TTA COMPLAINTS POLICY

2026-2027

Policy Statement

The Totteridge Academy prides itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its students. It recognises that parents may, from time to time, have concerns about the progress, achievement, behaviour or welfare of their son or daughter. Parents are encouraged to make those concerns known to staff so that they can be addressed in partnership with the Academy.

All concerns and complaints must be submitted to the school using the Feedback Form for TTA Families, found on our website: The Totteridge Academy | Get in Touch

The Totteridge Academy will take all concerns and complaints seriously and will make every effort to deal with complaints informally, at an early stage, in the spirit of continued respect and partnership.

This is a three-stage process. In most cases, any concern or complaint, regardless of whose attention to whom it is initially brought, should be discussed informally at stage 1, before being submitted to a formal process. Complaints concerning the Head may proceed directly to formal process at stage 2 and will be managed by the chair of the Local Governing Body (LGB).

Definitions

This policy deals with concerns or complaints from parents of current pupils and parents of former pupils provided the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered at the Academy.

For the purposes of this procedure, **concerns** are defined as having a worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought. A **complaint** can be any matter about which a parent/carer is unhappy and seeks action by the Academy.

Matters falling outside of this Policy

- This procedure does not apply in relation to appeals against admissions or exclusions which are managed under a separate statutory procedure. Please see the School Policies.
- This procedure does not apply to safeguarding concerns regarding children or allegations of abuse made against teachers, and other staff, including supply teachers and volunteers, which are managed under the Academy's Safeguarding Policy and is distinct from formal staff disciplinary, grievance or capability proceedings.
- Where the complaint concerns a third party or service used by the Academy please complain directly
- For 'Subject Access Request's and 'Freedom of Information Requests' please see the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Policy.
- For whistleblowing complaints, please refer to the UL Whistleblowing Policy.

Policy Aims and Guidance

We aim to:

1: Encourage the **informal and early** resolution of complaints at stage 1, so far as it is possible.
We aim to deal with all matters of concern raised by parents or carers promptly, fairly, openly, and without Prejudice. Concerns and complaints are more likely to be resolved informally when all

parties commit to working together towards a resolution in the spirit of co-operation. Informal resolutions will usually involve a meeting between the complainant and the Academy. Any concern or complaint should be listened to by an appropriate member of the staff team -usually the class teacher, year group or pastoral leader or a member of the leadership team (as appropriate to the nature of the complaint). Where further information is needed, we will aim to respond in a timely and sensitive manner. It also helps to understand what a satisfactory outcome would look like to the complainant. We aim to resolve matters at stage 1 within 15 working days.

When managing a concern or complaint informally at stage 1, parents may, if they are not satisfied with the response, to escalate their complaint to the formal stage of this procedure.

Mediation meetings may be helpful in resolving issues of concern or in mending relationships and moving forward in partnership with parents/carers however these sit outside of the formal complaints process.

2: Ensure that complaints process is easy to understand and access and be readily available.
United Learning has endeavoured to make its procedures as accessible as possible. Parents should not be put off from making a complaint because they are not sure how to do so. This complaints procedure is available on the Academy website and can be made available in hard copy on request from reception.

3: Keep the **formal procedure** to two distinct stages.
Stage 2 is a formal investigation and response. Stage 2 complaints should be made to the Principal, (or the Chair of Governors if the complaint concerns the Principal) who will investigate and provide a formal response.

Stage 3 is a review of the complaint by a Complaints Panel. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome at stage 2, trustees have delegated the LGB with authority to review the complaint on its behalf at **Stage 3.** The stage 3 panel **must** include independent representation*.

Resolution should be sought at all stages.

*It is a requirement of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school. United Learning determine this to mean external to the individual school and therefore a governor from another LGB within UL may be asked to join a review at stage 3.

The DFE confirms that; '*with the exception of the MAT's trustees, we are satisfied that a governor, from a local governing body at a different school within the MAT, who has no conflict of interest or prior knowledge of the complaint, can be an independent panel member. This is because such person would have no direct involvement with the management and running of the school being complained about.'*

4: Ensure that as few governors as possible are involved in the management of a complaint.
The Academy aims to ensure that members of the LGB do not become directly involved in the detail of a complaint, so they are not prevented from sitting on a Complaints Panel if called upon to review complaints under Stage 3.

Where a complaint has been made about a member of the local governing board or the entire governing board, the LGB clerk should seek advice from the Head of Local Governance at United

Learning about how the procedure should apply and proceed given the nature of the complaint. This may involve sourcing an independent investigator and/or panel to hear the complaint.

5: Records should be kept at both stages of the formal process

It is important that those responsible for reviewing a complaint at each formal stage keep records of what the complaint was, whether it was resolved following a formal procedure or proceeded to a panel hearing, any action taken by the The Totteridge Academy as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld), any evidence that was considered, and the outcome. The The Totteridge Academy will ensure that, in accordance with the Education (Independent Academy Standards) Regulations 2014, a copy of the findings and recommendations made at the panel review stage are provided in writing to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, as well being made available for inspection on the Academy premises by United Learning and the head teacher.

Any personal information recorded in regard to the complaint will be kept in accordance with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 (see the ICO website) and in accordance with the The Totteridge Academy's Privacy Notice and Data Retention Policy.

The The Totteridge Academy processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints the Academy (including any panel member appointed under the Stage [2/3] process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- The name of the complainant;
- The date and time at which the complaint was made;
- The details of the complaint;
- The desired outcome of the complainant;
- How the complaint is investigated (including written records of interviews held);
- Findings and recommendations of investigations;
- Any action taken;
- The complainant's response (satisfaction or further pursuit of complaint).

This may include 'special category personal data' (including sensitive data such as information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint.

6: Review the Complaint Procedure regularly

United Learning is confident that the complaints procedure it recommends to schools is thorough, clear and robust. As a matter of good practice UL will therefore review this procedure every two or three years to ensure it remains fit for purpose. The procedure may need to be amended before the review date if, for example, there are any changes to the law, or if it becomes apparent, as a result of a complaint, that the procedure is not working effectively. Any proposed amendment of the procedure will therefore be carried out centrally and submitted to Local governing boards for approval.

In line with our Provision of Information policy, this document is available to all interested parties on our website and on request from the admin office and should be read in conjunction with the following documents; Academic Performance Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Child Protection Policy, Curriculum Policy, Special Educational Needs Policy, Admissions Policy, Behaviour and Discipline Policy, Exclusions, Privacy Notice, Expulsion and Removal Policy.

If parents are unhappy with how the School has managed their complaint under this procedure, they may complain to the EFSA, online here; or by post at;

Academies Complaint and Customer Insight Unit, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT.

OFSTED: Piccadilly Gate, Store St, Manchester, M1 2WD
Phone: 0300 123 4666 or email enquiries@oftsed.gov.uk]

PROCEDURES

Stage 1: INFORMAL RESOLUTION

The LGB of The Totteridge Academy encourages those that have concerns to raise them with the appropriate person at the Academy (e.g. your child's class teacher) and to work constructively with that person towards resolving them. The majority of concerns can be dealt with without resorting to the formal stages of the formal complaint procedure. We recognise that, almost invariably, the sooner concerns are raised the easier it is for an appropriate resolution to be found.

Please see the following contacts in Academy for support:

- *Concerns of a pastoral and academic nature should normally be made to your child's Director of Learning (DoLs).*

The member of staff will acknowledge the complaint normally within 3 working days of receipt. They will try to identify areas of agreement and clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred. They may make a written record of your concern or complaint, the date on which it was received, and then try to resolve the matter themselves or refer you to the appropriate person.

The extent to which complainants have attempted informal ways of addressing an issue may be taken into consideration when assessing the reasonableness of a complaint during the formal stages of the procedure.

If a complaint cannot be resolved informally within 15 working days, or if the relevant member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then the parents should proceed with their complaint in accordance with **Stage 2** of this Complaints Procedure.

Complaints about a member of staff or the Principal

Where a complaint is about a member of staff, the Principal will investigate or will delegate responsibility to investigate to a senior member of staff (Deputy or Assistant Head for example).

Where the subject of the complaint is the Principal, the complainant should notify the clerk to the governors (see contact details at the end of the document). The formal, **Stage 2** process will then commence, but with the chair of governors as the individual responsible for the investigation, rather than the Principal.

For reasons of confidentiality, complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any disciplinary action against any member of staff, arising from a complaint.

The timescale of making a complaint

All complaints will be handled within clear and reasonable timescales. Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays. This means that during school holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the Academy will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay.

