PENK VALLEY ACADEMY TRUST

School Complaints Policy and Procedures

Adopted by Trustees:	
Signed:	
Date:	Spring 2026
This policy is reviewed annually by the Trust Board Committee.	
Next Review date:	Spring 2027

COLLABORATION CHALLENGE CURIOSITY CARE

POLICY INFORMATION

Date of last review:	Spring 2026	**Review period:**	Annually
Date ratified by Trustees:	Spring 2026	**Trustee committee responsible:**	Trust Board
Policy owner:	Chief Executive Officer	**Executive team member responsible:**	Chief Executive Officer

SCHOOL-SPECIFIC DETAILS	
School name	Penkridge Middle School
School email	office@penkridge-middle.org
School address	
Date ratified by Trustees	Spring 2026
Date of last review	Spring 2026
Next review date	Spring 2027

Reviews/revisions

Review date	Changes made	By whom
2024/2025 Spring 2026 Autumn 2026	New policy No changes Format updates	COO, CEO, HT, CG, Trustees LMC LMC

Equality and GDPR

All Penk Valley Academy Trust policies should be read in conjunction with our Equal Opportunities and GDPR policies.

Statement of principle – Equality

We will take all possible steps to ensure that this policy does not discriminate, either directly or indirectly against any individual or group of individuals. When compiling, monitoring and reviewing the policy we will consider the likely impact on the promotion of all aspects of equality as described in the Equality Act 2010.

Statement of principle – GDPR

Penk Valley Academy Trust recognises the serious issues that can occur as a consequence in failing to protect an individual adult's or child's personal and sensitive data. These include emotional distress, physical safety, child protection, loss of assets, fraud and other criminal acts.

Penk Valley Academy Trust is therefore committed to the protection of all personal and sensitive data for which it holds responsibility as the Data Controller and the handling of such data in line with the data protection principles and the Data Protection Act (DPA)/GDPR.

Penk Valley Academy Trust will be referred to as **PVAT** for the remainder of the document which includes all schools who are members of PVAT, business operations and centralised services

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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Aims

This Complaints Policy is based on the principle that concerns expressed by a pupil, parent or any other individual or organisation should be resolved as quickly as possible without the need to escalate to the formal stages of the procedure. However, where resolution has not been achieved and the person raising the concern is unhappy and wishes to take the matter further, the formal procedure for dealing with complaints will be followed.

Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Penkridge Middle School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt elsewhere under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions) or complaints directly to the trust about the trust, we will use this complaints procedure.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as **'*an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought*'.** For example, a concern regarding homework for a particular subject should be raised with the subject teacher, or a concern about a friendship with another child could be raised with the form tutor

A complaint may be defined as **'*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*'.**

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. Penkridge Middle School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, we will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, we will refer you 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.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Penkridge Middle School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

Scope of this complaints procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about Penkridge Middle School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below. For complaints against the trust please refer to the trust complaints procedure located on www.penkvalley.co.uk

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process – either through the appeals process see penkvalley.co.uk or via the local authority. https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/Admissionappeals/Admission-Appeals-Info.aspx
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and 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. https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Care-for-children-and-families/Childprotection/Child-Protection-Home.aspx Or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). https://www.staffsscp.org.uk/
• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Staffordshire county council provide the statutory assessments of special education needs. https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/SpecialEducationalNeeds/Staffordshires-Special-Educational-Needs-and-Disabilities-Strategy.aspx
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure. See the school policy section of the school's website for the behaviour policy. The school will have issued a letter regarding your child's suspension/exclusion that will also highlight sources of advice and information.*
• Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
• 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 school'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. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
• Third party using school premises	All third party complaints are handled by the third party provider where this is not a normal function of the school day and afterschool clubs, ie weekend football, evening dancing provided by a company
• Data protection and privacy complaints	Complaints specifically concerning the Schools processing of personal data or an individual's rights under data protection legislation are dealt with separately under Section 21 (Data Protection Complaints) of the Trust's Data Protection Policy.

Concerns

How to raise a concern

A concern can be made in person, in writing or by telephone.

What will happen

Senior staff / office will be made aware, and the concern will looked into locally by a member of staff.

If the concern is raised at or near the end of term it may be that the concern is not looked into until the school returns.

What sort of outcome could I expect.

Concern has been looked into and reassurances can be made or
Concern has been looked into but reassurances cannot be made. Further actions may be put in place to address or correct concern.

What correspondence could I expect.

Reassurances or actioned matters to enable reassurance may be conveyed verbally or in writing. Once issued there will be no further follow up.

Complaints

How to make a complaint

At the end of this document is a complaints form, including an email address when completing this document will help speed up the process. You will be asked to complete this form if it has not been done so.

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.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the head teacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint 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 only consider complaints made outside of this time frame if there are very exceptional circumstances.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

External bodies

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 Penkridge Middle School in relation to their complaint, we will suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Complaints aired on social media will not be investigated until a formal complaint has been received via the approved channels. Be aware that social media and associated responses may cause damage or render the complaint invalid as we have not had the opportunity to resolve the issue first.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the Penkridge Middle School wants 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 event complained of 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.

Withdrawal of a complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing, either email or letter to

office@marshbrook.staffs.sch.uk

Stage 1 – Formal complaints

Formal complaints must be made to the head teacher via the school office email (unless they are about the head teacher). This may be done in person, writing or on email (preferably with the completed complaint Form).

The school will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **10** school days, this may come from the school office or the Headteacher directly.

Within this response, we will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint and what outcome the complainant would like to see. If not already completed, the complainant will be asked to complete the complaint form to aid the process.

Upon receipt of the clarification and the completed complaint form, the headteacher or another member of the schools SLT will investigate the complaint. *Note: The head teacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.*

Complaints are broken down as follows to ensure we can deal with and manage the resources required to investigate and review complaints.

- Complaint about a school Process, Policy or Rule
- Complaint about School staff actions or decisions but not Headteacher
- Complaint about the headteacher
- Complaint about LGC Governors actions (but not Chair)
- Complaint about the Chair of Governors
- Complaints about the Trust
- Any other complaint not covered under the exemptions

During the investigation, the Head teacher (or another instructed by the headteacher to investigate) will:

- If necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained about, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the head teacher will provide a formal written response within **15** school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the head teacher 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 Penkridge Middle School will take to resolve the complaint.

Complaint about a school policy, process or rule

School policies, processes and rules go through a number of committees and stakeholder engagement prior to implementation and may be subject to national guidance or influence from other agencies such as HSE, Local Authority Safeguarding and other schools within the trust. Our parents and pupils do however provide valuable insight and where a policy, process or rule does warrant review we will do so. The first instance should be to raise a concern but if you want to elevate this to a complaint then this is the process:

1. Fill out the complaints form
2. Email to the school office marking for the attention of the Headteacher
3. You will receive acknowledgment within **10** school days
4. Headteacher or another member of the school SLT , will review complaint
5. You will receive a response within **15** school days from acknowledgement.
6. Where a policy, process or rule requires amendment the changes will be made and reviewed by the appropriate governing board be that the LGC or Trust during the normal committee meeting cycle. . You will receive notification as to when this will be reviewed

Complaints about school staff actions or decisions but not headteacher

Examples are where you disagree with a decision made by a teacher in the day to day operation of the school be it pupil discipline, marking, communication etc.

1. Fill out the complaints form
2. Email to the school office marking for the attention of the headteacher
3. You will receive acknowledgment within **10** school days
4. Headteacher, line manager or a member of the school SLT will review complaint
5. Where the complaint raises questions about staff conduct this will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.
6. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint.
7. You will receive a response within **15** school days of the acknowledgement

Complaints about the headteacher

Complaints regarding the headteacher are handled by the Trust, please see the trust complaints policy on www.penkvalley.co.uk

Complaint about LGC Governors actions (but not Chair)

Complaints regarding the LGC will be investigated by either the Chair of Governors and/or the Headteacher.

1. Fill out the complaints form
2. Email to the school office marking for the attention of the school clerk
3. You will receive acknowledgment within 10 school days
4. Headteacher, line manager or a member of the school SLT will review complaint
5. Where the complaint raises questions about a governor conduct this will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.
6. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a Governor as a result of a complaint.
7. You will receive a response within 15 school days

Complaint about the Chair of Governors

Complaints regarding the Chair of Governors are handled by the Trust, please see the trust complaints policy on www.penkvalley.co.uk

Complaints regarding Penk Valley Academy Trust

Please see the trust complaints policy on www.penkvalley.co.uk

Any other complaint not covered under the exemptions

All other complaints will in the first instance go to the Headteacher and/or the SLT of the school to review and to respond.

1. Fill out the complaints form
2. Email to the school office marking for the attention of the Headteacher
3. You will receive acknowledgment within 10 school days
4. Headteacher, line manager or a member of the school SLT will review complaint and seek further information where required
5. You will receive a response and outcome within 15 school days from acknowledgement

Stage 1 review.

Following the response if you are unhappy with the response / outcome you may request a review. This review will not look at any further evidence but will review the decision and outcome based on the information submitted and will broadly be reviewed as follows,

- A complaint about a school process, policy or rule – will be reviewed by Chair of Governors
- Complaint about school staff actions or decisions but not headteacher – will be reviewed by SLT member or another headteacher from within the trust.
- Complaint about LGC governor's actions (but not chair) – reviewed by either the Chair of Governors or the headteacher not party to the original investigation
- Any other complaint not covered under the exemptions – will be reviewed by the Chair of Governors

Process for the review.

1. Request to review must be received in writing within **5** school days
2. Email the school Clerk asking for a review.
3. Your email will be acknowledged within **5** school days
4. Review will take place within **15** school days
5. Outcome letter will be sent within **5** school days of the review taking place.

If the outcome is delayed for any reason this will be communicated before the deadline, as chair of governors are volunteers it is possible the time frames may need to be extended to accommodate their other commitments

Stage 2 – Escalated Formal complaint

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 review and wishes to take the matter further, they may escalate the complaint to Stage 2. Please note that both the stage 1 and stage 1 review must be completed before a stage 2 escalation can take place.

For policy complaints where there is no danger to pupils or significant risk the stage 2 complaint will be brought before the LGC at the next available meeting as a confidential agenda item.

For all other complaints a panel consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, with one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response. office@marshbrook.staffs.sch.uk

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within **10** school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the potential dates of the meeting. Three dates will be proposed. They will aim to convene a meeting within **30** school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed. If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. If the complainant is unable to attend then the meeting will proceed in their absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties. The clerk will at the same time request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee no later than **10** school days after the stage 2 request.

A complainant may bring someone along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under (Human Resources) staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes ***will not*** *be shared with them.*

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least **5** school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- Confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least **5** school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with under Stage 1 of the

procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it and with prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending which must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint, and all the evidence presented, so the information provided must be concise.

The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee 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 Committee will provide the complainant and Penkridge Middle School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days.

Unreasonable Complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore will be treated seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive.
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure, beyond all reason.
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out.
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on the school or Trust time.
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value.
- Has made the same complaint before, which has already been resolved by following the Trust's complaints procedure.
- A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so:
    - Aggressively
    - Using threats, intimidation, or violence.
    - Using abusive, offensive, or discriminatory language.
    - Knowing it to be false.
    - Using falsified information.

Every reasonable step will be taken to address the complainant's concerns and give them a clear statement of the School/Trust's position and their options. The Trust will maintain the role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including meetings with individuals.

If the complainant continues to contact the School/Trust in a disruptive way, communications strategies may be implemented, which:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address.
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term.
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as Citizens Advice.
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary.

Stopping Responding

The School / Trust may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- The School / Trust believes they have taken all reasonable steps to help address the complainant's concerns.
- The School / Trust has provided a clear statement of the position and the options.
- The complainant contacts the School / Trust repeatedly, and it is believed that their intention is vexatious or malicious or is to cause disruption and/or inconvenience.

The Complainant will be informed when the School / Trust intents to stop responding. However any new complaints will be considered at Stage 1 of the school or trust policy, as appropriate.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the Trust will immediately inform the police and communicate the actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from a School/Trust site.

Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a person with parental responsibility for any student in a Penk Valley Academy Trust school, the school will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to consider.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the process is complete.
- If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

Complaints not considered

The Trust will not consider complaints under the following circumstances:

- Anonymous complaints (unless there are exceptional circumstances).
- Where the complaint concerns a third party used by the school / Trust or that uses the school / Trust property or grounds to provide a service. The complaint should be sent directly to the third party to respond themselves.
- Complaints that relate to an incident which took place more than 3 months previously (unless otherwise agreed by the School/Trust)
- Complaints made on behalf of a third party.
- Where the complainant has used social media to air their alleged grievance.
- Malicious, serial or duplicate complaints
- Unreasonable or vexatious complaints

All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential,

except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Next Steps.

If the complainant believes the school has not handled their complaint correctly in accordance with this policy they may contact Penk Valley Academy Trust to request a review. Please see the Trust complaints procedure on how to undertake this.

www.Penkvalley.co.uk

If after this the complainant believes the School and Trust did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the ESFA.

Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the Penkridge Middle School. They will consider whether Penkridge Middle School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the ESFA online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit
Education and Skills Funding Agency
Cheylesmore House
5 Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

Complaint Form

Please complete and return to (*either Head Teacher / Clerk / Chair of Governor –delete as appropriate*) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:** **Email address:**
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: **Date:**
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Action taken:
Date: