The Summit Education Trust

Complaints Policy

Date of last review: September 2026

Date of next review: September 2027

Version: 8

Monitoring and Evaluation:

All documentation regarding complaints will be recorded centrally by the trust. A summary will be included in the CEO's regular report to the Trust Board, with school-level detail provided to Local Governing Boards as appropriate. The Trust Board will monitor the level and nature of complaints across all academies and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary. Local Governing Boards will monitor complaints specific to their school.

The monitoring and review of complaints by the school and the Trust Board is a useful tool in evaluating the school's performance and will contribute to school improvement. Any underlying issues identified will be addressed.

The information contained within this policy and the appendix are of equal importance. For relevant information please ensure you review the policy in its entirety.

Status: Statutory

This policy should be used for:

- Complaints relating to the schooling of your child
- Complaints about the education and care provided to pupils at the school
- Complaints about the school's operational arrangements
- Complaints regarding the centre's delivery or administration of a qualification
- Students who attend have their own complaints procedure

The information contained within this policy and the appendix are of equal importance. For relevant information please ensure you review the policy in its entirety.

The Trust is aware that any member of the public, including the parents of past and present pupils, can make a complaint about the provision of facilities or services that the Trust provides.

The Trust Board has overall responsibility for ensuring this complaints policy complies with all legal requirements, including the Academy Trust Handbook, and is implemented effectively across all Trust Schools in the Trust.

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 defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*'.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest opportunity. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. The Summit Education Trust takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If there is a difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, it will be referred to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, it will also be referred to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Summit Education Trust will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

Scope table

Scope of this complaints procedure
This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Summit Education Trust, This policy does **not cover complaints procedures relating to:**

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of special educational needs or school reorganisation

special educational needs • School re-organisation proposals	proposals should be raised with West Berkshire Council.
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. The Trust will ensure that safeguarding concerns raised through the complaints procedure are immediately referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and handled in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the Local Authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). <insert LADO/MASH details>.
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.*
• Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The secretary of state for education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the local authority or the DfE (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
• National curriculum - content	Please contact the DfE at www.education.gov.uk/contactus

Our Governance Structure
Summit Education Trust operates as a multi-academy trust with:

- A **Trust Board** with overall accountability for the trust and its schools
- **Local Governing Boards** at TDS, Basildon CE Primary School & Compton CE Primary School with delegated responsibilities for school-level matters
- A **CEO** with executive leadership responsibility across the Trust
- A **Director of Primaries** with oversight of primary school improvement
- **Heads of School** and **The Downs School (TDS) Headteacher** with day-to-day leadership responsibility for each of the Trust Schools

How to raise a concern or make a complaint
A concern can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. However, a complaint should be made in writing or by making an appointment with the designated person. There may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the member of staff concerned, or the Head of Department/Faculty Head of Year/Head of School or member of SLT in Primaries. It is hoped that the majority of concerns can be resolved informally in this way. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint via the designated person .

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 and 3 of the procedure.

Anonymous complaints
The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the CEO Summit Education Trust or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation via *Chair@summiteducationtrust.org.uk*

Duplicate complaints
If, after closing a complaint at the end of the complaints procedure, we receive a duplicate complaint from a spouse, a partner, a grandparent or a child not attending this school, we will remind them that we have already considered the complaint and the local process is complete. Complainants will be advised to contact the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our handling of the complaint.

Complaint campaigns
If we receive what we consider to be a large volume of complaints, all based on the same subject and possibly from complainants not connected to the school, then we will treat these complaints as being part of a campaign and respond in one of the following two ways, depending upon the nature and scale of the complaint:

- send the same response to all complainants; or
- publish a single response on the school's website

Timescales
Complainants must raise the complaint within **three months** of the incident, or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this timeframe if exceptional circumstances apply. (This will be at the discretion of the Headteacher/CEO or appropriate member of the Governing Board).

If at any point we cannot meet the timescales we have set out in this policy, we will;

Set new time limits with the complainant

Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, the example the police, Local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this policy or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodes have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against the trust or the school in relation to their complaint, then we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Complaints received outside of term time
We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.
Include key page 2 *2 green highlight

Resolving complaints
At each stage in the procedure, The Summit Education Trust wants to try and resolve the complaint. All staff will aim to respond within 2 days' even if this is a courtesy call/email to acknowledge receipt of a complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation.
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur.
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made.
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a complaint
If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Complaints Procedure

Complaints against School practice, procedure or staff please follow the table below:

If your complaint is about…	**Contact…**	**Email**
A teacher or school matter (primary schools)	Head of School	[school email] Compton Headteacher headteacher@compton.w-berks.sch.uk Melissa Cliffe <headteacher@basildonprimary.org.uk>
A teacher or school matter (at TDS)	Headteacher	Head@thedownsschool.org
Head of School	Director of Primaries	MCliffe (Miss M Cliffe <MCliffe@tds.school>
Director of Primaries	CEO	Head@thedownsschool.org

If your complaint is about…	Contact…	Email
TDS Headteacher (school matters)	Chair of Trustees	chair@summiteducationtrust.org.uk
CEO (trust-wide matters)	Chair of Trustees	chair@summiteducationtrust.org.uk
Chair of Trustees	Head of Governance	clerk@summiteducationtrust.org.uk
Individual trustee/whole board	Head of Governance	clerk@summiteducationtrust.org.uk
Individual governor/LGB	Chair of Trustees via Head of Governance	clerk@summiteducationtrust.org.uk

Please mark all correspondence as Private and Confidential.

The address for the Trust Office is:
Summit Education Trust
C/O The Downs School
Manor Crescent
Compton
Newbury
RG20 6AD

A template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations such as Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Stages of the complaint

Stage One (Informal concerns)
Concern/Complaint heard by relevant staff member (when not the subject of the concern/complaint).

Where the person expressing the concern is unhappy with an issue in school they should contact a member of staff in the first instance. In most cases this will be either a student's teacher or the school office staff. The member of staff receiving the concern will either:

- Provide a response to the person expressing the concern (after discussions with relevant colleagues if necessary) or
- Refer the concern to the appropriate person within the school.

Where the concern involves the CEO, a trustee, or the Trust Board, the concern must be made to the Head of Governance. Where the concern involves a member of a Local Governing Board, it should be raised with the Chair of that Local Governing Board or the Head of Governance.

If the person expressing the concern indicates that he/she would have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, or the concern relates to the staff member, the person expressing the concern may be referred to another staff member (or the Director of Primaries or the TDS Headteacher). The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is crucial.

The school will respond to the complaint within ten school days

If the person expressing the concern wishes to move to Stage 2, a request must be submitted to the school in writing using the template in Appendix 4 within 15 school days of receiving a response at stage 1. Otherwise, the matter is considered closed and will not be considered further. The letter must explain why the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

Stage 2 (Formal Complaint at school level)

Formal complaints must be made to the Head of School (unless they are about the Head of School). For complaints about the Head of School, contact the Director of Primaries (for primary schools) or the CEO. For complaints about the Director of Primaries, contact the CEO. This may be done in person, in writing (on the complaint form). The Director of Primaries or the TDS Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 2 school days. Within this response, the Director of Primaries or the TDS Headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Director of Primaries of the TDS Headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The Head of School, Director of Primaries, or TDS Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another appropriate senior leader, but not the decision to be taken. Where the complaint is about the TDS Headteacher in their school leadership capacity, the Chair of Trustees will appoint an appropriate person to investigate (this may be a trustee, or an external investigator).

During the investigation, the Director of Primaries or the TDS Headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Director of Primaries or the TDS Headteacher will provide a formal written response within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the Director of Primaries or the TDS Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions The Summit Education Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

The Director of Primaries or the TDS Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the CEO/TDS Headteacher or a member of the local governing board (including the chair or vice chair) a suitable skilled governor will be appointed to carry out the investigation at stage 2.

Complaints about the CEO, TDS Headteacher or member of the governing board must be made to the Head of Governance via clerk@summiteducationtrust.org.uk

Stage 3 (Formal complaint at Governing Board level)
If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to stage 3 – a meeting with members of the Trust Board's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to stage 3 must be made to the Head of Governance, including the completed appendix 5 form, in writing via clerk@summiteducationtrust.org.uk within 5 school days of receipt of the stage 2 response. Requests received outside of this timeframe will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply (this will be at the discretion of the CEO or appropriate member of the Governing Board).

The Head of Governance will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 2 school days.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a panel hearing or through written representations, but in making its decision it will be sensitive to the complainant's needs. Should the committee decide to hold a panel hearing, the Head of Governance will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 15 school days of receipt of the stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three people with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint.

For trust-level complaints (e.g., complaints about the Chair of trustees or CEO), at least one panel member will be independent of the management and running of the academy.
An independent panel member is someone who:

- Has had no prior involvement in the complaint or circumstances surrounding it
- Has no close personal relationship with any parties involved
- Has not expressed a strong view on the matter in question
- Is able to consider the complaint objectively and make a fair decision based on evidence

The Head of Governance will check the impartiality of all proposed panel members before confirming the panel composition. If any panel member becomes aware of a conflict of interest during the process, they must declare it immediately and withdraw from the panel.

