



Complaints Policy

Isaac Newton Academy is committed to ensuring that all students are provided with a first class educational experience and that the Academy works in a productive and positive partnership with all parents and carers. However, if a parent/carer feels that a situation has arisen that they are unhappy about then they have a right to make a complaint. Any and every complaint made will be taken seriously and dealt with swiftly and professionally. All parents/carers are made aware of this policy and the procedures to follow if they wish to make a complaint. This policy is displayed on the INA website and is contained in summary form in the Parent Handbook issued to all families when they are allocated a place at the Academy.

Concerns/Issues

If a parent/carer wishes to discuss a concern about an individual subject in the curriculum he/she is welcome to phone or make an appointment to see the relevant Head of Subject.

If a parent/carer wishes to discuss a concern of a general/pastoral issue he/she should phone or make an appointment to see their child's form tutor.

If a parent/carer is not satisfied after an initial conversation or meeting with the Head of Subject/Tutor, he/she should make an appointment with the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team.

If a parent/carer wishes to discuss a concern about a member of staff, and feels it is not appropriate to contact the individual in question, he/she should contact the Principal. If the concern is about the Principal, he/she should contact the Chair of Governors.

Informal Complaints

At Isaac Newton Academy we try to resolve any issue or concern informally where possible. If a complaint is made it will always be investigated thoroughly and the complainant will receive feedback (verbal or written). An effective response and appropriate redress will be provided as quickly as possible, dependent on the complexity of the issue raised.

The member of staff investigating the complaint will ensure that they:

- clarify the nature of the complaint/issue
- clarify what the complainant feels would resolve the issue

- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they so wish
- keep notes of interviews and details of the complaint.

The member of staff investigating the complaint will seek ways to resolve the issue satisfactorily and informally. The outcome may involve one of the following actions:

- an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid in whole or in part and/or an acknowledgement that the situation could have been handled differently or better (this is not the same as an admission of negligence)
- an apology
- an explanation
- an assurance and an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that this situation will not happen again
- an undertaking to review Academy procedures in light of the complaint

If a parent/carer is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation of an informal complaint, they have the right to make a formal complaint to the Principal.

Formal Complaints

If a member of staff, a parent or carer wishes to make a formal complaint, this should be addressed in writing and personally to the Principal. The complainant should include details of the complaint, any attempts already made to resolve the issue, actions he/she feels may resolve the issue and any members of staff he/she would prefer not to discuss the issue with. Any formal complaint will be investigated, either personally by the Principal or by an Investigating Officer appointed by the Principal. The member of staff about whom the complaint/allegation is made will be informed of the complaint. The Investigating Officer will submit a report to the Principal following a robust investigation, which will involve speaking to all relevant parties, including the complainant (who may be accompanied). The Principal will decide on an appropriate course of action on the basis of that report, and the complainant and the member of staff will be notified in writing accordingly. The Principal will respond within 7 working days of a complaint being lodged, and will notify the complainant within that timescale if that deadline is not going to be met, with reasons why.

If the complainant is not satisfied with this response, he/she must inform the Academy in writing, with details of their previous communication and the reason why they are still not satisfied, within two weeks of receipt of the outcome letter. The Principal or delegated member of the senior leadership team will respond within 10 working days. This timescale may be reasonably extended if the nature of the complaint is judged by the Principal to be of a complex nature.

If the complainant is still not satisfied, they can appeal to the Governing Body (see below). The governors will convene a complaints panel within a reasonable period of time (normally 21 days). This is dependent on the availability of those making up the panel. Every effort will be made to deal with the appeal expeditiously.

9. Complaints made about the Principal

ARK Schools recognise that in exceptional circumstances parents/carers may wish to complain about Principals/Headteachers.

If the complainant wishes to raise a complaint about the Principal, they should raise this directly with the Principal in the first instance. This is the first stage of the process.

Where issues have been raised in this way and remain unresolved, the complainant may appeal and write to ARK Schools at its head office c/o the Governance Manager. On receipt the complaint will be acknowledged and an investigation will be undertaken. The COO will convene a panel of three (including the COO) and the three panel members will not have had any direct involvement in the matters detailed in the complaint. The case and the complainant will receive a formal written response. As matter of courtesy the Chair of the LGB will be advised.

The determination will be made within 15 working days unless the complaint is judged to be of a complex nature.

Note regarding the Education Funding Agency (EFA): In limited circumstances it is possible for complaints to be referred to the EFA. The EFA can consider complaints where it is alleged that a) the academy has not complied with its own complaints policy or the policy does not comply with statutory requirements OR b) the academy has failed to comply with a duty imposed on it under its funding agreement with the Secretary of State. Details of how to complain can be found on the Department for Education's website.

Complaints made directly to ARK

Where a complaint is made directly to ARK, it will be logged by the governance manager and forwarded to the Academy (except if it is about the Principal). ARK School recognise that in exceptional circumstances parents/carers may wish to complain about the Principal where issues have been raised with the latter and not resolved in a way which is satisfactory to the parent/carers. In cases of complaint about the Principal, the correct procedure is for the complainant to write to ARK Schools at its head office c/o the Governance Manager. On receipt, the complaint will be acknowledged, an investigation will be undertaken and a response will subsequently be made to the complainant. As a matter of courtesy, the Chair of the Local Governing Body, Gerard Griffin, will be advised, but there is an expectation that matters can be resolved at an executive level. The response will be dealt with in an expeditious manner and the timeframe that applies will depend on the complexity of the matter raised and the depth of the investigation it requires.

Conduct when making a complaint

Parents/carers have a responsibility to present their complaint in a calm manner (not shouting or behaving aggressively, harassing or bullying, using abusive or threatening language). The school has a responsibility to listen carefully and impartially and to look into all complaints.

Appeals

If the process results in an appeal to the Governing Body, this procedure is statutory (schedule 1, para 7, The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulation 2010.

ARK's governance manager is responsible for organising any Complaints Panel hearing. The governance manager will set the date, time and venue for the hearing, collate any written material and send it to all parties in advance of the hearing, record the proceedings and notify parties of the outcome (within 3 working days).

Appeals Panels will consist of at least three people. At least one of the members must be independent of the management and running of the Academy and not a member of the Governing Body. Individual complaints must not be heard by the whole Governing Body at any stage. None of the panel members may have been directly involved in a previous consideration of the complaint. The panel will nominate a Chair. The appeal will be closed to the public. The complainant may attend the hearing and be accompanied. Witnesses will only be required to attend the hearing for the part in which they are called to give their evidence. The panel members may ask questions at any point. They will deliberate in private after the hearing.

The Complaints Panel may decide:

- to dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- to uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- to recommend changes to the Academy's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

The panel will inform the complainant of their decision in writing as quickly as possible and in an expeditious manner. The decision of the Appeal Panel is final. However, it is possible to refer the matter to the DfE/Education Funding Agency.

Complaints to the DfE/EFA

A complainant has a right, if they are still not satisfied once Academy processes are exhausted, to send their complaint to the DfE/EFA. The EFA can consider complaints where it is alleged that a) the Academy has not complied with its own complaints policy or the policy does not comply with the statutory requirements or b) the Academy has failed to comply with a duty imposed on it under its funding agreement with the Secretary of State. Details of how to complain can be found on the DfE website.

Persistent and Malicious Complaints

In the case of persistent complaints, the Chief Operating Officer of ARK Schools will inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed. The Academy and ARK Schools reserve the right to deny investigation of any complaints which are considered to be vexatious, malicious or relating to a previous complaint that has already been investigated.

Records

Details of all complaints, including informal complaints, will be recorded and maintained at the Academy. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that staff record all complaints and their outcome. Records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State for Education or a statutory body conducting an inspection requires access to them. The Academy's Governing Body monitors the level and nature of complaints and reviews their outcomes on a regular basis through the mechanism of the Principal's termly report to the governors.

Responsible Person

The person responsible for coordinating the complaints procedure at the Academy is the Principal. Overall responsibility is retained by ARK Schools through the office of the Chief Operating Officer. The role of governors arises only in respect of appeal where the complainant remains dissatisfied with attempts to resolve the issue of complaint and as set out above.

ARK Schools

The officer with responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented is the Chief Operating Officer at ARK Schools. Complainants should be aware that the Principal may refer complaints received to the Governance Manager at ARK Schools because she considers that the matter is one of such a nature that it should be investigated independently of the Academy. Likewise, complaints may be retrieved and dealt with by ARK Schools for the same reason. Where a complaint is made directly to ARK, it will be logged by the governance manager and forwarded to the Academy unless it is retrieved as stated above.

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