



ST. MARY'S
ACADEMY TRUST

St Mary's Academy Trust

Grievance Procedure

Date agreed by Board: **27th November 2017**

Date to be reviewed: **27th November 2019**

1.0 **PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

The purpose of the procedure is to enable a problem or concern an employee may have about their work, working conditions or relationship with colleagues to be addressed and where possible resolved. The procedure applies to all Trust employees.

Employees should aim to settle most grievances informally with their line manager with many issues resolved during the course of the working relationship. However where issues/concerns are unable to be resolved in this way an employee should use this procedure. At the informal grievance stage employees have the right to inform their Trade Union (if relevant) in case the matter proceeds to a formal grievance.

Employees should utilise this procedure where they are unhappy about the treatment they have received and consider the Trust/School has failed to adequately apply their rights.

2.0 **KEY PRINCIPLES**

Grievances should be raised by an employee(s) within **3 months** of the incident/issue taking place.

An appropriate manager/governor/committee member, who is not subject to the grievance, should deal with the grievance promptly. In exceptional circumstances time may be extended to allow an investigation of the facts however; in all situations advice in respect of the investigation should be sought from HR.

There will be matters outside of the control of the Trust and the scope of the procedure that cannot be addressed via the Grievance Procedure:

- Statutory adjustments to pay and allowances (e.g. National Insurance, Income Tax, Pension Scheme).
- Personal matters not directly related to employment. Employees may wish to discuss these with their Headteacher and request a referral to the Trust's preferred Health Counsellor.

There are some issues which the procedure is unable to deal with and other Human Resources procedures should be utilised;

- Disciplinary Procedure,
- Performance in Employment (Capability) Procedure,
- Long Term Ill Health and Managing & Supporting Attendance Procedures,
- Job Evaluation Scheme,
- Dignity at Work Procedure however; this will follow the grievance process in relation to any formal investigations carried out.
- Right to Request Flexible Working
- Recruitment and Selection

An employee may during the course of a disciplinary process, raise a grievance. Where the grievance is related to a disciplinary case then it is appropriate that both matters are dealt with at the same time i.e. at one meeting. However it is advisable that another manager/governor/committee member is allocated responsibility for investigating the disciplinary aspect of the case. In instances where the grievance has no relationship to the disciplinary matter then both procedures may be dealt with concurrently.

An employee is entitled to be accompanied throughout the process at each meeting by a work colleague or designated Trade Union/Professional Association Official. However, this right does not extend to friends/family or professional persons such as solicitors and barristers.

Collective Grievances - Where two or more employees raise an identical grievance the employees may agree to have them addressed in the same grievance process. The employees may be represented throughout this process by a Trade Union Representative, one of the nominated employees or address the meeting individually. Collective grievances will follow the same process as an individual employee grievance.

3.0 **ROLE OF THE HEADTEACHER/LGB/BOARD/HR COMMITTEE**

The Local Governing Body has overall responsibility for the staff within the school. The LGB may delegate these responsibilities to a group of Governors. It should be noted however, that any Governor hearing a case must have had no previous involvement in the grievance process.

In the case of a grievance against the Headteacher, the representative of the Board will take on the role of Manager as referred to throughout the procedure.

All employees have the right to appeal at any of the formal stages to the HR Committee.

The Investigator appointed to undertake the investigation should be of an appropriate managerial level/appropriate governor/committee member who has had no prior involvement in the case and must not be an individual who is named in the grievance.

4.0 **MEDIATION**

In some cases the Headteacher may consider that mediation can be used to assist in resolving issues/concerns. Mediation is a voluntary process where the mediator helps two or more people in dispute to attempt to reach an agreement.

Mediation can be particularly effective when used to deal with minor issues, concerns or misunderstandings that are being dealt with at the informal action stage or before matters escalate.

Please contact HR for further guidance about the mediation process and how it can be accessed.

5.0 **ASSESSMENT OF THE INITIAL ISSUE/CONCERN**

When the issue/concern is raised with the Headteacher/Chair of Governors, it is recommended that an overview of the situation is undertaken promptly so that a decision can be made on whether they can address the issues/concerns or if they need to forward the grievance to HR and the Chief Executive for an independent Investigator at an appropriate level to be appointed.

This may involve:

- Speaking to the employee concerned.
- Speaking to any witnesses
- Ensuring other evidence is considered e.g. documentary evidence etc.

Following this initial investigation it is advisable that the Headteacher/Chair of Governors provides a summary of their findings and agrees with the individual submitting the grievance the appropriate course of action:

- The issues/concerned can be dealt with by a discussion between the parties concerned.
- Mediation is appropriate should all parties agree
- An investigation is necessary to establish facts and details of the grievance will be forwarded to HR and the Chief Executive for an independent Investigator at an appropriate level.

6.0 **FORMAL GRIEVANCE**

Where the grievance is of such a serious nature that an informal process **cannot** be followed the employee is required to submit their issues/concerns in writing to the Headteacher (or the Board if the issue is about the Headteacher) by completing a [Grievance Notification Form \(GN1\)](#). This should include as much detail as possible about the issues/concerns raised and the outcome the employee is seeking as remedy of the situation.

On receipt of a grievance the Headteacher/Chair of Governors should inform HR and the Chief Executive. The Headteacher/Chair of Governors should also confirm in writing receipt and if possible at that stage confirm who the Investigator will be.

It is important that the investigation is carried out without unreasonable delay. The Investigator appointed to undertake the investigation should be of an appropriate managerial level and have had no prior involvement in the case and must not be an individual who is named in the grievance. The remit of the Investigator is to ascertain the appropriate evidence whilst maintaining an unbiased position. This usually requires the holding of management investigatory meetings with the employee and where appropriate witnesses.

Following completion of the management investigation the Investigator should arrange a formal grievance meeting.

7.0 **INITIATING THE FORMAL GRIEVANCE MEETING**

If the employee submits a formal grievance - GN1 Form and wishes to proceed to a formal grievance meeting the investigator should:

- Notify the employee in writing of date, time and location of the formal meeting and details of panel members.
- Send the employee all documentation they intend to refer to during the meeting, along with an overview of the case. These will be provided to the employee/representative not less than 10 working days in advance of the date of the meeting.

The employee/representative must also provide the investigator and panel members with copies of all documents which the employee intends to rely on together with an overview of their case no less than 5 working days in advance of the date of the meeting.

If the employee's representative is unable to attend on the specified date, the employee may request that the meeting be postponed. They may then offer a reasonable alternative date without unreasonable delay. This will only be accommodated once. Where the employee is unable to attend the rescheduled meeting the meeting without justifiable reason then Management will assume the employee no longer wishes to progress their grievance.

In normal circumstances the Panel conducting the Grievance Meeting should consist of:

- An appropriate panel of governors/committee members who have been delegated this function in accordance with the School Staffing Regulations 2009 (refer to Section 3 and point 10.3).
- The panel must consist of individuals who have not been involved in the investigation and are impartial to the process.

Consider whether any reasonable adjustments are necessary for either the employee, their representative or panel members.

8.0 **GRIEVANCE MEETING**

A recommended protocol for use when an employee wishes to attend a grievance meeting can be obtained from HR.

It is expected that all witnesses attend the meeting to be questioned. However, in some circumstances it may be impracticable or unacceptable for the witness to be present at the meeting and in which case a copy of the signed written statement may be provided. Where witnesses are unable to attend the circumstances for their non-attendance should be assessed and other methods may be utilised to ensure their evidence is heard i.e. written questions, video links etc. These alternative methods should be discussed on a case by case basis with the HR. Witnesses can be accompanied but not represented by a Trade Union representative or Professional Association Representative or work colleague.

It is expected that the Panel will fully consider the evidence and decide whether to uphold none/some/all elements of the grievance and then consider and make any necessary recommendations. These should be noted on the Grievance Procedure Action Plan available from HR.

The decision should normally be given verbally to the employee at the conclusion of the meeting and confirmed in writing, within 5 working days. However in exceptional circumstances it may be necessary with the employees agreement to communicate the outcome in writing rather than verbally. All parties should be advised of any changes to the method of communication and extension to timescales at the closure of the meeting.

Where external witnesses do not attend for whatever reason, it is for the panel to determine the weight placed on the evidence presented in the witness statement.

9.0 **RIGHT OF APPEAL**

An employee who wishes to appeal against the decision following a grievance meeting should inform the appropriate Chair of the Grievance Panel, setting out in writing, the grounds for their appeal and the resolution the employee wishes to achieve. This should be submitted within 10 working days of receipt of the letter notifying them of the decision of the grievance panel.

The Chair of the Grievance Panel will pass the grievance to the HR Committee and appropriate arrangements should then be made for the Appeal Meeting.

The rights of the employee and the procedure for convening an appeal shall be the same as for the initial Grievance Meeting.

The Appeal shall be a full re-hearing of the case and can include new evidence applicable to the issues/concerns raised but NOT relating to any new issues/concerns.

It is recommended that the Investigator should make arrangements for the meeting and inform the employee in writing, giving 10 working days' notice, of the requirement to attend.

A recommended protocol for use at the Appeal Meeting can be obtained from HR.

The decision should normally be given verbally to the employee at the conclusion of the meeting and confirmed in writing, within 5 working days. However in exceptional circumstances it may be necessary with the employees agreement to communicate the outcome in writing rather than verbally. All parties should be advised of any changes to the method of communication and extension to timescales at the closure of the meeting.

The Appeal Panel may confirm or revoke the original outcome.

10.0 **GRIEVANCES RECEIVED IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO EMPLOYMENT TERMINATING**

The employee may submit a formal grievance immediately prior to termination of their employment. The grievance must be in writing and could relate to issue(s) relating to their employment possibly detailed within their resignation letter. Pre termination grievances should be dealt with in accordance with the formal grievance procedure above.

It is recommended that a grievance investigation is undertaken and the employee offered either a written response or formal meeting to be held where possible before their last date of employment.

11.0 **GRIEVANCES AFTER EMPLOYMENT HAS ENDED**

If an employee raises a formal grievance within 14 days of leaving their employment it is recommended that a grievance investigation is undertaken and a written response provided to the former employee as soon as practicably possible.

12.0 **COMPLETING THE GRIEVANCE PROCESS**

On conclusion of the case:

- The Grievance Procedure Action Plan should be completed where appropriate identifying any recommendations.
- A copy of the Plan, when the actions are complete, should be placed on the employees personal file.
- The Investigator must ensure that all documents/evidence relating to the investigation is placed in a sealed envelope marked 'to be opened by Human Resources only' and should indicate that the contents relate to a grievance investigation and should be placed on the employee's personal file.

13.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

This policy has been impact assessed by the HR Committee, if on reading this Policy you feel there are any equality and diversity issues, please contact HR who will if necessary ensure the policy is reviewed.