The Rivers C.of E. Academy Trust

Complaints Policy

Burlish Park Primary School

Date approved by trustees:	July 2026
Next review/approval due:	July 2027

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1. Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant: The person holding a concern or complaint against the school or The Rivers CofE Academy Trust.

Investigator: The nominated person in the school or in The Rivers CofE Academy Trust's executive or leadership team for investigating the concern or complaint who is charged with establishing and presenting the relevant facts.

Complaints coordinator: The nominated person in the school or the trust's central team for coordinating responses and keeping the complainant informed and updated with the process.

Governance lead: The person responsible for coordinating the administration for the stage 3 complaint panel hearing for complaints about a trust school and the trust and the contact point for stage 2 complaints about the trust.

Complaints panel chair: The individual nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, who will ensure that the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial and that if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy.

Complaints panel member: No member of the panel will have prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.

2. Policy Aims and Principles

The Rivers CofE Academy Trust is committed to dealing effectively with any complaints you have about The Rivers CofE Academy Trust and its schools. This policy relates to concerns and complaints about the Rivers CofE Academy Trust and its schools.

The Rivers CofE Academy Trust is committed to listening and will manage all concerns and complaints seriously and in a positive way. No one will be penalised or treated unfairly as a result of making a complaint. We aim to put things right when they go wrong and to review our systems and procedures when we need to.

Where possible, The Rivers CofE Academy Trust and our schools believe it is best to deal with issues immediately, rather than trying to resolve them later. If there is a concern, please raise it with the relevant member of staff and they will try to resolve it informally immediately. Where lessons can be learned from addressing the concern, the member of staff will ensure they inform a member of the trust or the school's senior management team.

The school and The Rivers CofE Academy Trust will try to find reasonable resolutions.

The Rivers CofE Academy Trust is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints about the provision of facilities and/or services the trust and/or our schools provide. Exceptions to this may be where complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions). Unless complaints fall into any excluded categories, this complaints policy and procedure will be used.

The Rivers CofE Academy Trust and our schools will make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the trust's equality and diversity information and objectives.

This policy is consistent with all other policies adopted by The Rivers CofE Academy Trust and its schools and is written in line with current legislation and guidance.

2.1 The difference between a concern and a complaint

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

- 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*'.

2.2 How to raise a concern or make a complaint

We seek to resolve complaints informally in the first instance.

If your complaint has not been able to be resolved informally, then stage 1 of our complaints process is initiated. For ease of use, a template complaint form is provided at the end of this policy in appendix 2.

If there is a difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, the school's complaints coordinator Mrs Wright will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the headteacher will refer the concern 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.

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance to Mrs Lindley at the school via the school office or by email. Please mark as private and confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to Director of Education via complaints@riverscofe.co.uk or by post to Director of Education, The Rivers CofE Academy Trust, Jenny Lind Building, Farrier Street, Worcester, WR1 3BZ. Please mark as private and confidential.

Complaints about the trust central team should be addressed to the CEO via complaints@riverscofe.co.uk or by post to CEO, The Rivers CofE Academy Trust, Jenny Lind Building, Farrier Street, Worcester, WR1 3BZ. Please mark as private and confidential.

Complaints about the chief executive officer (CEO) or a trustee of the trust should be addressed to the chair of trustees via complaints@riverscofe.co.uk or by post to Chair of Trustees, The Rivers CofE Academy Trust, Jenny Lind Building, Farrier Street, Worcester, WR1 3BZ.

Complaints about the chair of trustees should be addressed to the vice-chair of trustees via complaints@riverscofe.co.uk or by post to Vice-Chair of Trustees, The Rivers CofE Academy Trust, Jenny Lind Building, Farrier Street, Worcester, WR1 3BZ.

If you require help in completing the complaint form, please contact the school office. You can also ask a third-party organisation, for example, 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.

2.3 Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints under this policy. However, the headteacher, CEO or chair of trustees, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

2.4 Timescale for Making a complaint

Any complaint must be raised 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 not consider complaints made outside of this timeframe unless there are exceptional circumstances.

2.5 Complaints received out of term time

The Rivers CofE Academy Trust and its schools will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

2.6 Scope of this complaints policy

This policy covers all complaints about the trust and any of its schools. However, some complaints are covered by other statutory procedures or trust policies, including those listed below.

- Admissions to schools
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs
- Matters relating to child protection
- Exclusions
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff conduct (complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint (due to confidentiality and employment law). However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.

For further information of who should be contacted where a complaint relates to any of these matters please see the table in appendix 1.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example, the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action against The Rivers CofE Academy Trust or one of its schools in relation to their complaint, the trust will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

2.7 Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, The Rivers CofE Academy Trust and our schools want to resolve the 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 matter relating to the complaint 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

2.8 Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing. We reserve the right to move forward with an investigation even after a complaint has been withdrawn.

2.9 Complaints The Rivers CofE Academy Trust cannot normally consider

The Rivers CofE Academy Trust cannot normally consider complaints in the following circumstances:

- If the complaint is received more than three months after the incident occurred (see section 2.4).
- If the complaint has been made previously to The Rivers CofE Academy Trust or the school about the same issue which has been fully investigated and/or resolved.
- Where the complaint is anonymous. However, the headteacher the chair of trustees or the CEO (if appropriate), will determine whether an anonymous complaint warrants further investigation.
- Where complaints are frivolous, vexatious, abusive or malicious.
- Serial and unreasonable complaints (see below).
- Where a complaint is made by a third party on behalf of another person without their authority.
- Where the complaint is about a pupil's education, health and care plan (EHCP).
- Matters that are the subject of legal action.
- If the complaint is about a third-party provider of a service that is organised or facilitated by us – complaints of this nature should be directed to the service provider.*
- Where complaints are about things that are out of scope of this policy (see sections 2.6 and section 4 for details of where these complaints should be directed).*

* Although these complaints cannot be formally investigated, they should be brought to the attention of the school or trust as we may be able to resolve the complaint or provide additional information/support.

2.10 Serial and unreasonable complaints

The Rivers CofE Academy Trust is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our schools. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable

behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The Rivers CofE Academy Trust defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

The headteacher and a member of the executive team will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school.

3. Making a Complaint

At the informal stage or stage 1, complaints can be made in person, by telephone or in writing. For ease of use a template complaint form is provided at the end of this policy.

3.1 Who should I contact to make a complaint?

School complaints School complaints coordinator	Name: Mrs Wright Email: office-bp@riverscofe.co.uk
Trust complaints Trust contact	Email: complaints@riverscofe.co.uk Jenny Lind Building Farrier Street Worcester WR1 3BZ

3.2 Records

Every complaint notified to a member of staff must be recorded, detailing the action taken. A written record of this will be kept in a complaint file which includes all of the evidence considered.

The complaint file will remain confidential except where;

- access is requested by the Secretary of State;
- disclosure is required in the course of an academy inspection;
- an individual has a legal right to access their own personal data contained within such documentation; or
- under other legal authority

Any requests for disclosure of any or all sections of the file will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and in line with data protection principles. The trust will keep all complaints records for the duration of the pupil's time at school.

All complaints will be recorded in a complaints log, which details the date the complaint was made, what stage the complaint went to, whether the complaint was resolved and any actions that occurred as a result of the complaint.

3.3 Complaints procedure

Most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis. Concerns should be raised with the class teacher or headteacher/senior leader in the first instance.

Formal complaints will normally follow the stages outlined below. The Rivers CofE Academy Trust has a three-stage formal process when dealing with complaints. Each stage is followed until the complaint is resolved If a complaint is resolved at stage one, for example, stage two will not commence and the matter is closed.

1. Stage 1: Investigation by the headteacher - where attempts at informal resolution have failed or if the complaint is of a serious nature.
2. Stage 2: Review by the executive team - where the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of stage 1 or where the complaint is in relation to the headteacher.
3. Stage 3: Complaint panel hearing - where the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at stages 1 and/or 2.

3.4 Complaints about a trust school

If your concern or complaint has not had a resolution informally, our formal process initiates.

3.4.1 Stage 1: Referral to headteacher

Stage 1 involves the complainant making the complaint in person, by telephone or in writing (using the formal complaint form in appendix 2) to the headteacher (unless the complaint is about the headteacher).

