

Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust Policy

# Concerns and Complaints Policy

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| <b>Committee and Date Approved</b> | Trust Board – Summer 2026                           |
| <b>Category</b>                    | Statutory                                           |
| <b>Next Review Date</b>            | Annually unless change in legislation – Summer 2027 |
| <b>Policy Availability</b>         | Trust Website                                       |
| <b>Officer Responsible</b>         | CEO                                                 |

The Trust, all Academies within the Trust and Shireland Learning Limited must comply with this policy.

## Contents

|                                                                                                             |                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Introduction .....                                                                                          | 3                                   |
| Definitions .....                                                                                           | 3                                   |
| Principles and Values .....                                                                                 | 3                                   |
| Procedures for raising a concern / complaint about an Academy or a member of its staff....                  | 4                                   |
| Informal Concern Stages .....                                                                               | <b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b> |
| Formal Complaint Stages .....                                                                               | <b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b> |
| Informal Concern Stages - Detail.....                                                                       | 4                                   |
| Stage One: Discuss concerns with the Office Manager .....                                                   | 4                                   |
| Stage Two: Discuss concerns with a Senior Member of Staff .....                                             | 4                                   |
| Formal Complaint Stages - Detail.....                                                                       | 5                                   |
| Stage One: Refer, in writing, to the Principal .....                                                        | 5                                   |
| Stage Two: Refer the complaint to the Chief Executive Officer.....                                          | 5                                   |
| Stage Three: Refer to the Chair of the Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust.....                              | 5                                   |
| Stage Four: Refer to Appeals Committee of Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust.....                           | 5                                   |
| Stage Five: Refer to the DfE .....                                                                          | 6                                   |
| Making a complaint about Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust or a member of its staff .....                  | 7                                   |
| Stage One: Report your concern to info@shirelandcat.net and discuss with the Trust Governance Manager ..... | 7                                   |
| Stage Two: The complaint can be referred to the Chief Executive Officer .....                               | 7                                   |
| Stage Three: Refer to the Chair of Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust.....                                  | 7                                   |
| Stage Four: Refer to Appeals Committee of Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust.....                           | 8                                   |
| Stage Five: Refer to the DfE.....                                                                           | 8                                   |

## Introduction

Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust is committed to providing high-quality services. Concerns and complaints are essential to help us review and further develop our services. We aim to achieve the highest standards.

This policy applies to all individuals, including parents or carers of children that are registered at each Academy and members of the public.

## Definitions

**Concern:** A concern is an expression of worry, uncertainty or dissatisfaction about an issue affecting an individual, child, family or the wider school/Trust community, where the matter can usually be addressed informally and at an early stage. Concerns may relate to day-to-day communication, decisions, actions or omissions, and should be raised as soon as possible so that they can be resolved quickly and appropriately.

**Complaint:** A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions taken, decisions made, or lack of action by Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust, one of its Academies, or a member of staff, where the person raising the matter is seeking a formal response, investigation, explanation, apology, remedy or review.

Where a concern cannot be resolved informally, or where the person raising the matter remains dissatisfied with the response, it may be treated as a complaint and progressed through the formal stages of this policy.

## Principles and Values

Our main aim is to deal with concerns and complaints openly, fairly, promptly and without prejudice. Our procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints will:

- Be simple to understand and follow
- Be focused on outcomes
- Keep people informed at all stages
- Where necessary, respect people's desires for confidentiality
- Be carefully monitored and evaluated
- Provide information to the senior leadership team so that the Academy's procedures can be improved.

The policy will follow a staged approach which is designed to ensure that every effort is made to deal with concerns and complaints in partnership with our community.

In this procedure:

- School days excludes weekends and Academy holidays. We will consider any concerns or complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first day after the holiday period. If the complainant is already going through the procedure and this is interrupted by a holiday, the procedure will be paused until the holiday has ended. If the procedure is close to concluding as the holiday approaches, we will make reasonable attempts to get the procedure to an end prior to the holiday period, but this may not always be possible.

- Where there is a requirement to respond within a given number of days, day 1 will start on the day after the complaint has been received.
- Complainants should not approach individual governors or trustees to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may prevent them from considering complaints at a later stage.
- Some people like to use AI tools to help organise their thoughts. We recommend against using public AI tools because they can store and republish personal information, such as sensitive details about your child. AI tools can also introduce inaccurate information, like old rules or laws from other countries. This can delay us responding to you. You should always carefully check the output to make sure it is accurate.
- If we are finding it difficult to clearly identify the key concerns from what you have shared, we may suggest a meeting or call to help us focus on what matters most and respond as accurately and helpfully as possible

## **Procedures for raising a concern / complaint about an Academy or a member of its staff**

Any person expressing continued dissatisfaction should be advised on the next stage in the procedure.

Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, the Academy may choose to refer the complaint to any later stage of the process.

For any complaints regarding our private nurseries, the first point of contact is the Nursery Manager.

If the complaint is in relation to the Principal of the Academy (or Nursery Manager), the complaint should be reported directly to the Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust by following the procedures in "Making a complaint about Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust or a member of its staff".

### **Informal Concern Stages**

#### **Stage One: Discuss concerns with the Office Manager**

- All issues reported to the Office Manager will be logged and followed up within 10 working days.
- The Office Manager will refer the individual raising the concern to the appropriate member of staff (e.g. Head of Year, Head of Department, Pastoral Manager etc)
- The member of staff who is dealing with the concern should ensure that the individual is reassured that the matter will be investigated and is clear what action has been agreed. All parties should be aware of the need for confidentiality.
- A brief record of any telephone calls, meetings and agreed actions should always be kept, although it is not always necessary to provide the individual with a written record at this stage.
- If either the individual raising the concern or staff member feels the matter needs to be taken further, this will be referred to Stage 2.

#### **Stage Two: Discuss concerns with a Senior Member of Staff**

- More serious concerns which remain unresolved at the end of Stage One will be referred to a Senior Member of Staff (SLT member). They will then investigate the matter further.
- A log of all contacts in relation to the concern should be kept.
- The Senior Member of Staff will communicate the outcome to the individual raising the concern either verbally or in writing, within 10 working days from receipt of the referral from Stage One. If the concern is not resolved and the individual would like to raise this as a formal complaint they can do so by following the next stages of the process.

## Formal Complaint Stages – Detail

### Stage One: Refer, in writing, to the Principal

- A formal complaint can be made in writing to the Principal at the Academy address
- The complainant should include the following in their complaint:
  - Full name
  - Name of child (if a family member)
  - Contact details
  - Details of complaint
  - Actions that have already been taken
  - Proposed actions to resolve the issue
- The Principal will deal with this within 10 working days of the receipt of the complaint.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the written response, a face-to-face meeting should be arranged with the Principal to discuss the complaint further.
- If the complainant feels the complaint has not been resolved adequately, the Principal or the complainant can refer it to the next stage of the process within 5 working days.

### Stage Two: Refer the complaint to the Chief Executive Officer

- Referrals to the CEO should be in writing to [info@shirelandcat.net](mailto:info@shirelandcat.net) and include the previous actions taken and an explanation of why the previous stage was not satisfactory.
- The CEO should only proceed with this stage of the process if they have received a complaint in writing.
- The CEO will deal with this within 10 working days of the receipt of the complaint (where the complaint is complex the CEO will agree a timescale for response with the complainant).
- If the complainant is still dissatisfied, the next stage is to refer the complaint to the Chair of Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust. This should be done within 5 working days.

### Stage Three: Refer to the Chair of the Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust

- The Chair of the Trust should only proceed with this stage of the complaint procedure if they have received a complaint in writing.
- It is essential that this process is fair and objective. Any member of Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust Board who has been involved with the complaint at an earlier stage would be unable to give objective consideration to the issue.
- If the complainant is still dissatisfied, the next stage is referral to the Appeals Committee of the Trust.

### Stage Four: Refer to Appeals Committee of Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust

- It is for the Trust to agree upon the procedures for the Appeals Committee meeting. However, the Trust will usually convene a small panel of three – five independent members who have not previously been involved in the complaint. This will be dealt with within 10 working days of the complaint being received. At least one of these members will not be involved in the management or running of the school.
- The Chair of the panel should notify the CEO and the complainant as to whether they will be invited to attend the panel meeting. Alternatively, the panel may decide to consider written material only. Both parties must be treated equally. For example, if the CEO is invited to the meeting, so must the complainant.
- If the complaint relates to staff disciplinary or a capability matter about which the CEO has already taken action, the members should focus on how the original complaint was managed to avoid prejudicing any on-going disciplinary or capability procedures.
- If they wish, the complainant may attend a panel meeting and be accompanied by one other individual.
- The CEO, complainant and, where relevant, the individual being complained about will be

informed of the panel's decision in writing within ten Academy working days. These decisions or findings will also be available for inspection by the Academy Principal on site.

- The Complaints Panel's decision is final.
- All correspondence, statements and records 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.

#### **Stage Five: Refer to the DfE**

- If the complainant believes that Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust acted "unreasonably", they can complain to the Secretary of State in the Department for Education under Section 496 of the Education Act 1996. Please note that "unreasonable" is used in a strict sense and means acting in a way that no reasonable Academy or authority could act in the circumstances. The complainant should write to the Secretary of State, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT.

## **Making a complaint about Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust or a member of its staff**

Any person expressing continued dissatisfaction should be advised on the next stage in the procedure.

Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, the Trust may choose to refer the complaint to any later stage of the process.

### **Stage One: Report your concern to [info@shirelandcat.net](mailto:info@shirelandcat.net) and discuss with the Trust Governance Manager**

- All issues reported to [info@shirelandcat.net](mailto:info@shirelandcat.net) will be logged and followed up by the Trust's Governance Manager within 10 working days either verbally or through writing.
- The Governance Manager will ensure that the individual is reassured that the matter will be investigated and is clear what action has been agreed. All parties should be aware of the need for confidentiality.
- A brief record of any telephone calls, meetings and agreed actions should always be kept, although it is not always necessary to provide the individual with a written record at this stage.
- If the complaint is about a member of staff, the Governance Manager may involve the HR Director at this stage.
- If either the complainant or Governance Manager feels the matter needs to be taken further, this will be referred to Stage 2.

### **Stage Two: The complaint can be referred to the Chief Executive Officer**

- The Governance Manager will ask the individual to formally write to [info@shirelandcat.net](mailto:info@shirelandcat.net) outlining their complaint. This should include:
  - Full name
  - Name of child (if a family member)
  - Contact details
  - Details of complaint
  - Actions that have already been taken
  - Proposed actions to resolve the issue
- If the individual has already written in during stage one, the Governance Manager may ask the individual to include more information where required before formally sharing with the CEO.
- The CEO should only proceed with this stage of the complaint procedure if they have received a referral and written complaint from the Governance Manager.
- The CEO will deal with this within 10 working days of the receipt of the complaint.
- If the complainant is still dissatisfied, the next stage is referral to the Chair of Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust within 5 working days of the conclusion of this stage.

### **Stage Three: Refer to the Chair of Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust**

- The Chair of the Trust should only proceed with this stage of the complaint procedure if they have received a referral from the CEO at the end of Stage Two.
- It is essential that this process is fair and objective. Any member of Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust Board who has been involved with the complaint at an earlier stage would be unable to give objective consideration to the issue.
- If the complainant is still dissatisfied, the next stage is referral to the Appeals Committee of

the Trust.

- The Chair of Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust will deal with this within 10 working days from when the referral is provided by the CEO.

#### **Stage Four: Refer to Appeals Committee of Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust**

- It is for the Trust to agree upon the procedures for the Appeals Committee meeting. However, the Trust will usually convene a small panel of three – five independent members who have not previously been involved in the complaint. This will be dealt with within 10 Academy working days of the referral from the previous stage of the process. At least one of these members will not be involved in the management or running of the Trust.
- The Chair of the panel should notify the CEO and the complainant as to whether they will be invited to attend the panel meeting. Alternatively, the panel may decide to consider written material only. Both parties must be treated equally. For example, if the CEO is invited to the meeting, so must the complainant.
- If the complaint relates to staff disciplinary or a capability matter about which the CEO has already taken action, the members should focus on how the original complaint was managed to avoid prejudicing any on-going disciplinary or capability procedures.
- If they wish, the complainant may attend a panel meeting and be accompanied by one other individual.
- The CEO, complainant and, where relevant, the individual being complained about will be informed of the panel's decision in writing within ten Academy working days. These decisions or findings will also be available for inspection by the CEO of Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust on site.
- The Complaints Panel's decision is final.
- All correspondence, statements and records 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.

#### **Stage Five: Refer to the DfE**

- If the complainant believes that Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust acted “unreasonably”, they can complain to the Secretary of State in the Department for Education under Section 496 of the Education Act 1996. Please note that “unreasonable” is used in a strict sense and means acting in a way that no reasonable Academy or authority could act in the circumstances. The complainant should write to the Secretary of State, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT.