



Complaints Policy

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1. Statement of Intent

Vita Multi Academy Trust ("the Trust") is committed to resolving complaints at the earliest possible stage and, where possible, informally.

This policy ensures that complaints are handled fairly, impartially, and transparently, while supporting a culture of continuous improvement.

The procedure aligns with the Department for Education (DfE) Model Complaints Procedure (March 2023) and applies to all schools within the Trust, including Perins School, Sun Hill Junior School, and Perins Pre-School.

2. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance, including:

- Education Act 2002
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (Part 7 – Complaints; Part 6 – Provision of information)
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- DfE (2023) Best Practice Guidance for Academies Complaints Procedures
- Academy Trust Handbook (DfE, 2025)

3. Definitions

- A concern is an expression of worry or doubt seeking reassurance.
- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about an action taken or lack of action.

The Trust distinguishes between concerns and complaints, encouraging resolution at the lowest possible level.

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated unless the Trust determines it appropriate to do so.

4. Who Can Make a Complaint

This procedure is not limited to parents or carers. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint about the provision of facilities or services provided by the Trust or its schools.

Third parties may make complaints on behalf of another person with appropriate consent.

Complaints about external providers using Trust facilities should be directed to the provider's own complaints procedure.

5. Timeframes and Publication

Complaints should normally be made within three months of the event. Complaints received outside this timeframe will only be considered under exceptional circumstances.

Acknowledgement: within 3 school days.

Response: within 15–20 school days (or an update provided if further investigation is needed).

Complaints received during school holidays are considered on the first school day of the following term.

Publication: This procedure is published on the Trust and academy websites. Each academy will also publish the number of formal complaints registered under this procedure during the preceding academic year.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

- Complainant: Cooperate respectfully, provide full information promptly, and engage constructively.
- Headteacher: Investigates complaints about staff or school issues.
- Chief Executive Officer (CEO): Investigates complaints about Headteachers or central Trust services but does not participate in appeal panels.
- Chair of Trustees: Investigates complaints about the CEO.
- Clerk to the Trust Board: Coordinates complaints panel hearings and maintains records.
- Complaints Panel: Considers escalated complaints at Stage 2 impartially and independently.

7. Complaints Procedure

Optional Pre-Stage – Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, concerns will be addressed informally at school or Trust level (e.g. via a meeting or call with the relevant staff member or leader).

Informal resolution does not preclude access to the formal procedure at any time. Notes of informal discussions may be kept to avoid later disagreement.

Stage 1 – Formal Complaint (Investigation)

Formal complaints should be made in writing to the relevant Headteacher, or where the complaint concerns a Headteacher/ Provision Manager, to the CEO.

The complaint will be acknowledged within 3 school days. A full investigation will be conducted, involving interviews with relevant parties and review of evidence.

A written response will be provided within 15–20 school days, outlining findings, actions, and

how to escalate to Stage 2 if dissatisfied.

A written record is kept of all Stage 1 complaints, including whether they proceed to a panel hearing and any actions taken (whether upheld or not).

Stage 2 – Complaints Panel Review (Hearing)

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request a panel review by writing to the Clerk to the Trust Board within 15 school days of receiving the Stage 1 response.

A panel of at least three members will be convened, including one independent of the management and running of the school.

No one directly involved in the matter (including the CEO/Headteacher or the Stage 1 investigator) will sit on the panel.

The Clerk will acknowledge receipt within 3 school days and will aim to convene a hearing within 20 school days. Parties will receive the bundle at least 5 school days prior to the hearing.

Attendance and accompaniment: The complainant may attend and be accompanied by a relative or friend (legal representation is not normally necessary).

Outcome: The panel will make findings and recommendations and issue a written decision within 10 school days of the hearing. A copy will be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about.

The panel's findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the academy premises by the Board of Trustees (proprietor) and the Headteacher. The panel decision is final within the Trust.

8. Escalation to the Department for Education

If the complainant believes the Trust has not handled their complaint properly, or acted unlawfully or unreasonably, they may refer it to the Department for Education.

Contact: www.education.gov.uk/contactus or write to: Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD.

9. Confidentiality and Record Keeping

All complaint records will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

A written record is kept of all complaints made under Stage 1 (formal), including whether they proceed to a panel hearing and any actions taken (regardless of whether upheld).

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection requests access.

10. Additional Provisions

Unreasonable Complaints and Behaviour: The Trust may restrict communication or take appropriate action where behaviour is abusive, persistent, or vexatious. Violence or threats will be reported to the police.

Complaints Campaigns: If multiple complaints are received on the same issue, a standard response may be published.

Barring from Premises: The Trust may bar individuals from school sites where their behaviour poses a risk.

Fluency in English: Complaints about a staff member's spoken English will be handled fairly under this policy, with appropriate assessment and support.

Data Handling: Complaint-related records are retained in line with the Trust's Data Protection and Records Management policies.

11. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Trust Board to ensure continued compliance with DfE guidance and legislation.

The next scheduled review will take place in 2026.