



Academy Complaints Policy External Stakeholders

Responsible:	Principal
Responsible Committee:	Teaching & Learning
Implementation Date:	April 2016
Review Date	October 2020
Date of Next Review:	October 2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, by a legitimate stakeholder involved in the Global Academy but not being employed at the Academy or part of the Governing Body. This policy reflects The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
- 1.2. There is a difference between a concern and a complaint. A concern will become a complaint when:
 - There is a serious concern that cannot be resolved in an informal way through the preliminary discussion.
 - Where a concern is strong enough to require the use of a formal procedure e.g. the health and safety of students is perceived to be at risk.
- 1.3. If the concern becomes a complaint then it must follow a sequential formal process as outlined in this policy
- 1.4. Complaints could be about, but are not limited to:
 - The standard of teaching
 - The conduct, actions or omissions of members of the support or teaching staff employed at the Global Academy
 - Bullying
 - Discrimination
 - Academy environment.
- 1.5. The Global Academy considers all concerns/complaints very seriously. It is important that concerns/complaints are notified as soon as is possible to the Academy before problems escalate.
- 1.6. In order for concerns/complaints to be dealt with efficiently, it is desirable for there to be a clearly identifiable contact, however there are some circumstances where a concern/complaint may be made anonymously. All anonymous complaints will be left to the Principal's discretion to decide whether the gravity of an anonymous complaint warrants its investigation.
- 1.7. It is widely accepted as good practice that every effort should be made to resolve concerns by informal means. However, complainants should be informed that formal procedures are available in certain circumstances should they feel that their concerns cannot be resolved informally. The investigation of any complaint will be kept confidential at all stages and any papers provided to those investigating, or adjudicating on complaints will be marked confidential and destroyed, except for the file copy which itself will be confidential.

2. Preliminary Discussion

- 2.1. If a parent or guardian has a concern, they should raise the concern either verbally or in writing with the relevant member of staff or, if more appropriate, their Line Manager as soon as possible. The Global Academy staff will acknowledge the correspondence within 24 hours and

respond to the concern within 5 working days either electronically, or verbally. This may be extended during Academy holiday dates.

3. Informal Stage 1 - Complaint to Senior Leadership

- 3.1. If the parent or guardian is dissatisfied with the outcome of the preliminary discussion, or the concern is of a very serious nature which affects the health and safety of students at the Global Academy, then an email or letter should be sent to the relevant Senior Leader Director/Assistant Principal. The Global Academy Director will acknowledge the correspondence within 24 hours and respond to the concern within 5 working days either electronically, or verbally, following a thorough investigation using the Academy forms (appendix 1). This may be extended during Academy holiday dates. The Office Manager will log the complaint.

4. Formal Stage 2 - Complaint to the Principal

- 4.1. If the complainant wishes to take the matter further, he/she should write formally to the Principal, setting out the complaint and the reasons why the actions taken at the *Preliminary Discussions* and *Informal Stage 1* are regarded as unsatisfactory.
- 4.2. The Principal will acknowledge the correspondence within 24 hours and invite the complainant into the Academy to discuss the issues within 5 working days. Within 5 days of discussing the complaint, the Principal will respond in writing with the outcome of any investigation, reporting any action taken. The Office Manager will log the complaint.

5. Formal Stage 3 - Complaint to the Chair of Governors

- 5.1. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the process, he/she should write formally to the Chair of Governors, setting out the complaint and the reasons why the actions taken at the *Preliminary Discussions*, *Informal Stage 1* and *Formal Stage 2* are regarded as unsatisfactory.
- 5.2. The Chair of Governors will convene a panel to consider the complaint within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint. The panel will consist of 3 members, all of whom will have not previously have been involved with the complaint. At least one of the panel members will be independent of the management and running of The Global Academy.
- 5.3. The complainant will be invited to meet the panel in person to put forward their case. Parents may choose to be accompanied but must advise the Chair of Governors who they wish to invite in advance.
- 5.4. Once the panel has concluded their view, a letter will be sent to the complainant stating the outcome, and any recommendation, within 5 working days.
- 5.5. *The Governor panel decision is final*

6. Education Funding Agency (EFA)

- 6.1. If, after following all the steps outlined in this policy, the complainant is not satisfied with the way in which The Global Academy has dealt with the complaint, they can complain to the Education Funding Agency (EFA). All relevant documentation should be sent with the complaint.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure>

7. Presence of students at formal and informal meetings concerning complaints

- 7.1. An important purpose of the Academy is to provide a high standard of education and pastoral care for all its students. However, it is unlikely that the resolution of a complaint within these guidelines will be assisted by the presence of students at any meeting between the Director, Principal or other staff and the complainant. A meeting which required the presence of a student would only be one at which confidential matters or issues relating to named members of staff were not discussed. Senior staff are advised to consult parents if their child is required to clarify facts concerning a complaint and ensure that students do not participate in a discussion where they might witness confrontations between adults.

8. Complaints about the Principal

- 8.1. These should be made in writing to the Chair of Governors for initial consideration, addressed to the Clerk to the Governors at the Global Academy address. He/she will decide whether to deal with it personally, or convene a Sub-Committee of the Governors.

9. Complaints made directly to the governing body

- 9.1. The Trust is responsible for the overall conduct of the Academy and is the employer of all staff in the Academy. In the event of complaints being received by the Trust from parents and others, Governors should have regard to the following: After discussion with the Principal, the Chair of the Governors must be sure that all the processes outlined in these guidelines have been exhausted and the complaint is still unresolved. If all the procedures have not been followed, then the complaint will be referred to the Principal for action as above. If the procedures have been followed and the complainant remains dissatisfied, the Chair of Governors may decide to deal with the complaint whether personally or by a Sub-committee of the Governors. The complainant will then be clearly informed, as soon as is practicable, by the Chair, of the decision.

10. Records of Complaints

- 10.1. Copies of the complaint and the response from the Vice Principal/Principal/Chair of Governors must be kept in the complaints file, held by the Office Manager. These records will be kept confidential to the Principal, Inspectors and the Secretary of State. Only information about the number of formal complaints in a previous academic year can be released to interested parties.

11 Unreasonable and/or persistent serial complaints

The school is committed to dealing with complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality service to those who do complain. However, we do not expect our staff to accept unreasonable complaints. A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to cooperate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.

A complaint will be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so face-to-face, by telephone, in writing or electronically in a way that could be described as:

- Maliciously.
- Aggressively, using threats, intimidation or violence.
- Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language.
- Knowing it to be false.
- Using falsified information.
- By publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers.

Where aggression or abusive behaviour has been used, the school may have to:

- Ask them to leave the school premises.
- Inform the police.
- If necessary, bar them from being on school premises. The school will give the complainant the opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing. The decision to bar should then be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the complainant and either confirmed or lifted. If the bar is confirmed, the complainant will be given an explanation as to how long the bar will be in place (usually six months).

Serial or persistent complaints

We do not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school but it is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent or repeated requests for meetings are made while a complaint is being progressed.

Such situations may occur when the complainant:

- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and/or by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.
- 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 school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome

Where complainants excessively contact the school, causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after six months.



Appendix 1

Complaints Procedure Flowchart