Timescales for investigating and/or responding to a complaint may also need to be extended in the event of a force majeure, a pandemic or as the result of enforced government restrictions. The Academy will inform parents if there is to be a delay to the anticipated timescales, for instance because of disruption to the Academy, staff absence or site closure.

Parents are expected to proceed with their complaint in a timely and reasonable manner. To enable effective review, the Academy therefore expects complaints to be raised within 3 months of an issue arising. Complaints outside this timeline will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. These may include (but are not limited to) subsequent information about the complaint coming to light and a valid explanation of why it was not possible to give notification of the complaint sooner. In such cases the Principal/chair of the governing board/clerk to the governing board (as appropriate) will review the circumstances, may seek advice, and determine whether the complaint is to be considered under this policy. It is also expected that if parents wish to escalate their complaint to the next stage of the procedure, they will generally do so within 15 working days of the conclusion of the current stage. Depending upon the circumstances, the Academy may, acting reasonably, treat a complaint as closed if a parent has not proceeded within this timeframe.

Maintaining records

Notes may be made to support the informal management of complaints and the Academy may also keep an informal record of any meeting held or any agreed action to be taken. These will be processed by the Academy in line with the relevant privacy notice (insert). Records taken and used throughout the complaints process, including correspondence, notes of meetings, telephone calls etc., will kept securely and in accordance with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018.

The record of complaints is kept for at least 7 years and may be kept for longer if there is a safeguarding aspect to the complaint].

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding Academy year is available on request from the Clerk to the LGB.

Maintaining confidentiality

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept strictly confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Concerns and complaints will therefore be dealt with confidentially at all stages and at the conclusion of the procedure. Confidentiality should be maintained all times by everyone involved. Complaints are not to be discussed externally by parents, including via social media.

Actions taken in relation to Academy staff that arise from complaints will remain confidential to the Academy and the member of staff concerned.

Safeguarding

Wherever a concern indicates that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, the Academy is duty bound to act on this which may include reporting this immediately to the local authority. Any action taken will be in accordance with the Academy's safeguarding policy.

Stage 2: FORMAL RESOLUTION

Investigation and Response (by the Principal of chair of LGB if the complaint is about the Principal.

1. A request for a formal investigation of a complaint by the Principal (or chair of the LGB if the complaint concerns the Head) should be made in writing, or by completing the formal complaints form that is included as Appendix 1 of this procedure. The Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

2. The Principal (or chair of the governing board as appropriate) will acknowledge the request in writing, **no later than 10 working days** (excluding those that fall in the school holidays) of receiving it. The written acknowledgment will, as far as possible, explain how the complaint will be investigated, the timescale for completing any necessary investigation and delivering a response.

3. A log of all correspondence in relation to the complaint will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Principles.

4. It may be necessary for the Principal (or Chair as appropriate) to carry out further investigation. In Investigating, the Principal (or Chair) will consider all evidence they consider relevant. This **may** include, but is not limited to:
   - obtaining statements from the complainant and those involved with the complaint
   - meeting/speaking with the complainant and those involved in the complaint
   - reviewing relevant correspondence and other documents relating to the complaint

5. After considering all matters the Principal/chair considers relevant, the Principal/chair of LGB can decide to:
   - uphold the complaint and direct that certain action be taken to resolve it
   - uphold the complaint in part (in other words find an aspect or aspects of the complaint to be valid, but not the whole complaint) direct for certain action to be taken, or
   - dismiss the complaint entirely

6. The Principal will inform the complainant of their decision in writing, the grounds on which it was made, and any actions taken as a result of the complaint. Wherever reasonably practicable, this will be **within 20 working days** (excluding those that fall in the Academy holidays) of having issued written acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint (see 2 above) or within 10 working days after any meeting or speaking with the parents to discuss the **Stage 2** complaint. The written notification shall also advise the complainant of their right to escalate the complaint to **stage 3** of the formal complaints procedure if they are not satisfied with the outcome at **stage 2**, including the contact details of the clerk to the governing board (see page 6).

7. Parents may request a review at **Stage 3** of the procedure within 15 working days of receipt of the stage 2 outcome letter.

8. If the parent does not invoke a **stage 3** review within this timeframe the Academy may, acting reasonably, deem the complaint closed.

