

## **Steiner Academy Hereford**

### **Complaints Policy and Procedures.**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Steiner Academy Hereford (SAH) aims to provide high quality teaching and pastoral care to its pupils and good communication with parents/carers. However, if a parent/carer does have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated with due care and respect by the Academy. This policy will describe the procedure to follow if a parent/carer has a complaint which needs to be heard.
- 1.2 The Academy is ultimately accountable to the Board of Governors in the management of Complaints.
- 1.3 For general questions or concerns, please use the 'Sharing Concerns' advice which can be found in the Parents Handbook, or pick up a leaflet from reception. Should your concern not be dealt with to your satisfaction you should then escalate your concern to a complaint using the processes set out in this policy.
- 1.4 Parents/carers can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where disclosure is required in the course of the Academy's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails. If the complaint is about a member of staff, this person has a right to know the nature of the complaint and how the Academy deals with it.
- 1.5 Although not designed specifically for academies, SAH has taken into account certain aspects of the guidance offered by the DfE within their document "Best Practice Advice for Schools Complaints Procedures 2016". The DfE provide a useful explanation of 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 generally defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*'.

The DfE also advise that it is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally.

- 1.6 In brief, there are 3 stages to the complaints procedure,

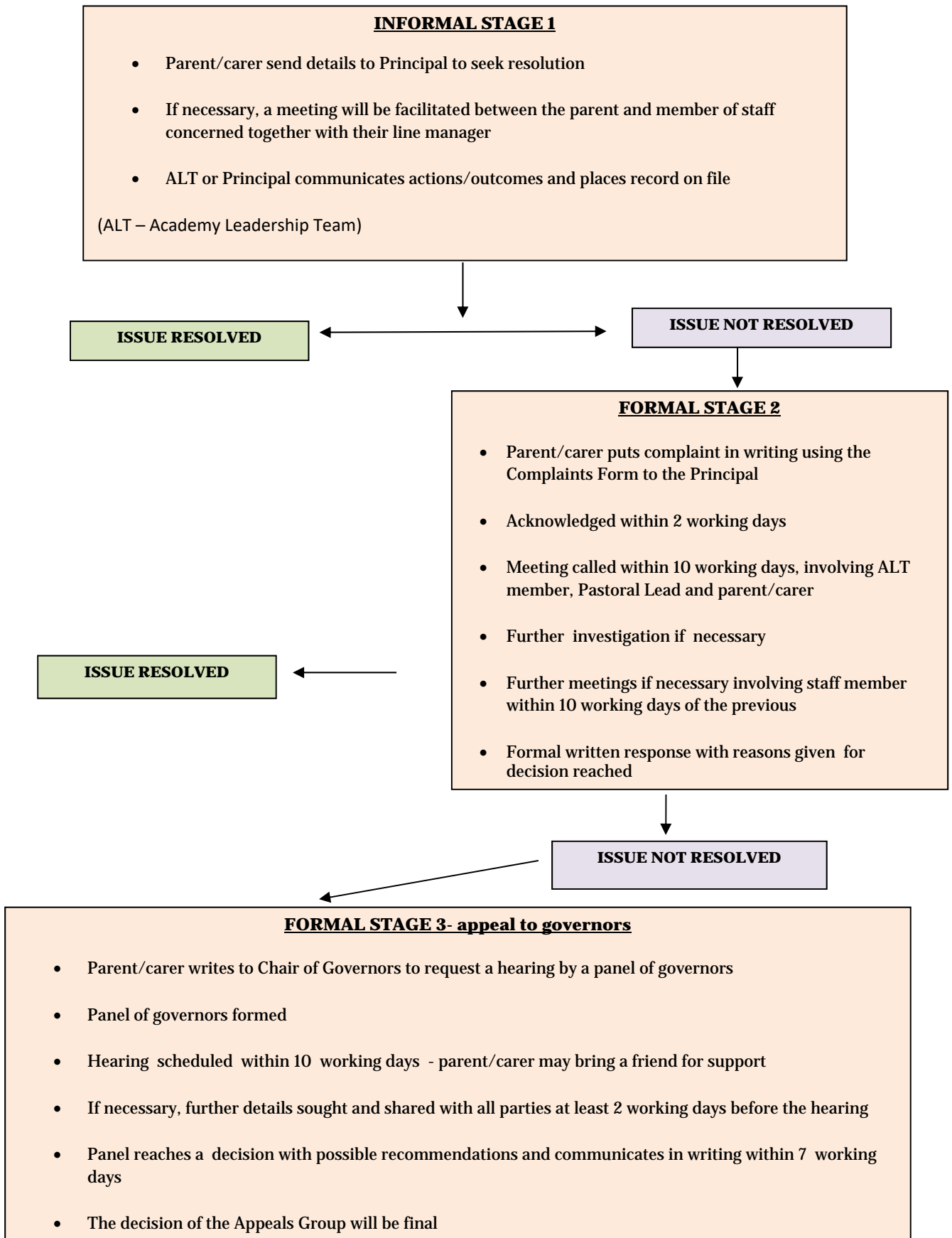
Stage 1 - the Informal Stage,

Stage 2 - the Formal Resolution Stage and

Stage 3 - the Appeal to Governors.

2. **Summative Flow Chart of the 3 Stages**

2.1 Flowchart



### **3. The Complaints Process**

#### **3.1 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

The Academy will endeavour to resolve complaints quickly and informally following the procedure set out below:

- 3.1.1 If you feel you have a complaint, please details to the Principal. A record of your complaint and how it is processed will be kept on file as described below.
- 3.1.2 During term time, every effort will be made to acknowledge the receipt of your communication within 2 working days.
- 3.1.3 The Principal will attempt to find a resolution to the complaint but if a member of staff is the subject of the complaint a facilitated meeting between the complainant and the member of staff will be convened to try to arrive at a resolution. Written and signed records of meetings will be kept on file.
- 3.1.4 Once information has been shared and discussed, verbal then written confirmation of any actions/outcomes will be communicated to all parties.
- 3.1.5 If the parties concerned fail to reach a satisfactory resolution by informal means, the parent/carer will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 – the formal complaints procedure described below.

#### **3.2 Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

- 3.2.1 The parent/carer should put their complaint in writing to the Principal. The Complaints Form should be used if possible, (from the Parents Handbook or copies available from reception) to ensure appropriate information is shared. Contact details, a brief outline of the problem and what action, if any, has been taken to try to resolve the matter should be included as well as how you would like the matter resolved. Any relevant paperwork should be attached and a copy kept for reference.

If the complainant has a communication preferences due to disability or learning difficulties, SAH will allow alternative methods of contact which may include raising the complaint in person or by telephone, etc.

##### **3.2.2 If the complaint is about the Principal:**

- a) The parent/carer should address the complaint to the Chair of Governors.

##### **3.2.3 If the complaint is about a Governor:**

- a) The parent/carer should address the complaint to the Chair of Governors.
- b) The Academy will make every effort to acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 2 working days to let the parent/carer know that the matter is in hand
- c) An initial meeting with the parent/carer, members of ALT or the governing body and the Pastoral Lead as appropriate will be offered within a maximum of 10 working days
- d) The Pastoral Lead will manage the process and call the meeting/s. All participants will see records of meetings at which they are present and be asked to sign them as accurate, a copy will be given to the parent/carer. It may be necessary to conduct some further investigation into the situation that has given rise to the complaint. Communication to the parent/carer as a result of this will be made as soon as possible

- e) Any further meetings must be agreed by both parties and should take place as soon as possible and within 10 working days of the previous one
- f) Once the Parent/Carer and ALT/Governors, Pastoral Lead are satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made by the school. The parent/carers will be informed of this decision in writing with reasons for the decision within 5 days of the last meeting. Any verbal decision will be confirmed in writing
- g) If the parents/carers are still not satisfied with the decision/situation, they will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 3 of the formal complaints procedure as described below.

