



# **HARMONIZE ACADEMY**

## **COMPLAINTS FOR PARENTS, GUARDIANS OR CARERS POLICY**

<b>POLICY WRITTEN BY:</b>	<b>PRINCIPAL</b>
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**Trust, Respect, Compassion, Forgiveness**

# **COMPLAINTS FOR PARENTS, GUARDIANS OR CARERS POLICY**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This policy and procedure is for the benefit of Harmonize Academy parents, guardians or carers. (Hereafter referred to as “parents”)

This policy and procedure applies in respect of all complaints by parents made against Harmonize Academy, except in respect of child protection allegations where the Harmonize Academy Safeguarding policy and procedure applies.

Harmonize Academy is committed to ensuring that all Harmonize students receive the best possible education in a safe, comfortable and enjoyable environment. It is keen to respond quickly to any problems and to remedy any defects as soon as possible.

Parents can be assured that all complaints and expressions of concern, whether raised informally or formally, will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will remain confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended) requests access to them or where any other legal obligation prevails.

## **Harmonize Academy Complaints Procedure**

### **Stage One - Informal Resolution**

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

- ❑ If parents or Harmonize students have a complaint they should normally contact the Harmonize Vice-Principal. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the students' or parents' satisfaction. If the Harmonize Vice-Principal cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult other staff, the Principal or Governors.
- ❑ Complaints made directly to Harmonize Academy Trustees or Principal will usually be referred back to the Harmonize Vice-Principal unless a Trustee or the Principal deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- ❑ The Harmonize Vice-Principal will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. These records will be kept for one year after the student has left Harmonize Academy.
- ❑ Harmonize Academy will use its reasonable endeavours to resolve any informal complaints within ten working days of them being raised, except where they are raised in school holidays or within two working days of their commencement where Harmonize Academy will use its reasonable endeavours to resolve them as soon as possible after commencement of the new school term (usually within ten working days).
- ❑ Should the matter not be resolved as referred to above, or in the event that the Harmonize Vice-Principal and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage Two of this Procedure.

## **Stage Two - Formal Resolution**

- ❑ If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis as set out above, then parents should put their complaint in writing to the Harmonize Academy Principal. The complaint should be expressed clearly and courteously. .
- ❑ The Principal will investigate the complaint and will decide the appropriate course of action to take. In most cases, the Principal will meet or speak with the parents concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- ❑ The Harmonize Academy Principal will use reasonable endeavours to speak to or meet parents within ten working days of the formal complaint being received, except where the complaint is received in school holidays or within two working days of their commencement where the Principal will use his/her reasonable endeavours to speak or meet with parents as soon as possible after the commencement of the new school term (usually within ten working days).
- ❑ The Principal will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- ❑ Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. Parents will be informed of this decision in writing, giving reasons for the decision. The written decision should be provided no later than ten working days after speaking or meeting with parents to discuss the matter. The Principal may also arrange to meet with parents to explain the decision.
- ❑ Where parents are dissatisfied with the outcome of the Principal's response to their formal complaint, they have the opportunity to appeal to the Harmonize Academy Chair of Governors.

## **Stage Three – Appeal to the Harmonize Academy Chair of Governors**

- ❑ If the complaint cannot be resolved at stage two as set out above, then parents can appeal to the Harmonize Academy Chair of Governors. The parents should put their appeal in writing.
- ❑ The Harmonize Academy Chair of Governors will consider the appeal and will decide the appropriate course of action to take. The Harmonize Academy Chair of Governors will endeavour to meet the parents concerned to present his/her response.
- ❑ The Harmonize Academy Chair of Governors will use reasonable endeavours to meet the parents within ten working days of the appeal being received, except where the appeal is received in school holidays or within two working days of their commencement where the Harmonize Academy Chair of Governors will use his/her reasonable endeavours to meet with parents as soon as possible after the commencement of the new school term (usually within ten working days).

#### **Stage Four - Independent Complaints Panel.**

- ❑ If parents seek to invoke Stage Four following the failure to reach an earlier resolution and the outcome of their appeal to the Harmonize Academy Chair of Governors, the parents may, in writing request that their complaint be further considered by an independent Complaints Panel set up for this purpose.
- ❑ Parents must lodge their appeal in writing and within ten working days of the date of the response to their appeal to the Harmonize Academy Chair of Governors. Their appeal should provide a list of their complaint(s) made against Harmonize Academy and which they believe to have been resolved unsatisfactorily by the Stage Two Procedure, along with the remedies sought in respect of each. The Complaints Panel is only obliged to consider the complaint(s) lodged in this 'initial submission' although they may use their discretion to consider other relevant and related matters that may subsequently arise.
- ❑ Where an appeal is received by Harmonize Academy, within five working days, the matter will be referred to the Secretary of LHET. Where the appeal is received by Harmonize Academy during school holidays, or within two working days of their commencement, the Harmonize Academy has five working days upon commencement of the school term to refer the matter to the Secretary of Harmonize Academy Trustees.
- ❑ Once an appeal has been received by Secretary of LHET, he/she will acknowledge the appeal in writing within five working days, and will inform the parents of the steps involved in this Complaints Procedure. The Secretary of Harmonize Academy Trustees will then endeavour to convene an independent Complaints Panel hearing as soon as possible to consider the matter, normally no later than twenty school days after receipt by Harmonize Academy of parents' written notice that they wish to invoke the Stage Four Procedure, dependent upon the availability of the Panel members.
- ❑ The independent Complaints Panel will consist of two Harmonize Academy Trustees who have not previously been involved in the complaint and one person independent of the management and running of Harmonize Academy.
- ❑ The following are entitled to attend a hearing, submit written representations and address the Panel:
  - (a) The parents;
  - (b) The Harmonize Academy Chair of Governors and/or one representative of the management of Harmonize Academy; and
  - (c) Any other interested person whom the Complaints Panel considers to have a reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the Panel in their decision-making.Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- ❑ Where the Complaints Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. In such cases all parties will be given the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Panel in support of their position, including:
  - (a) documents in support of complaint(s),
  - (b) chronology and key dates relating to complaint(s), and
  - (c) written submission setting out the complaint(s) in more detail.This evidence will be considered by the Panel, along with the initial submission that was lodged by the parents.

- ❑ Evidence will be initially sent to the Secretary of LHET, who will then circulate the documentation to all parties, including the Panel members, along with an order of proceedings. All written evidence must be received by the Secretary of Harmonize Academy Trustees no later than ten working days in advance of the hearing. The Secretary of LHET will distribute the written evidence to the relevant parties no later than five working days in advance of the Panel hearing.
- ❑ It is for the Panel to decide how to conduct the proceedings of the appeal, which should be reasonably informal so that all parties can present their case effectively. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- ❑ After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision, and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within ten working days of the hearing. The decision reached by the Complaints Panel is final.
- ❑ Any decision reached that may have financial implications for Harmonize Academy will need the appropriate approval from Harmonize Academy Board of Trustees, although any such approval must be compatible with the decision of the Complaints Panel.
- ❑ The Panel's findings will be sent by the Secretary of LHET in writing to the parents, Harmonize Academy Chair of Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of. The letter will state any reasons for the decision reached and recommendations made by the Complaints Panel.

### **Complaints Procedure Records**

- ❑ Harmonize Academy will keep a written record of all formal complaints, including records of meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, and its decision.
- ❑ Harmonize Academy will keep a written record of all appeals, decisions and recommendations of the Complaints Panel.
- ❑ All such records will be kept for one year after the relevant students have left the Harmonize Academy.