

COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

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| Monitoring, evaluation and review: The Principal and Board of Governors will review this policy at least every two years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout by UTC Leeds. | |

1. Introduction

The policy and procedures within this document are addressed to the Senior Leadership Team of UTC Leeds; to all members of staff (teaching and non-teaching staff); and to parents at enrolment interviews. A copy is also available on the UTC Leeds website.

The policy has been approved by UTC Leeds Board of Governors (TBC). It sets out the process that UTC Leeds will follow when handling concerns and complaints. It takes account of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010 (SI 2010/1997). (Certain of the procedures can only be carried out during term time).

2. Scope

This policy covers most complaints that UTC Leeds is likely to receive from parents and students, except those for which there is an alternative process such as:

- Complaints regarding special needs assessments – for which parents have a right of appeal via an SEN Tribunal
- Concerns about Admissions or Exclusions – for which parents have a specific right of appeal to UTC Leeds Board of Governors.
- Allegations of child abuse – which are dealt with through the Child Protection Policy
- Complaints raised by staff members – which are dealt with through the Grievance Process.

3. Values and aims

UTC Leeds takes seriously any concern or complaint, as we believe that tackling issues at the earliest possible stage will improve UTC Leeds, enhance learning, prevent issues escalating and reduce the number of formal complaints.

- 3.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure that a concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and is resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, it is fair to those concerned and it helps to promote parents' and students' confidence in our ability to safeguard and promote welfare. We will try to resolve every concern or complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong, and where necessary, reviewing our systems and procedures in light of the circumstances.
- 3.2 **Policy Statement:** we need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. We recognise that a concern which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment, which would be damaging to relationships and also to our culture. Parents and students should never feel - or be made to feel - that a complaint will be taken amiss or will adversely affect a student or his/her opportunities at UTC Leeds. The policy however distinguishes between a concern which can be resolved informally and a formal complaint which will require investigation.

4. Dealing with Complaints – Initial concerns

The procedure which follows deals with complaints but the underlying principle at UTC Leeds is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure should not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. In most cases the class teacher or the individual delivering a service in the case of extended UTC Leeds provision, will receive the first approach. It would be helpful if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot, including apologising where necessary.

5. Framework of Principles

Our Complaints Procedure:

- Encourages resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible.
- Is easily accessible and publicised.
- Is simple to understand and use.
- Is impartial.
- Is non-adversarial.
- Allows swift handling within agreed time-limits for action and keeping people informed of progress.
- Ensures a full and fair investigation.
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality.
- Addresses all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary.
- Provides information to UTC Leeds's senior leadership team so that services can be improved.

6. Investigating Complaints

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint will make sure that they:

- Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved.
- Clarifies the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved.
- Meets with the complainant or contacts them (if unsure or further information is necessary).
- Clarifies what the complainant feels would put things right.

- Interviews those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
- Conducts the interview with an open mind and is prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Keeps notes of the interview with due regard to confidentiality and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

7. Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure UTC Leeds will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology.
- An explanation.
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
- An assurance that the event complained of will not recur.
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again.
- An undertaking to review UTC Leeds policies in light of the complaint.

UTC Leeds will encourage complainants to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage.

8. Vexatious Complaints

This procedure should limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of UTC Leeds Board of Governors is able under this policy to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

9. Publication and circulation of the Complaints Procedure

UTC Leeds Board of Governors will publicise the complaints policy and procedure in:

- The information given to new parents when their children join UTC Leeds
- UTC Leeds website

It will be available on request from UTC Leeds.

10. Complaints Procedure

This policy describes a four stage procedure:

- Stage 1:** Informal raising of a concern or complaint notified orally or in writing to a member of staff
- Stage 2:** A formal complaint in writing to the UTC Leeds's Principal
- Stage 3:** A renewed complaint in writing to the Chair of the UTC Leeds's Board of Governors.
- Stage 4:** Complaint procedure referred to the Education Funding Agency.

Stage 1: Concern or complaint Heard by Staff Member

Where a concern or complaint arises, the first reference should be to the Form Tutor. In most cases the concern can be satisfactorily resolved at this stage. If, however, the issues raised require further enquiries, the Form Tutor will make such enquiries and report back to the complainant either verbally or in writing within 5 working days.

