’s systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future
13. The panel chair will provide the complainant and school and/or the trust with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within five school days of the meeting. The response will also detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school or trust will take to resolve the complaint. The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about.
 14. A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel meeting, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.
 15. All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.
 16. Timescales for acknowledgement and responses are set out in table 3 below.

Table 3		
Stage	Acknowledgement	Response timescale
Stage 1 – informal		5 school days of the date of receipt of negative feedback, concern or complaint

Stage 2 – formal	5 school days of the date the complaint was received	15 school days of the date the written complaint was received
Stage 3 – panel	5 school days of the date the complaint was received Meeting within 15 school days of the date the issue was escalated to stage 3	Within 5 school days of the meeting

Appendix B: Complaints form

For help completing this form, contact the school office.

To whom the complaint is addressed
Your name
Student's name and date of birth (if relevant)
Your relationship to the student (if relevant)
Address
Postcode
Phone number
Email address
Please give details of your complaint
Please detail who you have spoken to at the school or the trust about your complaint, and when, and what the outcome was
Please detail what you want to happen to resolve your complaint
If you are attaching any paperwork, please give details here
Signature:
Date:
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent
By who
Complaint referred to
Action taken
Date

Appendix C: Roles and Responsibilities

The PA to the Headteacher

The PA to the Headteacher will:

- Ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- Liaise with staff and the trust's governance professional as appropriate to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- Be aware of issues regarding:
 - Sharing third party information
 - Additional support e.g. help with completing the complaints form or interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- Keep records

The governance professional

The trust's governance manager handles stage three complaints and can be contacted via email [here](#). The governance professional is impartial and provides the primary point of contact and is responsible for communication between all parties in the process (the school or trust, the complainant and the panel) and administers the process.

Trustees and local governors

Trustees and LGC members commit to sitting on panels when appropriate. As a minimum they will have undertaken the National Governance Association (NGA) Learning Link training module on hearing complaints or Governor Hub Knowledge online module "Suspensions and Exclusions".

Complainant

The person making the complaint is referred to as the complainant. The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- Explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- Work together with the school or trust in seeking a solution to the complaint
- Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- Refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality

Investigator

The Investigator may be another member of staff, a member of the senior leadership team, or may be an independent person experienced in carrying out investigations who has been commissioned to undertake the investigation. The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:

- Sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened, who has been involved and clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- Interviewing staff and students and other people relevant to the complaint
- Consideration of records and other relevant information
- Analysing information

The investigator should:

- Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- Keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- Ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- Be mindful of the timescales to respond
- Prepare a comprehensive report that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and if appropriate, recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The panel chair

The panel chair, who is nominated in advance of a stage 3 complaint hearing, should ensure that:

- Both parties are asked (via the governance professional) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting.
- The meeting is structured but is conducted in as informal a manner as possible, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy.
- Complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the person speaking is a child/young person.
- The remit of the panel is explained to the complainant.
- Written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy. If a new issue arises a short adjournment of the meeting should be considered to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it.
- Both the complainant and the school or trust are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or orally in the meeting itself.
- The issues are addressed and key findings of fact are made.
- The panel is open-minded and acts independently.
- No member of the panel has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure.
- The meeting is minuted.
- They liaise with the governance professional clerk

Panel members

Panel members should be aware that:

- The meeting must be independent and impartial and should be seen to be so. No local governor or trustee may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint, or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school or trust and the complainant. Even if the outcome does not find in the complainant's favour and the complainant is not satisfied, the panel will aim to establish the facts and make any appropriate recommendations.
- Many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting and parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- Extra care needs to be taken if a child/young person is present during all or part of the meeting. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated. The panel should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

- If the child/young person is the complainant, the panel should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend. However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the panel considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.
- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

Appendix D: Code of Conduct for Parents and Carers

1. The trust's mission

MARK Education Trust's aim is to provide the best possible education for our students, preparing them for life in the 21st century, so they can stand equally alongside their peers, locally, nationally and globally. This is underpinned by an ambitious vision and clearly stated values.

The purpose of this code of conduct

In order to foster strong and respectful relationships and sustain safe, purposeful and happy environments in and around the trust's schools, this code of conduct outlines how parents and carers are expected to work alongside the trust's schools.

2. Supporting the trust's values

Everyone associated with the trust is expected to support the trust's guiding values and the expectation that everyone will 'Make their MARK' via the trust's Manners, Acceptance, Respect and Kindness ethos.

3. Raising issues

Families are expected to engage with our schools effectively and respectfully to support the two-way partnership between families and the school. It is understood that parents and carers raising any issues in relation to their child or children can be emotive, but parents and carers are encouraged to express any concerns they may have as soon as possible so that they can be resolved swiftly and in a constructive manner through an open and positive dialogue. However, no matter how emotive the issues, when interacting with the trust or any of its schools, parents and carers are expected to observe this code of conduct. Parents and carers who remain unsatisfied with the trust or school's response can complain in line with the trust's complaints policy and procedure which can be found on the trust and school website.

4. MARK Education Trust expects parents and carers to:

- a) Support the trust's values and reflect its ethos by:
 - Ensuring that their children are adhering to behaviour policies, including uniform, and equipment.
 - Ensuring their child's regular and punctual attendance at school; avoiding term-time holidays, arriving on time each day, recognising the strong link between attendance, wellbeing, and achievement.
 - Engaging proactively with the school regarding attendance; responding to communication, providing timely and appropriate information and working collaboratively with the school where attendance concerns are identified.
 - Setting a good example to students through their own behaviour and the way they interact with staff, students and other adults.
 - Managing their child's behaviour appropriately, particularly on school grounds where it could otherwise lead to conflict or aggressive or unsafe behaviour.
 - Respecting the trust's schools' property and environment by keeping it clean and tidy and by expecting the same from their children.
 - Adhering to procedures regarding driving and parking when dropping off and collecting students; this includes respecting local residents' access to their properties.
 - Where appropriate, clarifying with the school their child's version of events, to establish the facts to bring about a peaceful and swift solution to any issue.
 - Working collaboratively and respectfully with staff for the benefit of their child or children.
 - Understanding that schools are required to work within guidelines defined by external bodies, for instance those set out within the SEND Local Offer.

- Ensuring responsible use of AI. Excessively long AI generated communications can change the tone of the relationship families have with the school and risks obscuring the actual issue.
- b) Report safeguarding concerns without delay:
- Issues raised during school hours will be addressed in accordance with the trust’s Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
 - Issues arising outside of school hours and in the school holidays should be reported to the police in the first instance.
 - Contact staff via email in the first instance with:
 - A brief outline of the concern and to request a follow up call or meeting to discuss the matter in more detail and in collaboration with staff.
 - Consideration about the frequency, length and tone of communication.
 - An understanding that staff will endeavour to respond to any concerns in a timely way.

5. MARK Education Trust will not tolerate any of the following:

- a) Inappropriate behaviour such as:
- Using foul, abusive, offensive, racist, misogynistic or sexual language.
 - Inappropriately raised voices.
 - Bullying, harassment, abusive or threatening intimidation, including online, via email, phone or in person.
 - Physical intimidation including using aggressive hand gestures.
 - Displaying disruptive or other inappropriate behaviours which interferes or threatens to interfere with any of trust or school operations or activities.
 - Writing or posting abusive, offensive or defamatory comments about an individual, the trust or the schools, including on social media.
 - Dressing inappropriately.
 - Smoking, vaping or the use of drugs on trust or school premises.
 - Drinking alcohol on school premises, unless it has been authorised and supplied by the trust or a school during a planned school event.
 - Sending excessively long, repeated and vexatious AI generated communications.
- b) Breaching safety and security such as:
- Driving unsafely in or around the schools or ignoring parking and drop off / collection rules.
 - Trespassing on school properties without prior permission or implied licence.
 - Causing intentional damage to school or staff or student property.
 - Breaching school security or safeguarding procedures.
 - Taking photographs or videos on school premises without permission from the school.
- c) Discrimination against any member of the trust, its schools and their communities, including students, staff, trustees and other parents.

6. Consequences

Any instances of parents or carers breaching this code of conduct may result in:

- Restricting or redirecting the parent or carer’s channels of communication to the school.
- Barring the parent from the school premises.
- Contacting the police.
- Seeking legal redress through the courts.
- Reporting content the parent has posted online to the website’s admin.

- Referring the case to the local authority.

7. Agreement to comply with the code of conduct

Parents and carers who accept a place at a MARK Education Trust school for their child are sent a copy of this code of conduct and are expected to adhere to it.