All complaints at this stage must normally be received in writing within three months of the incident as outlined in section 2.4.

- The complaint will be investigated by the headteacher or suitable person appointed by the headteacher.
- If the complaint is about the headteacher, the complaint will be reviewed centrally by a member of the trust's executive team and the complaint may be escalated to stage 2.
- The date the complaint is received will be recorded and an acknowledgement of the complaint will be sent to the complainant within 5 school days.
- The acknowledgement will confirm the arrangements for investigating the complaint and the timescales.
- The investigator may delegate the task of collating the information to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken.
- During the investigation, the head teacher (or investigator) will meet with the complainant/s and others involved in the matter, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish, and keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.
- At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within 20 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.
- If the 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 school will take to resolve the complaint.
- The headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 1.
- Complaints about the headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to complaints@riverscofe.co.uk .
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint under stage 1 of this complaints policy, the complainant may write to complaints@riverscofe.co.uk asking for the complaint to be reviewed by the trust's executive team under stage 2 of this policy. The request, detailing the reasons why the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, should be made in writing (if not already completed, the complainant must complete the formal complaint form – see appendix 2) within 5 school days of receiving the letter confirming the outcome of stage 1. The complainant should not repeat matters raised in their original complaint letter or attach documentation already provided. Furthermore, the complainant should not introduce any new complaint or include evidence unrelated to the initial complaint.

3.4.2 Stage 2: Review by a trust executive

- The trust will acknowledge receipt of the request for the complaint to be considered under stage 2 of the complaints policy within 5 school days.
- A trust executive or delegated trust leader will be appointed and will be provided with all documentation relating to the complaint within 10 school days of receipt of the request for a review under stage 2, including the record of the mediation (if applicable), the original letter of complaint (or complaint form), any documentation provided by the complainant with their complaint, all investigation records under stage 1 and the outcome under stage 1.
- The trust executive or delegated trust leader will review all of the documentation received and consider the matters raised in complaint and the investigation carried out under stage 1. The executive or delegated trust leader will only speak to the persons involved in the matters raised where it is deemed necessary. Where the executive or delegated trust leader does speak to a pupil or a member of staff whose conduct is in issue, they will be accompanied as set out in the safeguarding and HR policies. The complainant will be offered a meeting with a representative of the executive team or delegated trust leader, who will listen to the complainant and understand what they may deem to be an acceptable resolution.
- All meetings held at stage 2, will be minuted by a trust representative.
- The trust's executive or delegated trust leader will write to the complainant confirming the outcome of the review within 20 school days from the date that the request for a review was received, where possible. If the trust's executive or delegated trust leader is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.
- The letter will set out whether the executive or delegated trust leader agrees/does not agree with the findings and conclusion under stage 1 and give reasons, as well as responding to any feedback/comments/issues arising from the stage 1 investigation.
- The letter will inform the complainant that, if they are unsatisfied with the outcome of the stage 2 review, they should write to the executive or delegated trust leader named on the decision letter via complaints@riverscofe.co.uk within 10 school days of receipt of the letter requesting a complaint panel hearing under stage 3 of this complaints policy and detailing why they are not satisfied with the outcome at stage 2. The complainant should not repeat matters raised in their original complaint letter or attach documentation already provided. Furthermore, the

complainant should not introduce any new complaint or include evidence unrelated to the initial complaint.

3.4.3 Stage 3: Panel hearing

Stage 3 is the final stage of the complaints process where the complainant can request a complaints panel.

The panel is independent and impartial. No member of the panel will have prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it. The complaints panel will be chaired by a trustee or a senior executive from The Rivers CofE Academy Trust and a clerk will attend to oversee the running of the panel and to take minutes. Electronic recordings of the panel hearing will not normally be permitted and, in any event, would require the consent of all those present.

The panel will be held in private and its aim is to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the academy and the complainant. However, it is recognised that this might not always be possible and it may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

The complainant may bring a relative or friend to the panel meeting with prior notification or they may wish to submit a statement in their absence.

- The administration for stage 3 complaint panel hearings will be handled by the governance lead, hereinafter referred to as "clerk".
- The clerk will acknowledge receipt of a request to escalate to stage 3 within 5 school days.
- The panel will be arranged by the clerk at a location and time convenient to all parties. This meeting will normally take place no longer than 20 school days from the date the panel was requested. Any delay in timescales will be communicated to the complainant as soon as possible in writing. If the offer of three proposed meeting dates is rejected without good reason, the clerk will coordinate with the panel to decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the absence of the complainant on the basis of written submissions from both parties.
- The clerk will inform the complainant of the names of the complaint panel members as soon as this has been arranged.
- The panel will consist of three people and one other person who is independent of the management and running of the trust/school. The composition of the panel will include:
  - a trustee from The Rivers CofE Academy Trust Board of Trustees
  - a senior executive from The Rivers CofE Academy Trust
  - an independent panel member
- The panel 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 one of the procedure.

The panel can take the following action:

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

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

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- recommend changes to systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur

The outcome of the complaints panel, including the findings and recommendations, will be communicated to all parties i.e. the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained

about, on the day or a letter will be sent (by email or otherwise) confirming the outcome within 10 school days.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

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

3.5 Complaints about The Rivers CofE Academy Trust

All complaints about The Rivers CofE Academy Trust must normally be received in writing within three months of the incident as outlined in section 2.4.

There may be a time when a complaint is received is regarding the actions of The Rivers CofE Academy Trust and/or a central team staff member. In these instances, the procedures for dealing with such complaints differ from those regarding schools.

The process for complaining about The Rivers CofE Academy Trust follows three stages. Before the formal process commences, informal concerns can be made over the telephone, by email or post. Concerns should be raised directly with the staff member involved. If your concerns are not able to be resolved directly with the staff member involved, the process detailed below should be followed.

3.5.1 Stage 1 – Referral to CEO, chair of trustees or vice-chair of trustees

- A formal complaint should be made in writing to The Rivers CofE Academy Trust's CEO. If it is a minor complaint, then this will be managed by the line manager of the person who the complaint involves. Where the complaint cannot be resolved immediately, a full response will be provided by the CEO within 20 school days. The CEO may delegate fact finding to a member of the executive team or delegated trust leader.
- If the complaint is considered to be complex or falls under one of the categories detailing where complaints can be escalated, The Rivers CofE Academy Trust's CEO will acknowledge the complaint within 5 school days, confirming that the complaint will be dealt with at stage 2 of the procedure.
- If the complaint is about the CEO, the complaint should be addressed to the chair of trustees. The complaint will be reviewed by the chair of trustees and may be escalated to stage 2.
- If a formal complaint form is received about the chair, the complaint will be referred to the vice-chair for investigation. A full response will be provided within 20 school days.

3.5.2 Stage 2 – Review by a trust executive

Stage 2 of the procedure is for the complaint to be reviewed by a member of the executive team unless relating to the CEO. It is the responsibility of the complainant to request a review.

- To request a review, the complainant should write to The Rivers CofE Academy Trust's governance lead within 20 school days of being notified of the outcome of stage 1, detailing why they remain unhappy with the stage 1 response.
- This request will be acknowledged by the governance lead within 5 school days.
- The governance lead will pass the request on to a member of the executive team for review and will remain the main point of contact at this stage.
- The task of collating the information may be delegated to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken.

- The executive member reviewing the complaint may take the decision to meet with the complainant and/or any relevant people named within the complaint.
- A full and final response to the complaint will be communicated in writing within 20 school days of the complaint being allocated to a member of the executive team. Any delays will be communicated to the complainant in writing. The letter will inform the complainant that, if they are unsatisfied with the outcome of the stage 2 review, they should write to the trust's governance lead within 10 school days of receipt of the letter requesting a complaint panel hearing under stage 3 of this complaints policy and detailing why they are not satisfied with the outcome at stage 2. Furthermore, the complainant should not introduce any new complaint or include evidence unrelated to the initial complaint.
- In stage 2, where the complaint is about the CEO, the investigation will be carried out by the chair of the trust board or the chair may delegate this to another member of the board.

3.5.3 Stage 3: Panel hearing
Stage 3 is the final stage of the complaints process where the complainant can request a complaints panel.

- The administration for stage 3 complaint panel hearings will be handled by a senior member of the trust's governance team, hereinafter referred to as "clerk".
- The clerk will acknowledge receipt of a request to escalate to stage 3 within 5 school days.
- The panel will be arranged by the clerk at a location and time convenient to all parties. This meeting will not normally take place longer than 20 school days from the date the panel was requested. Any delay in timescales will be communicated to the complainant as soon as possible in writing.
- The makeup and procedures of the complaints panel will follow the same process and composition as detailed in paragraph 3.4.3.

4 Next Steps

If the complainant believes that a school or trust complaint was not handled in accordance with the published complaints policy or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, the complainant can contact the Department for Education after they have completed all stages.

Complain to DfE

DfE will consider your complaint. They may use the information you provide to recommend improvements to school policies.

DfE cannot deal with complaints about:

- fines for taking holidays in term time (sometimes known as a 'fixed penalty notice')
- lack of compensation or apologies from the school
- the behaviour of school staff

If you have followed all the steps in the school's complaints procedure and believe your complaint was not dealt with correctly, you can complain to DfE via this link here.

5 Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or earlier if required, for example:

- where there are changes in legislation and/or government guidance
- as a result of any other significant change or event
- in the event that the policy is determined not to be effective

If there are urgent concerns about this policy, please raise these with the school headteacher or the CEO in the first instance. This will enable them to consider whether a review of the policy is required/recommended, in advance of the review date.

Appendix 1: Contacts

Stage	Section	Who to Contact
Informal stage	2	Verbally to school staff, headteacher or school office
Stage 1	3.4.1	In person, by telephone or in writing to the headteacher (use form in appendix 2). If the complaint is about the headteacher, in writing to complaints@riverscofe.co.uk (attach complaints form in appendix 2)
Stage 2	3.4.2	In writing (if not already completed, the complainant must complete the formal complaint form – see appendix 2) to the director of education via complaints@riverscofe.co.uk or by post to Director of Education, The Rivers CofE Academy Trust, Jenny Lind Building, Farrier Street, Worcester, WR1 3BZ. Please mark as private and confidential.
Stage 3	3.4.3	In writing to the executive named on the stage 2 decision letter via complaints@riverscofe.co.uk or by post to the executive named on the stage 2 decision letter, The Rivers CofE Academy Trust, Jenny Lind Building, Farrier Street, Worcester, WR1 3BZ. Please mark as private and confidential.
Trust Complaint (all stages)	3.5	In writing via complaints@riverscofe.co.uk (use complaints form in appendix 2) or by post to CEO (if the complaint is about the CEO, the complaint should be addressed to the chair of trustees), The Rivers CofE Academy Trust, Jenny Lind Building, Farrier Street, Worcester, WR1 3BZ. Please mark as private and confidential.

Appendix 2: Formal Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the headteacher or school office who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:	
Pupil's name (if applicable):	
Your relationship to pupil (if applicable):	
Address and postcode:	
Daytime telephone number:	Evening telephone number:
Email address:	
Details of complaint (including the names of all persons involved and the dates of incidents referred to):	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (for example, who did you speak to and what was the response)?	
What key actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.	
Signature:	Date:
For official use:	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
Name of person complainant referred to:	
Action taken:	
Signature:	Date:

Appendix 3: Exceptions Contact Details

Contact details for organisations relating to complaints that are covered by other trust policies or procedures.

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions to schools Statutory assessment of special educational needs	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process or via the local authority.
Matters relating to child protection	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding and or the relevant local authority children's social care/safeguarding contact.
Exclusions	Matters relating to a pupil's exclusion are handled under the trust's exclusion policy.
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.
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 trust'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 (due to confidentiality and employment law). However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.

Appendix 4: Complaints Procedure Flowchart – School Complaints

If the complaint is about the school

Informal stage
Concern raised with a member of school staff, headteacher or school office.

Matter concluded
No further action

Matter not concluded
Move to stage 1

Stage 1
*(**formal stage** – referral to headteacher)*
Formal complaint to headteacher in person, by telephone or in writing. Acknowledged within 5 school days and written response within 20 school days. If unsatisfied with outcome, complainant may write to complaints@riverscofe.co.uk within 5 school days of receiving the outcome asking for the complaint to be reviewed by the trust's executive team under stage 2.

Matter concluded
No further action

Matter not concluded
Move to stage 2

Stage 2
*(**formal stage** – review by trust executive)*
Request for complaint to be considered under stage 2 acknowledged within 5 school days. Trust executive writes to complainant confirming the outcome of the review within 20 school days of receiving the request.
If unsatisfied with the outcome of stage 2, the complainant may write to the executive named on the decision letter via complaints@riverscofe.co.uk within 10 school days of receiving the outcome letter requesting a complaint panel hearing under stage 3 of this policy.

Matter concluded
No further action

Matter not concluded
Move to stage 3

Stage 3
*(**final formal stage** – panel hearing – this is the final stage of the trust's complaints process)*
Formal complaint reviewed by impartial panel (one panel member will be independent of the trust). The panel will normally take place no longer than 20 school days from the date the panel was requested. The outcome will be confirmed in writing within 10 school days.

If the complaint is about the headteacher

Informal stage – complaint about the headteacher
Concern made to complaints@riverscofe.co.uk

Matter concluded
No further action

Matter not concluded
Move to stage 2

Stage 1
*(**formal stage** – referral to trust's exec team)*
Formal complaint to a member of the trust's executive team via complaints@riverscofe.co.uk Acknowledged within 5 school days. May be escalated straight to stage 2. If unsatisfied with the outcome, the complainant may write to complaints@riverscofe.co.uk within 5 school days of receiving the outcome asking for the complaint to be reviewed under stage 2.

Matter concluded
No further action

Matter not concluded
Move to stage 2

Stage 2
*(**formal stage** – review by a trust executive)*
Request for complaint to be considered under stage 2 acknowledged within 5 school days. Trust executive writes to complainant confirming the outcome of the review within 20 school days of receiving the request.
If unsatisfied with the outcome of stage 2, the complainant may write to the executive named on the decision letter via complaints@riverscofe.co.uk within 10 school days of receiving the outcome letter requesting a complaint panel hearing under stage 3 of this policy.

Matter concluded
No further action

Matter not concluded
Move to stage 3

Stage 3
*(**final formal stage** – panel hearing – this is the final stage of the trust's complaints process)*
Formal complaint reviewed by impartial panel (one panel member will be independent of the trust). The panel will normally take place no longer than 20 school days from the date the panel was requested. The outcome will be confirmed in writing within 10 school days.

Appendix 5: Complaints Procedure Flowchart – Trust Complaints

Informal stage
Concern raised with a member of the central team.

Matter concluded
No further action

Matter not concluded
Move to stage 1

Stage 1
*(**formal stage** – review by trust leader, chair or vice-chair of trustees – may be escalated straight to stage 2)*
Formal complaint to The Rivers CofE Academy Trust's CEO or chair of trustees if the complaint is about the CEO. Acknowledged within 5 school days and written response within 20 school days. Complaint may be escalated straight to stage 2 by the CEO or chair of trustees.

Matter concluded
No further action

Matter not concluded
Move to stage 2

Stage 2
*(**formal stage** – review by trust executive)*
Request for complaint to be considered under stage 2 acknowledged within 5 school days. Trust executive writes to complainant confirming the outcome of the review within 20 school days of receiving the request.
If unsatisfied with the outcome of stage 2, the complainant may write to the executive named on the decision letter via complaints@riverscofe.co.uk within 10 school days of receiving the outcome letter requesting a complaint panel hearing under stage 3 of this policy.

Matter concluded
No further action

Matter not concluded
Move to stage 3

Stage 3
*(**final formal stage** – panel hearing - this is the final stage of the trust's complaints process)*
Request for complaint to be considered under stage 3 acknowledged within 5 school days. Formal complaint reviewed by impartial panel (one panel member will be independent of the trust). The panel will normally take place no longer than 20 school days from the date the panel was requested. The outcome will be confirmed in writing within 10 school days.