Stage 3: Review by the Local Governing Body (LGB) Complaints Panel

The complainant is entitled to request a review of the decision and the actions taken at **Stage 2.** The review is carried out by a complaints panel, at a meeting convened by the LGB clerk and provides an opportunity for the complaint to be heard afresh.

Requests for a review of the decision taken at stage 3 should be made in writing to the LGB clerk (see contact details Page 6) **no later than 15 working days after receipt of written notification of the decision at Stage 2.** The request should include a summary of the complaint, why the complainant it dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 2 and the outcome they are seeking.

The LGB clerk or Chair of Governors will convene a meeting of the complaints panel and will organise the time and date of the Stage 3 review meeting, inviting all the attendees, collating all the relevant documentation and distributing this to all parties, no less than 5 working days in advance of the meeting. Minutes of the review meeting will be taken by the clerk and provided with the written notification of the decision taken at stage 3 (see 9 below).

The following steps are taken at **stage 3**

1. The clerk will acknowledge the written request for the complaint to be reviewed no later than ten working days (not including the school holidays) after receiving it.

2. The LGB clerk will convene a panel of **three** people who were not directly involved in the detail of the complaint, one of which must include **one** independent of the running and management of the Academy to review the complaint. A governor from a local governing body of a different school within United Learning, provided they have no conflict of interest, may sit as an independent panel member.

3. If the panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the meeting or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties usually not later than 5 working days prior to the meeting or 3 working days if requested after receipt of the full pack of documents.

4. The review meeting will take place within 20 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) of receipt of the written acknowledgement from the clerk (see 1 above).

5. The review meeting is not a court case and will be as informal as circumstances allow and conducted in such a manner as at the discretion of the Panel. The meeting may be convened remotely or face to face within school. The Panel members are not legally trained and therefore cannot making findings as to points of law.

6. The panel **may** speak with the following, either as part of the review meeting, or as part of any further investigation:

    - the complainant
    - the Principal (or chair of the LGB as appropriate) who investigated the complaint and made the decision at stage 2
    - relevant persons involved the complaint
    - persons whom, in the view of the panel, can provide relevant advice and information relating to the subject of the complaint and the review process at stage 3

7. Where the complainant, Principal and/or relevant person involved in the complaint have been invited to attend the review meeting, they are entitled to be accompanied by a family member/friend/representative as appropriate. However, legal representatives are not permitted to attend the review meeting.

8. The parents may attend and be accompanied at the panel meeting by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate. The parents should notify the LGB Clerk at least 3 working days in advance of the hearing of the name and occupation of an accompanying person (if relevant).

9. The Panel meeting will go ahead unless the complainant indicates that they are satisfied and do not wish to proceed further. A Panel meeting may proceed notwithstanding the complainant may subsequently decide not to attend, in which case, the Panel will consider the complaint in absentia and issue findings on the substance of the complaint, thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion.

10. Where the complaint is about a governor or the LGB itself, the complainant may request that the review meeting is held by an independent panel. This is at the discretion of the LGB/ United Learning who will notify the clerk of their decision. Where an entirely independent panel is required, timescales may be affected while the school source appropriate individuals for the review.

11. If possible, the panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the panel will decide how it should be carried out, and may undertake any such further investigation, and ask for any such further information as it considers necessary, in order to be able to reach a finding in respect of the complaint. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the panel will make findings as to whether the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and accordingly can decide to:
    - uphold the complaint and recommend that certain action be taken to resolve it;
    - uphold the complaint in part (in other words find an aspect or aspects of the complaint to be valid, but not the whole complaint) and recommend certain action to be taken, or
    - dismiss the complaint entirely.

12. The Panel may make recommendations to the Academy as a result of its deliberations but has no power to compel the Academy to take action.

13. The complainant, the Principal, (or chair of the LGB as appropriate) who investigated the complaint and made the decision at stage 1, and, where relevant, the person complained about will be informed in writing of the panel's findings and any recommendations, normally no later than 10 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) after the review meeting has taken place.

14. A confidential written record of all complaints that are made in accordance with the formal stage of this procedure will be kept by the Academy. The written record will include whether the complaint has been resolved following a formal procedure and whether it proceeded to a

panel review meeting. It will also refer to any action taken by the Academy, regardless of whether it has been upheld.