### **3.3 Stage 3 –Appeal to the Governors**

- 3.3.1 If a parent/carers still feels the matter has not reached an appropriate resolution, they can write to the Chair of Governors to request a review, giving details of their complaint and why they believe it is not yet resolved. A date will then be set for a hearing by panel of governors, so long as this request for a review has been received in writing within 20 school days of the date on the letter notifying the parents of the outcome of the investigation into their formal complaint.
- 3.3.2 Members of the Governors Appeals Panel will be shared with the parent/carers to ensure there is no conflict of interest or other concern.
- 3.3.3 The Appeals Panel will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 working days.
- 3.3.4 The Appeals Panel will have secretarial support to minute the hearing and notify all parties of the outcome as directed by the chair of the appointed group. Records will be filed as described.
- 3.3.5 If the chair of the Appeals Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 2 full working days prior to the hearing.
- 3.3.6 The parent/carers may choose to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher/member of staff or friend.
- 3.3.7 The aim of the Hearing will give an opportunity for both the parent/carers and managers to state their case to an independent panel.
- 3.3.8 If possible, the Governors Appeals Panel will decide on a response to the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Appeals Group will decide how it should be carried out.
- 3.3.9 After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Governors Appeals Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, as soon as possible and at the latest within 7 working days of the hearing. The Appeals Panel will write to the parent/carers, informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. Copies will be sent to the Principal, the Chair of the Governors and, where relevant, the person at whom the complaint was directed.
- 3.3.10 The decision of the Appeals Panel will be final.

- 3.3.11 Any Action Plans to amend practice subsequent to recommendations from the Appeals Panel or from the Principal directly will be shared with the school community through the usual channels

4. **The Pastoral Lead (PL)**

- 4.1 Will be the nominated person responsible for seeing that this policy and the procedures therein and the decisions reached are managed and monitored effectively. The PL will give due consideration to the processes outlined in this policy.
- 4.2 Role and effectiveness of the PL will be reviewed annually.
- 4.3 Will be informed of all complaints from the informal stage onwards.
- 4.4 Will ensure that any meetings which take place at any stage of this procedure have appropriate representation for both parent/carer and Academy needs, with due consideration given to possible relational difficulties.
- 4.5 Will be responsible for progressing the complaint and taking it, or information relating to it, to the Principal or the Governors if appropriate, respecting due process and confidentiality Relevant information will also be shared at College of Teachers meetings at the end of the process.
- 4.6 Will be responsible for reporting to the parent/carer, ensuring a decision is reached and if it is not, explaining the next step in the process.
- 4.7 Will be responsible for communicating appropriately between parties and keeping records of dates/meetings etc.

5. **Complaints Records**

- 5.1 The Academy will keep a confidential and secure file where each complaint will be listed with the date it was first brought to the attention of the Academy. Records for each complaint will include:
- a) The nature of the complaint
  - b) A log of meetings/communications/letters and names of participants
  - c) Whether resolved and at which stage
  - d) A record with comments of the final outcome
  - e) If appropriate, a note referring to this information file will be placed in the pupil file
  - f) A log of complaints should be kept and reports should be presented to all full Board meetings and to the preceding ALT meeting.

6. **The Governors Appeals Panel**

- 6.1 This group will consist of at least three (max 5) persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one member of the panel must be independent of the management and running of the academy.
- 6.2 Each of the Appeals Panel members will be appointed by the Governors and should not have been involved at an earlier stage of the process in order to play an impartial role. The panel will make themselves conversant with policy and procedures and the Academy's procedures relative to the complaint being made.

7. **Circulation.**

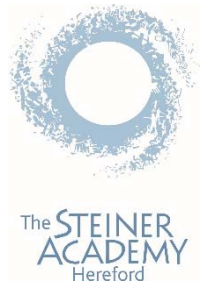
- 7.1 This policy will be shared with all staff and available on request to parents/carers and prospective parents. It may also be accessed through the school's website. Updates will be published for the parents/carers via the Friday Flier.

**Steiner Academy Hereford**

**Complaints Form; Annex 1**

**Please complete and return to the Principal**

**(School can arrange to do this for you if necessary)**



The person who experienced the problem should normally fill in this form. If you are making a complaint on behalf of someone else please indicate on this form. Please note that before taking forward the complaint we will need to be satisfied that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person concerned. If you are a pupil the school will help you complete this form, will explain it to you and will give you a copy of it when it is completed.

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Pupil's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your relationship to the pupil: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Day time telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Evening telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide a complete description / explanation of the complaint, including the date of the incident on which the complaint is based, names of students or others responsible or involved in the incident, names of witnesses, and all other relevant facts. Please attach additional papers as needed.

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.

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Who did you speak to and what was the response?

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What specific remedy or corrective actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage ?

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What would a positive outcome look like for you ?

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Are you attaching any paperwork ? If so, please give details. \_\_\_\_\_

Signed:

Date:

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For office use:

Date received:

By whom:

Date acknowledgement sent:

Stage of Complaint: