

Contents

1. About this Policy
2. Who can make a complaint
3. The difference between a concern and a complaint
4. The Stages of a Complaint
5. Anonymous Complaints
6. Vexatious or Repeated Complaints
7. Unreasonable Complaints
8. Time Scales
9. Complaints received outside of term time
10. Scope of this complaints Policy – includes issues outside the scope of the Policy
11. Resolving Complaints
12. Withdrawal of Complaints
13. Stage 1 – Informal Complaints
14. Stage 2 – Formal Complaints
15. Stage 3 – Panel Meeting
16. Complaints escalated to/ about the Trust, CEO or Trustee
17. Next Steps

Appendix A : Stage 1 - Complaint Form

Appendix B : Stage 2 or Stage 3 – Complaint Form

Appendix C : Process Flow Chart

Note : A supporting document is available for issue with the Policy explaining the Roles and Responsibilities of those involved in the process.

This Policy covers all complaints about any facilities or services provided by the Avanti Schools Trust or that are provided by the Trust to our schools.

The Policy sets out the approach of the Trust to concerns and complaints, including the three-step procedure that we will follow, the aim of which is to address and resolve complaints as quickly and as amicably as possible.

The Policy follows closely the most recent best practice guidance published by DfE which can be found here

[Best practice guidance for school complaints procedures 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/441211/best-practice-guidance-for-school-complaints-procedures-2020.pdf)

This Policy is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make

We understand that there may be occasions when concerns may not be satisfactorily dealt with and people would like to raise a complaint. In this case, Avanti Schools Trust will attempt to resolve the issue through the stages outlined within this Complaints Policy.

An initial complaint or concern can be made in person, in writing or by telephone.

Complaints or concerns may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have consent from the complainant to do so.

There are three Stages to the Trust Complaints Procedure. It is a requirement of the Policy that, starting with Stage 1, each step of the process be completed before proceeding to the next.

At Stage 1, complaints are dealt with informally, the aim being always to reach a mutually agreed, amicable resolution of the issue. Stage 1 of the process is distinct from the formal process that begins at Stage 2.

If Stage 2 is unable to resolve the matter, a complainant may proceed to Stage 3 : this is the final Stage of the Trust formal complaints process and involves consideration of the complaint by an Independent Panel.

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the School Principal (or Trust Complaints Officer (TCO) if appropriate) will determine whether an anonymous complaint warrants an investigation.

There may be occasions when

- despite a complaint being considered under all stages in this Complaints Policy, the Complainant persists in making the same complaint to the School; OR
- a Complainant raises unreasonable persistent complaints or raises complaints about matters which do not directly affect them; OR
- a complaint is made about a matter which is clearly so trivial that it would be a waste of the School's resources to deal with it under the formal stages of the procedure.

In these cases, the School Principal reserves the right to regard the complaint as vexatious and/or repeated and to refuse to investigate it under this Policy.

Where the School Principal decides that a complaint is vexatious and/or repeated and will

not be investigated, the Principal will write to the Complainant advising them of this, within 10 school days of receipt of the complaint.

The Trust and its schools are 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 the Trust and the school. However, we do not expect our

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with the Trust

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal Whistleblowing Policy for all our employees, including temporary staff and workers.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from employees are dealt with under the Trust's internal grievance procedures.</p>

will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made

- e) an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.
- f) an apology.

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis. An initial concern should be made direct to the Principal of the school.

Where this does not resolve the issue, written complaints should be made via the following e mail address :

Avantitrust.complaints@SIPS.co.uk

Complainants should not approach individual SSC members or Trustees to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and this may prevent them from considering complaints which escalate to Stage 3 of the procedure.

The independent Clerk appointed to support the complaints process will ensure that the school keeps a written record of Stage 1 complaints and a copy of the response to the investigation. At the conclusion of their investigation, the person appointed by the Principal to investigate the complaint will provide a written response to the Principal who will, within 20 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint, advise the complainant of the outcome.

The Principal will review the report and advise the complainant of the findings and the outcome. This may be at a meeting or by letter/e.mail. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step will be to make a formal complaint (Stage 2).

With the exception of initial complaints made in person or by telephone, complaints should be made in writing to:

Avantitrust.complaints@SIPS.co.uk

Complaints that

- involve or are about the Principal of a school;
- involve or are about the Chair of a School Stakeholder Committee, an individual SSC Member or the whole SSC;
- involve or are about the Chief Executive (CEO), Executive Leaders or a trustee of the Trust

must be made in writing and sent to the Trust Complaints Officer (TCO), Avanti Schools Trust, Wemborough Road, Stanmore, Middlesex, HA7 2EO marked "Private and Confidential"

OR

e mailed to

Avantitrust.complaints@SIPS.co.uk

**SIPS is an independent Governance support service appointed by the Trust to provide independent administrative support to the Trust Complaints process.*

Please make it clear in your communication/e mail that you are submitting a Stage 1 Complaint.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure, such as providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint / complete the complaints form or holding meetings in accessible locations or locations other than the school.

All formal complaints, including those that progress to Stage 2 or to Stage 3, be submitted on the formal complaints form (Appendix A) via the following e-mail address:

Avantitrust.complaints@SIPS.co.uk

If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office or ask a third party, for example, the Citizens Advice Bureau or a friend.

The Clerk receiving the complaint will

- record the date the Stage 2 complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days. The response will include a short summary of the substance of the complaint.
- liaise with the Principal of the school who will decide to either investigate the complaint themselves or delegate the investigation to another member of the

School Leadership Team. The same person will not investigate a complaint at Stage 1 and Stage 2.

- consider whether a face to face meeting(s) with the complainant may be the most appropriate way of dealing with the matter, in the first instance.

During the investigation, the Principal (or investigator) will:

- if appropriate, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, 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 the investigation, the Principal will provide a formal written response to the complainant within 20 school days of the date of receipt of the Stage 2 complaint*.

**If the Principal is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.*

The response from the Principal (or in some instances the Clerk) 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, include details of actions that the school/Trust will take (or has taken) to resolve the complaint;
- where appropriate, invite the Chair of the SSC to take part in the investigation and/or the initial meeting with the complainant; and
- advise the complainant that, if they are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, they may escalate their complaint to Stage 3, and explain how they should do this.

If the complaint is about the Principal, or a member of the SSC, the Clerk (or Trust Complaints Officer (TCO)) will refer the matter to a Trustee to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair of the Trust, or
- the entire SSC, or
- the majority of the SSC

Stage 2 will be escalated by the Trust Complaints Officer to the Chief Executive (CEO) of the Trust (see below).

A complainant may bring someone to the panel meeting to provide

- to dismiss 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;
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future;

The Chair of the Panel will provide the complainant and School/Trust with the summary notes of the meeting (compiled by the Clerk) and a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days of the meeting. The letter to the complainant will include

- details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency

SIPs receives complaint CEO/TGO advised of complaint	SIPs acknowledge receipt – refers to CEO/TGO. CEO/TGO confirms complaint to be investigated under Stage 2 of the Policy and provide a target response datense date	Within 5 school days

For

--

(You may wish to include here your response to the letter you have received relating to the outcome of Stage 1 (or if relevant Stage 2).

--

--

--



