



Complaints Procedure for Public Use

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This document applies to all schools and operations of the Vale Academy Trust. www.vale-academy.org

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Complaints Procedure for Public Use

Who can use this procedure?

This procedure is for people who are **not** parents or carers of pupils currently registered with, and attending, a school of the Vale Academy Trust (“the Trust”).

Anyone who is a parent or carer of a current pupil should instead use the **Complaints Procedure for Parents and Carers**, which can be found on school and Trust websites or a copy can be obtained from their offices.

For complaints about the Trust’s Chief Executive Officer, or members of the Board of Directors or its Chair, please note the process to follow is set out on page 4 of this procedure.

Exceptions to Complaints Procedure

Certain types of concerns and complaints are better raised through procedures other than this complaints procedure.

In certain circumstances, for example where the Local Authority or another public body is investigating the matters in a complaint, the school’s own process may be suspended until those investigations are concluded.

Exceptions	What you should do
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Allegations of child abuse /other child protection issuesOther safeguarding issues	Immediately report your concern to the school’s Designated Safeguarding Lead or Headteacher and check the school’s safeguarding policy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Where a currently registered pupil wishes to personally raise a concern or make a complaint	He or she should talk to an appropriate teacher or member of staff and follow in-school procedures for dealing with pupil concerns and complaints.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">School Admissions including appeals	Check the Admissions information on the school’s website.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pupil Exclusions	Check the school’s Behaviour Management Policy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Whistleblowing (<i>for financial or other regulatory malpractice</i>)	Check the school’s Whistleblowing Procedure.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff grievances /disciplinary procedures	These matters will invoke the school’s internal grievance procedures. Staff should refer to the school’s Staff Grievance Policy.

If your complaint relates to an external service provider, this should be raised with the Headteacher of the school in the first instance, but it might be that you or the school will have to follow the provider’s own complaints procedures thereafter.

Raising a concern or complaint

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

It is important that the school knows of a concern or complaint at the earliest opportunity. In the first instance it may be a teacher or a member of the school office who can best deal with the problem although there may be situations where a senior member of staff or the Headteacher would need to discuss the matter (or the Chair of the Local Governing Body, if the complaint is about the Headteacher). Experience shows that nearly all concerns can be dealt with quickly and efficiently.

If you are uncertain about who you should contact, please seek advice from the school office.

It is a precondition to the operation of this procedure that the complainant shall have made reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution and shall have acted in relation to the matter in a reasonable and measured way. The Chair of the Local Governing Body shall have a discretion, which will be exercised reasonably, not to allow a complaint to be pursued where this precondition has not been met.

Where the matter is not resolved at this informal stage, the complainant may escalate his/her complaint to **Stage 2**.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution: Investigation by a member of the Senior Leadership Team

1. The complainant must put the complaint in writing, addressed to the Headteacher of the school, setting out briefly the facts and stating what it is that the complainant considers the school should have done or where the school has not met reasonable expectations.
2. An investigation will be carried out by a member of the Senior Leadership Team of the school; which may include the offer of a meeting with the complainant. The investigator will speak to others involved. Whenever reasonably possible, any meeting with the complainant will take place within 15 school days of the written complaint being received.
3. The investigator will put her/his findings in writing and will indicate what, if any, steps should be taken to resolve the matter. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 15 school days of any meeting with the complainant; if no meeting is arranged it will be within 15 school days of the written complaint being received.

Where the complainant remains dissatisfied she or he may request the complaint is dealt with at **Stage 3**. Any such request **must** be set out in writing, stating where the complainant remains dissatisfied and lodged within **10** school days of the complainant receiving the findings in writing.

Any complaint relating to the Headteacher or a member of the Local Governing Body must be raised in the first instance with the Chair of the Local Governing Body who will, if an informal resolution cannot be reached, investigate the complaint as per **Stage 3**. Stage 2 does not apply to a complaint against the Headteacher or a member of the Local Governing Body.

Any complaint relating to the Chair of the Local Governing Body must be raised in the first instance with the Chair of the Trust's Board of Directors (using the contact details for the Vale Academy Trust which can be found on the [Trust's website](#) – please mark your correspondence 'For the Attention of the Chair of the Board of Directors'). The Chair may, if an informal

resolution cannot be reached, designate a member of the Board of Directors to investigate the complaint as per **Stage 3**. Stage 2 does not apply to a complaint against the Chair of the Local Governing Body.

Stage 3 – Formal Resolution: Local Governing Body

1. The complainant must put the complaint in writing, addressed to the Chair of the Local Governing Body, at the school's address, setting out briefly the facts and stating what it is that the complainant considers should have been done or where the school has not met reasonable expectations.
2. The Chair of the Local Governing Body may appoint a member of the Local Governing Body to investigate the complaint. The investigation may include the offer of a meeting with the complainant. Whenever reasonably possible, any meeting with the complainant will take place within 15 school days of the written complaint being received.
3. The investigator will put her or his findings in writing and will indicate what, if any, steps should be taken to resolve the matter. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 15 school days of any meeting with the complainant; if no meeting is arranged it will be within 15 school days of the written complaint being received. **Thereupon the complaint process will conclude and no further correspondence be entered into.**

In exceptional circumstances the Chair of the Trust's Board of Directors (or Vice-chair if the complaint is about the Chair) may at his or her absolute discretion determine that a complaint against a Headteacher or member of the Local Governing Body should be dealt with at Board level and if so determined he or she will oversee **Stage 3**.

Serial or Persistent Complainants

If at any level a complainant attempts to reopen an issue or a closely related issue that has already been dealt with under this complaints procedure, the Headteacher or the Chair of the Local Governing Body may write to the complainant to inform him/her that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter closed, that continued correspondence on the same matter is vexatious and that the school/Trust will not respond to any further correspondence on this issue or a closely related issue.

Complaint about the Trust's Chief Executive Officer, or Chair of the Board of Directors, or a member of the Board of Directors.

If the complaint is against a member of the Trust's Board of Directors or the Trust Chief Executive, then the Chair of the Board, (or in the case of a complaint against the Chair, the Vice-chair) will investigate the complaint (or appoint another member of the Board to do so) in the same way as in the process at **Stage 3**. **Stage 2** does not apply.

Record Keeping

A written record will be kept of all complaints that were resolved at the formal stage of the complaints procedure and the record will contain details of any action taken by the school as a result of a complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld).

Confidentiality

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 Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.