If following the informal process, the complainant is not satisfied with the response, the matter should be referred through the formal process.

Stage 2: Complaint in writing to the Principal

This stage in our procedures deals with written complaints, where the complainant is not satisfied with outcome of Stage 1 above. Normally, written complaints should be addressed to the Principal using the Complaints Form (see appendix B). If, however, the complaint concerns the Principal personally, it should be sent to the Chair of the Board of Governors of UTC Leeds.

Acknowledgement of written complaints will be made, in writing, within 3 working days. This will include details of what will happen next, the timescales involved and the person who will be in charge of progressing the complaint.

As part of the investigation, the complainant may be invited to meet with the Principal (or person in charge of the complaint) to discuss the detail of the complaint. If desired, the complainant may be accompanied by a friend/advocate. Written records will be kept of meetings and telephone conversations during the investigation.

The person who has been nominated to carry out the investigation will inform the complainant and, where applicable, the person complained about in writing, of the outcome within 10 working days. This will include a full explanation of the decision and the actions, where appropriate, that UTC Leeds will take / has taken to resolve the complaint. The complainant will be offered the opportunity to discuss the response to the investigation. If the complaint is unlikely to be fully investigated within the 10 working day timeframe, a further written acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant detailing the progress to date and providing a revised target date for a full response.

All documentation with regard to the investigation and its outcome will be retained on the premises and treated as confidential, held by the PA to Principal, and will be available on request for inspection by the Board of Governors and the Principal.

Stage 3: Complaint in writing to the Chair of the Board of Governors

If, following due process, the complainant feels that the complaint has not been investigated appropriately or the complainant wishes to take the complaint further then they should write to the Chair of UTC Leeds Board of Governors. This should be done within 10 days of receipt of the outcome letter from Stage 2 of the procedure.

The Chair of the Board will acknowledge receipt of the complainant's letter within 3 working days. If appropriate, the Chair will then convene a Complaints Panel of the Board. The Panel shall consist of 3 Governors who have not been involved previously.

The Panel will meet within 20 working days of receiving the complaint. The Chair of the Board will notify the complainant in writing, at least 5 working days in advance of the date, time and venue for the panel meeting. The complainant will be invited to attend the Panel and can be accompanied by a friend/advocate. The Principal or Chair of the Board will be asked to prepare a written response for the Panel in response to the complaint. All documentation will be made available to the panel and the complainant in advance of the Panel meeting.

Following the Panel meeting, the complainant and, where applicable, the person complained about will receive written notification of the outcome within 5 working days of the meeting.

The details of the meeting, minutes and all records and correspondence relating to the complaint will be retained on the premises and kept confidential, held by the PA to Principal, and will be available on request for inspection by the Board of Governors and the Principal.

If the complainant has been through all the stages of UTC Leeds's complaints procedure but remains dissatisfied, they can ask the Education Funding Agency to review the handling of their complaint.

Stage 4: complaint procedure referred to the Education Funding Agency

If, following Stages 1 to 3, the complainant remains dissatisfied, the complaint can be taken to the Education Funding Agency.

Details of the role of the EFA are set out on the Department for Education website at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/complaintsprocedure/b00212240/making-complaint-school>

Complaints to the EFA can be made in writing to:

Department for Education
Castle View House
East Lane
Runcorn
Cheshire
WA7 2GJ

APPENDIX A - CHECKLIST FOR PANELS

Checklist for a Panel Hearing

The panel needs to take the following points into account:

- The hearing is as informal as possible
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence. Students may not appear as witnesses, but they may provide statements
- After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses
- The Principal may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken
- The Principal is then invited to explain UTC Leeds's actions and be followed by UTC Leeds's witnesses
- The complainant may question both the Principal and the witnesses after each has spoken
- The panel may ask questions at any point
- The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint
- The Principal is then invited to sum up UTC Leeds's actions and response to the complaint
- Both parties leave together while the panel decides on the issues
- The Chairman explains that both parties will hear from the panel within a set time scale.

APPENDIX B - COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete and return to(PA to Principal)

Your name:

Student's name:

Your relationship to the Student:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.

(To whom did you speak and when. What was the response)?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date: