

## **LAMBETH ACADEMY**

### **Complaints Procedure**

#### **Informal Resolution**

It is recognised that parents will, from time to time, have normal and legitimate concerns about the progress, achievement, behaviour or welfare of their son or daughter. Parents are encouraged to make those concerns known to staff in the Academy so that they can be addressed in partnership with the Academy. Almost invariably, the sooner such concerns are raised the easier it is for an appropriate resolution to be found.

A concern or complaint may be raised with any member of staff. In our Academy this would normally be your child's Form Teacher or the Home - Academy Liaison Officer. That person will try and resolve the matter or will refer you to the appropriate person.

The member of staff will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. If the matter cannot be resolved within 3 school days or in the event that you are not satisfied, you will be advised to proceed to make a formal complaint to the Home – Academy Liaison Office, Mrs Rebecca Lacey. If the complaint concerns the Principal, the Home Academy Liaison Officer would normally refer you to the Chair of the Local Governing Body.

#### **Stage One: Complaint Heard by Staff Member**

If you need to make a formal complaint it should be in writing and sent to the Home – Academy Liaison Officer, Mrs Rebecca Lacey. If you have difficulty in putting your complaint in writing, you are asked to make an appointment with the Home – Academy Liaison Officer who will help you do that.

The Home – Academy Liaison Officer will decide the best person to hear the complaint. It would be helpful if you could indicate if there is someone with whom you might have difficulty discussing the complaint so that your views can be respected. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels too compromised to deal with the complaint, the Home – Academy Liaison Officer may consider referring you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be.

In most instances, there will need to be an investigation in order to understand the circumstances surrounding the complaint. That investigation will normally be undertaken by the Home – Academy Liaison Officer.

If the matter cannot be resolved within 5 school days following receipt of the written complaint or in the event that you are not satisfied, you will be advised to take your complaint to the second stage of this procedure.

The Home – Academy Liaison Officer will make a written record of the complaint, the date on which it was received the date on which the matter was dealt with and the outcome of the procedure. You will receive a copy of this written record within a reasonable time following this process.

### **Stage Two: Complaint Heard by the Principal**

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of stage one, if you feel that your complaint is sufficiently serious or if you are dissatisfied with the way in which your complaint has been handled, you may take your complaint to the second stage of this procedure.

You should put your complaint in writing to the Principal. Again, if you have difficulty in doing that, you are asked to seek assistance from the Home – Academy Liaison Officer.

The Principal may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken. The decision in respect of this complaint will normally be made within 5 school days of the Principal receiving the complaint. If the Principal feels that it is necessary, within reason, to ask for additional time, you will be informed.

## **Appeals Procedure**

- 1 The third stage of the formal complaints procedure is the LGB's Appeals Panel.
- 2 The appeals procedure is invoked when a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the second stage of the procedure or with the handling of a complaint by the Principal.
- 3 The complainant is required to put their complaint in writing to the Chairman or to the Complaints Coordinator marked for the Chairman. It is important that the complainant should set the matter out in sufficient detail.
- 4 On receiving a written complaint under the appeals procedure, a hearing by an Appeals Panel will be arranged within 10 working days.
- 5 The complainant may attend the hearing in person and may be accompanied if they so wish, in which case, they are required to notify the clerk of the name and occupation of such a person.

### **The Composition of the Appeals Panel**

- 6 Care must be taken not to involve the whole LGB as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.
- 7 The panel would normally consist of three people at least one of whom will be independent of the Local Governing Body and the running of the Academy. The panel may choose their own chair.
- 8 It is important that the appeal hearing is as independent and impartial as possible and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the composition of the panel, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.

### **The Role of the Appeals Panel**

- 9 The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the Academy and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations which will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.
- 10 An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. Care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial. Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child.

- 11 The panel may:
- (a) dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
  - (b) uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
  - (c) decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
  - (d) recommend changes to the Academy's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

- 12 It is strongly recommended that a clerk be appointed who would be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:
- (a) set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient or acceptable to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
  - (b) invite both the complainant and the Principal to put their position in writing for the Panel to consider;
  - (c) collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;
  - (d) record the proceedings;
  - (e) notify all parties of the panel's decision.
- 13 The Chair of the Panel has a key role, ensuring that:
- (a) the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting their case without undue interruption;
  - (b) written material is seen by all parties;
  - (c) key findings of fact are made and each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
  - (d) the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
  - (e) the panel is open minded and acting independently.

### **Notification of the Panel's Findings and Recommendations**

- 14 The Chair of the Panel needs to ensure that the LGB, the Principal and the complainant are notified of the panel's findings and recommendations, in writing, with the panel's response within 3 working days of the hearing.
- 15 The decision of the Appeals Panel is final.

## Lambeth Academy Complaint Form

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS and return to Rebecca Lacey the Home Academy Liaison Officer who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>	
<b>Student's name</b>	
<b>Your relationship to the student</b>	
<b>Address</b>	
<b>Postcode</b>	
<b>Day time telephone number</b>	
<b>Evening telephone number</b>	
<b>Please give details of your complaint</b>	
<b>What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (To whom did you speak to and what was the response?)</b>	
<b>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?</b>	
<b>Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.</b>	

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>For Official use only</b>	
Date acknowledgement sent	
Acknowledgement sent by	
Complaint referred to	
Complaint referred on (date)	