
Darlinghurst Academy



Complaints Policy

February 2024

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1. Introduction

Legra Academy Trust values good home/academy relationships. We seek to resolve any concerns or complaints promptly, and to the satisfaction of all concerned. It is the academy's policy to ensure that any concerns expressed by parents/carers and others about the academy curriculum and related matters will be dealt with initially in informal discussion with the appropriate member of staff at the academy.

We welcome feedback on what parents feel we do well, or not so well, as an academy. We will consider carefully all feedback, whether positive or negative, and will review our policies and practices accordingly. We will treat all concerns and complaints seriously and courteously and will advise parents/carers and others of the academy's procedures for dealing with their concerns. In return, we expect parents/carers and other complainants to behave respectfully towards all members of the academy community. In particular, any disagreement with the academy should not be expressed inappropriately or in front of pupils.

All academy staff, teaching and operational; and members of the Governing Body, will be aware of this policy statement and will be familiar with the academy's procedures for dealing with parental concerns and complaints.

The academy's procedures will be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary. If there are cases which cannot be resolved informally, arrangements do exist to consider formal complaints. For further details, please see below.

2. Procedure

Parents of pupils attending an academy within Legra Academy Trust:

As mentioned above, the procedure is to speak to the child's form class teacher in the first instance to arrange an appointment to discuss your complaint with the relevant person. If necessary, the issue may be referred to the Vice Principal to resolve.

Members of the public:

Members of the public should make a complaint using the following methods:

- write to the PA to the Principal via enquiries@darlinghurstacademy.org.uk
- email your concern through the enquiry form on the academy website FAO PA to the Principal.

Legra Academy Trust aim to respond to public complaints within 2 working days of receipt.

For parents of pupils attending Darlington Academy, the procedure is divided into three stages:

Stage 1: The academy will aim to resolve the concern through informal contact at the appropriate level in academy within 2 working days of receiving the complaint. If the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made at this stage, they must then put their complaint in writing as outlined in stage 2.

Stage 2: This is the first formal stage where written complaints are considered by the Principal. For a stage 2 complaint, please write to the PA of the Principal via enquiries@darlingtonacademy.org.uk. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint and how it has been handled so far.

The Principal considers written complaints very seriously and investigates each case thoroughly. Stage 2 complaints will be dealt with within 10 working days of receipt of the letter and a written response will be provided. Most complaints are normally resolved at this stage.

Stage 3: This is the next step once Stage 2 is complete and should be carried out only if the complaint made at Stage 2 fails to resolve the matter. In the unlikely case that the dispute remains unresolved at Stage 2, a complaint must then be made in writing, to the Chair of the Governing Body. This letter can be delivered to the academy reception or emailed FAO Chair of Governing Body, via enquiries@darlingtonacademy.org.uk. This will then be passed to the Chair of Governors. The Chair will consider all written complaints within 7 working weeks of receipt and will do all they can to resolve the complaint to the parent/carer's satisfaction and a written response will be provided.

This stage will involve a complaints review panel of Governors/Directors, in addition to one independent member (who is independent of the management and running of the academy) from a neighbouring academy's governing body or business representative. The Chair of Governors together with the academy Governing Body/Directors will ensure that 2 weeks' notice of the panel will be given to the complainant. Parents are invited to attend and may be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish.

If the complainant is deemed to behave inappropriately throughout any part of this process the Chair of Governors will not uphold the complaint and abandon the procedure. This will be confirmed in writing to the complainant.

Beyond the Chair of Governors, the final recourse for a complainant is to The Secretary of State for Education using the following website: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

Our procedure sets realistic goals and reasonable time limits for each stage. Where we feel further investigations are necessary and its clear our published timescales cannot be met we will:

- set new time limits
- send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay.

3. Vexatious or Repeated Complaints

There may be occasions when, despite a complaint being considered under all stages in this complaints Policy, the Complainant persists in making the same complaint to the academy and/or Trust. There may also be occasions when a complainant raises unreasonable persistent complaints or raises complaints about matters which do not affect them. There may also be occasions when a complaint is made about a matter which is clearly so trivial that it would be a waste of the academy's resources to deal with it under the formal stages of the procedure.

In all of these cases, the academy reserves the right to regard the complaint as vexatious and/or repeated and to refuse to investigate it under the procedure in this Complaints Policy, if it appears reasonable and fair to do so, having regard to the circumstances surrounding the complaint.

Where the academy decides that a complaint is vexatious and/or repeated and will not be investigated, the academy will write to the Complainant within ten school days of the complaint being raised to notify them of the decision.

If the complainant is unhappy with the decision not to investigate a vexatious and/or repeated complaint, they may write to the Chair of Local Governors to ask for the decision to be reviewed. The Chair of Local Governors will be provided with all documentation relating to the current complaint and any previous complaints which were relevant to the decision, together with the letter from the academy to the complainant, and will review the decision not to investigate the complaint. The Chair of Local Governors will not investigate the complaint itself during this review.

The Chair of Local Governors will write to the complainant with the outcome of the review within fifteen school days of the date that the letter from the complainant seeking the review was received. If the Chair of Local Governors quashes the decision not to investigate the concern or complaint, it will be referred to the academy to be dealt with under the procedure in this Complaints Policy in the usual way.

If the Chair of Local Governors upholds the decision not to investigate the concern or complaint, the complainant may refer the concern or complaint to the Education Funding Agency using the procedure stated towards the end of this Complaints Policy. In exceptional circumstances, the Chair of Local Governors can delegate the responsibility for the review to the Vice-Chair of Local Governors.

4. Anonymous Complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the anonymous complaint will be referred to the CEO, if appropriate. The CEO will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation. If we can find out enough information to take the complaint further, we will follow this policy as closely as we can. If we can't find out any other information or the complaint isn't serious, we will take no further steps.

5. Monitoring and Review

The Principals across our academies, log all complaints received by the academy and records how they were resolved. The Local Governing Bodies will monitor the log of written complaints.

Please note, complaints made during an academy holiday or half-term holiday that necessitate action by the Principal, Chief Executive Officer of Legra Academy Trust or the Chair of Governors will be dealt with as soon as practical and will not follow the normal timescale.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.