15. The Academy will ensure that, in accordance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, a copy of the findings and recommendations made at the panel review stage are provided in writing to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, as well being made available for inspection on the Academy premises by United Learning and the head teacher.

Stage 3 is the final stage at which the Academy will consider the complaint.

Right to appeal

1. **Contact United Learning.**

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint procedure, they may contact United Learning.

United Learning reserves the right to consider each complaint on a case-by-case basis. If deemed appropriate, it may appoint a senior representative to carry out a desktop exercise to review the complaint and the action taken by the Academy. They will then give a direction and ensure the complainant is appropriately informed.

They may either

- **Uphold** the outcome at stage 3; or
- **Overturn** the outcome at stage 3 and direct a further review by independent LGB panel

An independent review panel will consist of three governors, **all of whom** must be external to the LGB of the Academy. It will follow the same process outlined in stage 3 above. The decision of the designated UL representative or any subsequent review panel is **final and binding**.

Timescales:

Requests for UL review will not normally be considered beyond fifteen days from receipt of a stage 3 outcome unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Complainants will be given a written response to their complaint by UL within **15 school days** from the receipt of the request to review by United Learning's Central Office.

Independent review panels should aim to be convened within a further **15 working days** of receipt of the direction**.**

A letter of final outcome should be made available to the complainant within **5 working days of the Independent panel hearing.**

Complainants requesting review by United Learning are advised to contact the Head of Local Governance, Lesley Dolben Lesley.dolben@unitedlearning.org

Right of appeal to the EFSA

If parents are not satisfied they may choose to escalate their complaint to the EFSA online here; or by post at;

Academies Complaint and Customer Insight Unit, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT.

Complaints about governors

Where a complaint concerns a governor, the complainant should contact the LGB clerk. The LGB clerk will then determine the most appropriate course of action, seeking advice from the Head of Local Governance, as appropriate. This will depend upon the nature of the complaint.

Complaints about the CEO, UL officers or members of United Learning central team

Where a complaint concerns a member of United Learning staff, this should be referred to the Company Secretary, Alison Hussain, who will determine the most appropriate person to review the complaint.

Written complaints relating to the requirements of the EYFS Statutory Framework

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated in accordance with Stage One of the complaints procedure and you will be notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 calendar days of the complaint being received. Stage Two above will be available to you if you remain dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage One.

The School will provide Ofsted and ISI (as appropriate), on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, their outcome and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint, which will include details of whether the complaint was upheld.

You may also complain directly to ISI or OFSTED if you believe that the School is not meeting the EYFS requirements:

[ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net.]

Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 4666 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Responding to complaints campaigns

Occasionally schools can become the focus of a campaign and receive large volumes of complaints;

- All based on the same subject
- From complainants unconnected with the school

In these rare instances, the school will seek advice from United Learning central office and may respond using a template response to all complainants. Alternatively, the school may choose to publish a single response on its website. In these circumstances we would expect to respond to a complaint campaign within 30 working days.

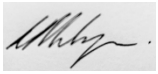
Vexatious Complaints

There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, and where central office has agreed to investigate, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue or a closely related issue that has already been dealt with under this complaints procedure, the relevant United Learning Director and the Chair of the LGB will inform parents in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant writes again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be recognised as vexatious and there will be no obligation on the part of the school or Central Office to respond to any further correspondence on the same issues or a closely related issue.

Whilst we understand that some matters may be potentially upsetting, if the conduct of the complainant is inappropriate, threatening or abusive (either in person or in written form), the school reserves the right to regard the matter as a vexatious complaint and there will be no obligation on the part of the school to respond.

Signed off by:

Name: Tom Knott **Signature:**  **Role:** Principal	**Name:** Anahita Milligan **Signature:**  **Role:** Chair of Governors

Approved By:	LGB
Policy Overseen by:	Tom Knott
Last Review Date:	July 2026
Review Frequency:	Annually
Next Review Date:	July 2027

Appendix 1

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS and return to the *[AMEND: e.g. Deputy Head]* who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.	
Your name	
Student's name	
Your relationship to the student	
Address	
Postcode	
Contact telephone number (1)	
Contact telephone number (2)	
Please give details of your complaint below	
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?)	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork?	**YES / NO**
If so, please give details.	
Signature:	**Date:**

Appendix 2 – Complaints Process – Timelines