For school-level complaints, the panel may consist of:

- Trustees, and/or
- Members of the relevant school's Local Governing Board (LGB), and/or
- Members of another LGB within the trust, provided they are impartial and have had no prior involvement in the complaint

The Head of Governance, in consultation with the Chair of the Trust Board, will determine the most appropriate composition for each panel based on:

- The nature and subject of the complaint
- The availability of impartial trustees and governors
- The need to ensure the panel has appropriate expertise and understanding of the context.

If there are insufficient impartial trustees or governors available from within the trust, the Head of Governance will source additional independent trustees or governors through another local trust, the local authority's governance services team, from another school outside of the Trust or the National Governance Association.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. We do not encourage legal representation.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

Before the panel hearing, the Head of Governance will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- request copies of any written material relating to each stage of the process to be submitted to the committee at least **10 school days** before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least **5 school days** before the date of the panel hearing. The committee will not normally accept as evidence recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from stage 1 of the procedure.

The panel hearing will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented.

The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The chair of the committee will provide the complainant and The Summit Education Trust with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the DfE if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by The Summit Education Trust.

If the complaint is jointly about the chair and vice chair or the entire Governing Board or the majority of the Governing Board, Stage 3 will be heard by a committee of independent panel.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions The Summit Education Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

Next steps
If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 3.

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by The Summit Education Trust. They will consider whether The Summit Education Trust has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

Appendix 1

Persistent and Unreasonable Complaints Handling Procedure

1 Purpose and applicability

1.1 To identify complainants who are unreasonable or unreasonably persistent in pursuit of their complaint, and/or prolific complainants, and manage their complaints appropriately.

1.2 To ensure that all complaints are treated equitably and on an individual basis.

1.3 To ensure that access to the complaints process as a mechanism for representation is not unlawfully barred, while ensuring that the process is not misused.

1.4 To ensure that individual needs are considered when deciding on a suitable approach to dealing with their complaints.

1.5 To avoid perpetuating correspondence or contact which is time consuming and not helpful to the complainant, other complainants, and Summit Education Trust staff.

2 Defining Unreasonable Complaints

2.1 Complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

2.1.1 refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance;

2.1.2 refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved

2.1.3 refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;

2.1.4 insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;

2.1.5 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;

2.1.6 makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced;

2.1.7 changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds;

2.1.8 repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed):

2.1.9 refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education:

2.1.10 seeks an unrealistic outcome

2.1.11 makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email or by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

2.2 A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:

2.2.1 maliciously:

2.2.2 aggressively:

2.2.3 using threats, intimidation or violence;

2.2.4 using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language;

2.2.5 knowing to be false;
2.2.6 using falsified information:
2.2.7 publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media websites and newspapers – please see our Codes of Conduct.

3 Management Plans

Options available to manage unreasonably persistent or prolific complainants can include:

3.1 **Explanation**: wherever possible, the Director of Primaries or TDS Headteacher or Chair of Governors to make clear to the complainant why their behaviour is unreasonable, and ways to amend it, before taking more formal action. In some cases, close liaison with all relevant professionals will be necessary to reach an appropriate and coordinated decision. This is good practice and should be done in all cases where complaints cut across service or partnership boundaries.

3.2 **Co-ordination**: Designate a key officer as the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for the complainant. This ensures that all concerns and issues can be reviewed centrally and any new issues identified and acted upon. It also reduces the resource burden on other staff. Advise the complainant of the SPOC's role and contact details, also advise other staff who may continue to receive correspondence or calls, of this process. All future representations and communications from the complainant regarding their issues subject to complaint will be fed through this officer to ensure all responses are co-ordinated and provide the same clear answers.

3.3 **Correspondence**: Ensure that new issues raised are quickly passed on to the appropriate staff team to ensure speedy resolution and a quick and firm response.

3.31 Where correspondence includes or develops into requests for information (RFI's), these will be passed through the Freedom of Information RFI process.

3.32 In very exceptional circumstances the service/s may decide to decline to respond to further representations from the complainant on old issues. If this is the case then the complainant must be advised of this, with reasons. This advice should include an indication that all correspondence will be read, and information passed on as relevant to inform and advise the relevant officers, but that no response will be provided in future.

3.4 **Record keeping**: The TDS Headteacher's PA and Director of Primaries should keep on record copies of correspondence to and from the complainant.

3.5 **Staffing**: Ensure all staff involved are aware of the arrangements to manage the complainant's issues.

3.6 **Managing Behavioural Issues**: If the complainant's behaviour is abusive or provocative, the schools' may determine that only written representation (by letter) will be acceptable, explaining why, and also explaining who to address any written representation to. Where this is not possible arrangements should be made for a named member of staff to take detail of complaints.

4. Barring from School Premises

Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Schools will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.

If a parent's behaviour is a cause for concern, a school can ask him/her to leave school premises. In serious cases, the Head of School (with CEO approval) or the CEO can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily

revoked subject to any representations that the parent may wish to make. Schools should always give the parent 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 representation made by the parent, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the parent should be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place.

Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so by letter or email, to the CEO or Chair of Trustees. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the Department for Education. Once the school's own complaints procedure has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.

Appendix 2

There are several points which any governor sitting on a complaints panel needs to remember:

a. It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial 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 make-up 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.

b. The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school 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.

c. An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.

d. Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child's parent is the complainant, it would be helpful to give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child needs to attend.

e. The governors sitting on the panel need to be aware of the complaints procedure.

Roles and Responsibilities of Complaints Panel

The Role of the Clerk
The Department strongly recommends that any panel or group of governors considering complaints be clerked. The clerk would be the contact point for the complainant and be required to:

- set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible;
- collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing;
- meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing;
- record the proceedings;
- notify all parties of the panel's decision.

The Role of the Chair of the Trust Board or Local Governing Board, or the Nominated Trustee/Governor
The nominated governor role:

- check that the correct procedure has been followed;
- if a hearing is appropriate, notify the clerk to arrange the panel;

The Role of the Chair of the Panel
The Chair of the Panel has a key role, ensuring that:

- the remit of the panel is explained to the parties and each party has the opportunity of putting its case without undue interruption;
- the issues are addressed;
- key findings of fact are made;

- parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing are put at ease;
- the hearing is conducted in an informal manner with each party treating the other with respect and courtesy;
- the panel is open minded and acting independently;
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure;
- each side is given the opportunity to state their case and ask questions;
- written material is seen by all parties. If a new issue arises it would be useful to give all parties, the opportunity to consider and comment on it.

Notification of the Panel's Decision

The chair of the panel needs to ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision, in writing, with the panel's response; this is usually within a set deadline which is publicised in the procedure. The letter needs to explain if there are any further rights of appeal and, if so, to whom they need to be addressed.

Appendix 3 Leaflet for Parents

Policy Statement:
Each day our schools makes many decisions and tries hard to do the best for all our children. Your comments - either positive or negative - are helpful for future planning. We are learning schools, committed to continuous improvement. Our philosophy is, 'Learning together: learning for life.' You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of our schools, though not actually make a complaint. You may just want to get something 'off your chest'. Please let us know your views. If you are dissatisfied about the way your child is being treated, or any actions or lack of action by us, please feel able to raise a concern.

Our promise to you
- You will receive a response within 2 school days
- Your complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence
- Your complaint will be looked into thoroughly and fairly
- Your complaint will always be dealt with in a timely manner
- We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage
- You will get an apology if we have made a mistake
- You will be told what we are going to do to put things right
- You will get a full and clear written reply to formal complaints within 15 working days
- The Director of Primaries or the TDS Headteacher will keep a copy of all complaints made in a complaints log.

How to raise a concern (informal)
First
If you have a concern about anything we do, you can do this by telephone, in person or in writing. We hope that most concerns can be settled quickly and informally, either by putting matters right or by giving you an explanation. If there is something you are not happy about, or you don't understand why we are doing something in a particular way, please make an appointment to discuss it with your child's tutor or other appropriate member of staff, such as the Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) if it is about special needs.
We know that it can feel uncomfortable to question or challenge, but if you don't tell us what is worrying you we cannot explain what we are doing or try to put it right.

How to make a complaint (formal)
Second
If you are not satisfied you can complain formally by writing a letter or by filling in the form obtainable from Reception or on the school website (www.thedownsschool.org). Send your letter/the form to the Director of Primaries or the TDS Headteacher who will then arrange for your complaint to be investigated and considered and will reply within 15 working days to give you a progress report and tell you what will happen next. When your complaint has been fully investigated you will be told of the outcome in writing.

Third
If you are not satisfied with the outcome following contact with the Director of Primaries or the TDS Headteacher you can complain formally by writing a letter or by filling in the form obtainable from Reception or on the school website (www.thedownsschool.org). Send your letter/the form to the Chair of Governors who will then arrange for your complaint to be investigated and considered and will reply within 15 working days to give you a progress report and tell you what will happen next. When your complaint has been fully investigated you will be told of the outcome in writing.

Appendix 4 Complaint form (to be used at stage 2)

Please complete and return to (*either Director of Primaries/ TDS Headteacher/Head of Governance/Designated Governor – school to delete as appropriate*) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Daytime telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:**
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it and why you were dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: **Date:**
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By whom:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

Appendix 5 Complaint form (to be used at stage 3)

Please complete and return to the Head of Governance via fwilson@summiteducationtrust.org.uk who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Daytime telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:**
Please give details of why you are dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2 and why you wish to take the matter further. Please remember, the committee will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from stage 1 of the procedure.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this final stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: **Date:**
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By whom:
Complaint referred to:
Date: