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|-------------|------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Author      | Encarna Aparicio | Target group | All employees, consultants and volunteers |
| Issued      | September 2026   |              |                                           |
| Approved by | Executive Team   | Next review  | September 2028                            |

## School Concerns and Complaints Policy

### Aims

Anthem Schools Trust (Anthem) its schools aim to meet its statutory obligations when responding to concerns and complaints by:

- being impartial and non-adversarial
- facilitating a full and fair investigation, where necessary
- addressing all the points at issue and providing an effective and prompt response
- treating complainants with respect and courtesy
- making sure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- keeping complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- considering how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full. To support this, we will make sure we publicise this policy and make it available on the school website.

### Legislation and guidance

- This policy meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents/carers of students at the school.
- It is also based on best practice guidance for academies complaints procedures from the Department for Education (DfE).
- This is a Trust-wide policy, and it also addresses duties set out in the [Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#) with regards to dealing with complaints about the school's fulfilment of EYFS requirements.
- This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

### Accessibility

In accordance with the Equality Act, we will consider making reasonable adjustments to enable concerned parties to access and complete this complaints procedure.

## Scope

This policy applies to all sections of our school and provides guidelines for handling concerns and complaints raised by current parents/carers about the school their child or children attend. It may, at our discretion, apply to parents/carers whose child has recently left the school, other non-parents/carers or students

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN). These should be raised directly with local authorities
- Safeguarding matters - these will be handled under the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you are concerned about the safety of your child, you should immediately notify the person you believe is best placed to take urgent action and confirm this by writing to the Headteacher. This policy may, however, cover complaints about how a safeguarding matter has been handled by the school.
- Suspension and permanent exclusion. However, complaints about the application of the Behaviour & Ethos Policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances – complaints from staff will be dealt with under the Grievance Policy
- Staff conduct. Depending on the nature of the matter, complaints about staff may be dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy and/or the Allegations against the staff Policy, as 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.
- Data Protection

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

Any person wishing to raise a concern or complaint about Anthem at a Trust level should refer to the Anthem Complaints Policy, available on the Anthem website <https://www.anthemtrust.uk>.

If you are not clear whether this policy or another policy applies, please contact the relevant school's Complaints Coordinator or the Anthem Complaints Coordinator (contact details at Appendix 1).

## Roles and responsibilities

### The Complainant

- The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they try to resolve the concern informally first with school staff
- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- ask for assistance if needed, we are happy to support
- follow these procedures

- say clearly what you think might resolve the issue at the earliest stage, confirming early what outcome you are seeking
- co-operate with the school throughout the process, responding to deadlines and communication promptly
- refrain from publishing details about the complaint on social media
- treat all those involved with respect and use appropriate language at all times. Please refer to the school's Code of Conduct for Parents, Carers and Visitors
- respect confidentiality
- contact the appropriate staff member or the school's Complaints Coordinator to raise your concern and not multiple people in the school and at Anthem, as this may lead to an uncoordinated and duplicated response
- refrain from approaching individual Anthem Community Council (ACC) members about the complaint. They have no power to act on an individual basis, and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 or Stage 4 of the procedure
- not send repeated communication to the school whilst the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone or email), as it could delay the issue being resolved and the outcome being reached.

### Complaints Co-ordinator

**The contact details for the Complaints Co-ordinator for all schools are set out at Appendix 1.**

The Complaints Coordinator will remain impartial and will:

- keep the complainant up to date at each stage in the procedure
- coordinate and ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure
- keep records of each formal complaint and how matters proceed (including noting at which stage each complaint is resolved)
- arrange additional assistance for those raising a concern, difficulty or complaint when required
- monitor the level and type of complaints as well as the keeping, confidentiality and storage of records in relation to complaints
- keep the Anthem Lead Complaints Coordinator informed of any complaints being dealt with by the school at Stage 2 to 4.

### Timescales

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident. We will consider exceptions to this timeframe in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made outside of term time, they will be deemed to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period. The dates of each term are published on the school's website.

The school aims to resolve any concerns and complaints in a timely manner. The timescales for each stage of the procedure are set out below under the relevant section. When this policy refers to school days, we mean Monday to Friday, when the school is open to students during term time.

Although every effort will be made by the school to comply with the time limits specified under each stage of the procedure, it may not always be possible to do so, for example due to the complexity or

quantity of matters raised, or due to the unavailability of the complainant to attend a meeting, if offered. In all cases, where a time limit cannot be complied with, the school will write to the complainant within the specified time limit, setting out the reasons why the time limit cannot be complied with, and confirming the new time limit which will apply.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on the school's 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 a complainant commences legal action against the trust in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

### Complaints about our fulfilment of early years requirements

We will investigate all written complaints relating to the school's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The school will keep a record of the complaint and make this available to Ofsted on request.

If parents/carers are not satisfied with our response, they can contact Ofsted by:

- Calling: 0300 123 4666
- Emailing: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

Schools will notify parents and carers if they become aware that they are to be inspected by Ofsted. Schools will also supply a copy of the inspection report card to parents and carers of children attending the setting on a regular basis.

### Recording meetings

Recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. All parties should agree in advance to a meeting or conversation being recorded.

Recordings of conversations that are obtained covertly and without informed consent of all parties being recorded will not be accepted as evidence.

### Stages of complaint

#### Four stages

We have adopted a 4-stage process for dealing with concerns and complaints:

**Stage 1:** Concerns and difficulties, dealt with informally

**Stage 2:** Complaints in writing formally investigated by the Headteacher

**Stage 3:** Complaints formally reviewed by a member of the National Team or designate.

**Stage 4:** Complaint Panel Hearing

## Stage 1 – Concerns and difficulties, dealt with informally

We expect that most concerns or difficulties can be resolved informally. Examples might include dissatisfaction with an aspect of teaching provided, a class/group allocation, allocation of responsibilities or privileges, a timetable clash, a problem with the school's equipment or provision, or an admin error. Certain serious complaints such as discrimination, harassment or victimisation are taken very seriously and may need to be dealt with at Stage 2 or Stage 3 without action at Stage 1.

The school will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

The complainant should raise the concern as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff (Class teacher, Head of Year, Form Tutor etc.), either in person, by letter, telephone or email within the timescales set out. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the school's Complaints Coordinator.

If a concern or difficulty is raised with a member of staff who feels that it raises serious issues which should be dealt with as a formal complaint immediately, the member of staff will tell the complainant that they should put their complaint in writing to the Headteacher.

The school will aim to acknowledge informal complaints within five school days and will confirm how the school intends to proceed.

The school will aim to resolve a concern or difficulty informally within **15 school days** of the date that it was raised. Where a concern or difficulty has not been resolved by informal means within this time limit, the complainant can escalate the matter to a formal complaint (Stage 2) of this school's Concerns and Complaints Policy by writing to the school Complaints Coordinator within 10 school days of the Stage 1 response being received.

Low level concerns about individual Anthem Community Council (ACC) members should be directed to the Chair of the ACC in the first instance. The Chair will notify the Anthem Governance Team of all concerns. If the concern is about the Chair of the ACC, it should be directed to the Anthem Governance Team directly at [Governance@anthemtrust.uk](mailto:Governance@anthemtrust.uk)

## Stage 2: Complaints in writing formally investigated by the Headteacher

A formal complaint must be in writing unless the complainant has a good reason to request a reasonable adjustment.

### Notification

A concern or difficulty raised under Stage 1 of this school's Concerns and Complaints Policy which remains unresolved after **15 school days**, or a serious matter which requires formal investigation from the outset, should be set out in writing and sent to the Headteacher or school Complaints Coordinator.

Complaints regarding the Headteacher should usually be dealt with at Stage 3.

The complainant should clearly set out:

- the matters in dispute
- the relevant dates
- the full names of the persons involved and

- what the complainant believes the school should do to resolve the complaint.

A template form is attached to this policy at **Appendix 2** to provide guidance on content of the formal written complaint, which the complainant can use if desired. Any documentation relied upon by the complainant should be attached to the formal complaint.

If the complainant requires assistance with writing the formal complaint, because of, for example, a disability, they should contact the school Complaints Coordinator.

Formal complaints about ACC members will be investigated by the Anthem Governance Team.

### Acknowledgement

The formal complaint will be acknowledged in writing within **five school days** of receipt. The acknowledgement letter/email will confirm the date that the formal complaint was received, the action to be taken and the specified time limit.

### Investigation

The Headteacher may appoint an impartial Stage 2 investigator or may lead on the investigation directly. The Stage 2 investigator can be a senior member of school, a staff member from another Anthem school, a National Team staff member or an Anthem Community Council member and will not have had any prior involvement in the complaint.

The Headteacher or the Stage 2 investigator will be provided with the records of the Stage 1 informal procedure (if applicable) and will then proceed to investigate the complaint. This will involve obtaining and considering all documentation held by the school, which is relevant to the complaint, including all documentation sent in by the complainant. If additional information is required from the complainant, and others involved, this may be requested from them over the telephone or in writing. A meeting with the complainant may be requested as part of the investigation.

### Outcome

If the Headteacher considers it to be appropriate, the complainant may be offered a meeting to discuss the issues raised after the investigation has taken place with the aim of reaching an amicable resolution.

Whether or not an outcome meeting is arranged, the Headteacher will write to the complainant confirming the outcome of the investigation within **20 school days** from the date the complaint was received. The letter will set out the individual matters raised by the complainant, the findings made by the investigation, and the conclusion reached by the Headteacher.

The letter will inform the complainant that, if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this policy within **five school days** of receipt of the letter.

Where the complaint was received during a school holiday or within 20 days from the end of a term or half term, the Headteacher will endeavour to expedite the investigation wherever possible.

### Stage 3 – Complaint formally reviewed by a member of the Anthem National Team or designate.

#### Notification

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint under Stage 2 of this school's Concerns and Complaints Policy, the complainant may write to the school Complaints Coordinator to request that their complaint is taken to Stage 3 of this policy within **five school days** of receiving the Stage 2 outcome letter.

The complainant should not repeat the matters raised in their original letter or attach documentation already provided but should clearly set out how and why the complainant does not accept the findings made under Stage 2 and the outcome they wish to achieve. Complaints regarding the Headteacher should also usually be addressed under Stage 3 of this policy.

Stage 3 complaints about ACC members will be reviewed by a member of the Anthem Executive Team.

#### Acknowledgement

The complainant's letter/email will be acknowledged within **five school days** of receipt.

#### Investigation

The school Complaints Coordinator will arrange for a member of the Anthem National Team or designate to review the complaint under Stage 3 of this policy.

They may lead the investigation directly themselves or appoint an impartial Stage 3 investigator.

If additional information is required from the complainant, and others involved, this may be requested from them over the telephone or in writing. A meeting with the complainant may be requested as part of the investigation.

#### Outcome

The complainant may be offered a meeting to discuss the issues raised after the investigation has taken place with the aim of reaching an amicable resolution.

Whether or not an outcome meeting is arranged, the member of the Anthem National Team or designate will write to the complainant confirming the outcome of the investigation within **20 school days** from the date that the request for a Stage 3 review was received. The letter will set out whether they agree with the findings and conclusion under Stage 2, and give reasons, as well as responding to any criticisms of the Stage 2 investigation.

The letter will inform the complainant that, if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 3 review, they should write to the school Complaints Coordinator within **five school days** of receipt of the letter requesting a Complaint Panel Hearing under Stage 4 of this school's Concerns and Complaints Policy.

### Stage 4 – Complaint Panel Hearing

#### Overview

A Complaint Panel (Panel) Hearing (Hearing) is a review of the decisions taken by the Headteacher and, where relevant, the member of the Anthem National Team or designate. The Panel will 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 from Stage 1/2 of the procedure.

### Notification

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the review under Stage 3, the complaint may be referred to the Panel Hearing by writing to the school Complaints Coordinator within **five school days** of receiving the Stage 3 decision.

The request will usually only be considered if the complainant has completed the procedures at Stages 1 and 2, and where appropriate Stage 3.

The complainant should not repeat the matters raised in their original letter or attach documentation already provided but should clearly set out how and why the complainant does not accept the findings made under Stage 3 and what they think could resolve the complaint.

### Acknowledgement

The school Complaints Coordinator will write to the complainant within **five school days** acknowledging receipt of their request.

### Composition of the Panel

The school Complaints Coordinator will be responsible for convening the Panel as soon as reasonably practicable. The Panel will normally consist of a minimum of three individuals. No panel members will have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member of the Panel will normally be from Anthem National Team or Resolutions Team and at least one member will be independent of the management and running of the school.

The **Resolutions Team** is a pool of people willing and able to sit on panels with the following membership: volunteering ACC Members and Trustees, National Team staff, Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers and external people who have volunteered specifically for the Resolutions Team.

### Convening the Complaint Panel Hearing

The school Complaints Coordinator will liaise with the Panel, the complainant and the school's representative to agree a mutually convenient date for the Panel Hearing, which will usually take place within **20 school days** of receipt of the complainant's request, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Panel will not normally sit during half term or the school holidays.

If the complainant rejects the offer of 3 proposed dates without good reason, the school Complaints Coordinator may set a date. The hearing may go ahead using written submissions from both parties.

The panel hearing will be normally held remotely unless specific circumstances apply.

The school Complaints Coordinator will write to the complainant confirming the date, time and place of the Panel Hearing together with brief details of the Panel members who will be present at least 5 school days before the Hearing takes place.

If the Panel Hearing will not take place within **20 school days** of receipt of the complainant's request, the letter/email will set out the exceptional circumstances involved.

The Panel reserves the right to convene at their convenience rather than that of the complainant.

## Attendance

The complainant will be allowed to attend the Hearing and be accompanied if they wish. For the avoidance of doubt, the complainant's companion will be present for moral support only and will not play any part in the proceedings, unless invited to do so by the Panel. The Panel Hearing is **not** a legal hearing, and it is not appropriate for either the complainant or the school to be legally represented.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

## The role of the Panel

The Panel's task is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering the documents provided by both parties and any representations made by the complainant, the Headteacher or the member of the Anthem National Team or designate. If, after establishing the facts, the Panel consider that the complaint is made out, they will uphold the complaint. If the Panel decide that the complaint is not made out, they will dismiss the complaint. They will make these decisions on the balance of probabilities.

## Hearing

The Hearing will be chaired by one member of the Panel (chosen by themselves) and will be conducted in an informal manner. The Hearing will be conducted in such a way as to ensure that all those present have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments in an appropriate manner. The Hearing is not a legal proceeding and all statements made at the Hearing will be unsworn. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the Hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and their comments will be recorded.

## Conduct

All those attending the Hearing are expected to be polite and show courtesy, restraint and good manners or after due warning, the Hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the chair of the Panel. If terminated on the grounds of poor conduct by the complainant or the complainant's accompanying person, the previous decision regarding the complaint may be taken to stand.

## Adjournment

The chair of the Panel may, at their discretion, adjourn the Hearing for further investigation of any relevant issue. This may include an adjournment to take legal advice.

## Notes

All present will be entitled to make their own notes for reference purposes if they wish. Minutes of the proceedings will be taken during the Hearing, to be finalised afterwards and shared with all parties.

Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless required as part of reasonable adjustments. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending will be sought before any recording takes place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

## Private proceeding

The Hearing is a private proceeding. No notes or other records, or oral statements, about any matter discussed in or arising from the Hearing shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media.

## The outcome

After due consideration of the matters discussed at the Hearing, the Panel shall reach a decision unless there is an agreed position. The Panel can:

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

If the complaint is upheld, the Panel will:

- decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's or Anthems systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future

The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations will be notified to the complainant within **10 school days** of the Hearing, as well as to the Anthem Executive Team, the school's representative, the Headteacher and where relevant, any person about whom the complaint has been made. The findings and recommendations will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher. The decision of the Panel will be final.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the DfE if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the school.

## Mediation Stage

Mediation can happen after the formal complaint process is complete to help rebuild relationships, but it can also be used earlier in the process to try and resolve things sooner.

There may be times when we consider that a full investigation is not necessary to resolve a complaint and a Mediation Stage may be the most appropriate course of action. This can be useful in helping the school and complainants reach an agreement and move forward.

School complaints mediation is a voluntary, confidential process using a neutral third party to resolve disputes between parents/carers and schools, often utilised when formal procedures stall.

Mediation is not a substitute for formal investigations but a tool to facilitate discussion and reach agreements, often used after formal steps have been completed. If neither the school nor the complainant believe mediation will help, the complainant can move on to the next stage of the procedure.

## Referral to the DfE (Department for Education)

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the DfE. The DfE will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly. The DfE will not overturn the school's decision about a complaint but will intervene if a school or trust has:

- Breached a clause in its funding agreement
- Failed to act in line with its duties under education law

- Acted (or is proposing to act) unreasonably when exercising its functions

If the complaints procedure is found not to meet regulations, the trust will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe> for how to complain about a school. We will include this information in the outcome letter to complainants.

Before escalating a complaint to the DfE, the complainant needs to complete the school's complaints procedure, unless one of the following applies:

- a child is not getting an education
- a child has been exposed to harm
- the school is stopping you from following its complaints procedure

### Late complaints

Where a complaint is submitted more than three months after the incident or event (or where the complaint relates to a series of incidents or events, more than three months from the date of the latest incident or event), the school reserves the right to refuse to investigate the complaint under this school's Concerns and Complaints Policy if it appears reasonable and fair to do so, having regard to the circumstances surrounding the complaint.

Where the school decides that a complaint which was submitted late will not be investigated, the school Complaints Coordinator will write to the complainant notifying them of the decision within **five school days** of the complaint being received.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision not to investigate a complaint which was submitted late, the complainant may write to the school Complaints Coordinator asking for the decision to be reviewed by the Director of Education. The complaint itself will not be investigated during this review.

The complainant will be written to with the outcome of the review within **10 school days** of the date that the letter/email from the complainant seeking the review was received.

If the decision not to investigate the complaint is quashed, it will be referred to the school Complaints Coordinator to be dealt with under this school's Concerns and Complaints Policy in the usual way.

If the decision not to investigate the complaint is upheld, the complainant may refer the concern or complaint to the DfE.

### Anonymous complaints

The school will not investigate anonymous complaints under the procedures in this school's Concerns and Complaints Policy. Anonymous complaints will be referred to the Headteacher or Director of Education who will decide what, if any, action should be taken.

### Complaint Campaigns

If the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- sending a template response to all complainants; and/or
- publishing a single response on the school's website

If complainants are not satisfied with our handling of the situation, they can contact the DfE as stated in the section above.

### Unreasonable and persistent complaints

#### Unreasonable complaints

We 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 our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Once a complainant's behaviour has become so extreme as to be deemed unreasonable and abusive, they will not necessarily be entitled to all stages of the complaint procedure outlined above.

A complaint may become unreasonable if the complainant:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaint's investigation process
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- Raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to the DfE
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- Uses threats to intimidate
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- Knowingly provides falsified information
- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums

**Please note:** the above list is not intended to be exhaustive and is for guidance purposes only. It is at the discretion of the school what is deemed to be unreasonable.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone or email), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

### **Steps we will take for unreasonable complaints**

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns and give a clear statement of our position and the complainant's options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals.

Whenever possible, the school will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking. If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable, refer them to this policy and remind them to act in accordance with it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may:

- 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

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from school premises and ensuring appropriate measures of support are provided to staff where they are the subject of aggression and/or violence.

### **Serial/persistent complaints**

If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent.' It is poor use of schools' time and resources to reply to repeated letters, emails or telephone calls making substantially the same points.

We may stop responding to the complainant when the following conditions are met:

- We have taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts the school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time

The case to stop responding is stronger if:

- The complainant's communications are often or always abusive or aggressive
- The complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
- We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

The school will not refuse to accept further correspondence or complaints from an individual we have had repeated or excessive contact with. The application of a 'serial or persistent' marking will be against the subject or complaint itself rather than the complainant.

When we decide to stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will consider any new complaints they make provided the concerns raised are materially different to those raised previously and/or are unconnected to the previous concern.

## Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we had not previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

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 that the local process is complete
- direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If a duplicate complaint is raised which in the view of the school warrants further consideration or new aspects are raised, the procedure outlined above (as appropriate) will be repeated.

## Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

To ensure complaints are understood clearly and handled fairly, parents/carers are expected to submit complaints in their own words and should reflect their personal experience and views.

The use of AI-generated content is discouraged, as it may distort the facts, include inappropriate language, or misrepresent the complainant's views. AI does not always get it right when citing laws and can make a complaint more complex than necessary. If a complaint is suspected to have been drafted using AI, the school reserves the right to seek clarification or ask for the complaint to be resubmitted.

## Anthem Schools Trust

The school Complaints Coordinator and Headteacher will ensure that the Anthem Complaints Coordinator is informed of any complaints at Stage 2 to 4 and complaints received from external agencies without delay and is kept informed as to all stages of the complaint thereafter.

## Record-keeping and confidentiality

The school Complaints Coordinator will keep written records of each formal complaint received by the school, at which stage of the procedure each was resolved, the action taken by the school at all stages (whether or not the complaints were upheld), and the final outcome. This material will be treated as confidential and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

This is except where the Secretary of State (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR, or where the material must be made available to Ofsted.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and our Retaining Records Policy.

## Monitoring and evaluation

Anthem will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in making sure that complaints are handled properly. The Anthem Executive Team will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future. This policy will be reviewed every two years.

## Appendix 1 – List of schools' Complaints Coordinators

| Name of School             | Complaints Coordinator | Contact details                                                                                |
|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Queensbury Academy         | Katherine Briggs       | <a href="mailto:KBriggs@queensbury.anthemtrust.uk">KBriggs@queensbury.anthemtrust.uk</a>       |
| St Mark's C of E Academy   | Carol Low              | <a href="mailto:CLow@stmarks.anthemtrust.uk">CLow@stmarks.anthemtrust.uk</a>                   |
| The Deepings School        | Amy Howe               | <a href="mailto:concerns@deepings.anthemtrust.uk">concerns@deepings.anthemtrust.uk</a>         |
| Oxford Spires Academy      | Harriet Bellamy        | <a href="mailto:HBellamy@oxfordspires.anthemtrust.uk">HBellamy@oxfordspires.anthemtrust.uk</a> |
| Abacus Belsize Primary     | Encarna Aparicio       | <a href="mailto:complaints@anthemtrust.uk">complaints@anthemtrust.uk</a>                       |
| Abbey Woods Academy        | Encarna Aparicio       | <a href="mailto:complaints@anthemtrust.uk">complaints@anthemtrust.uk</a>                       |
| All Saints Junior School   | Ajantha Antoinette     | <a href="mailto:complaints@anthemtrust.uk">complaints@anthemtrust.uk</a>                       |
| Benjamin Adlard Primary    | Encarna Aparicio       | <a href="mailto:complaints@anthemtrust.uk">complaints@anthemtrust.uk</a>                       |
| Boston West Academy        | Encarna Aparicio       | <a href="mailto:complaints@anthemtrust.uk">complaints@anthemtrust.uk</a>                       |
| Gladstone Park Primary     | Encarna Aparicio       | <a href="mailto:complaints@anthemtrust.uk">complaints@anthemtrust.uk</a>                       |
| Grampian Primary Academy   | Encarna Aparicio       | <a href="mailto:complaints@anthemtrust.uk">complaints@anthemtrust.uk</a>                       |
| Judith Kerr Primary School | Encarna Aparicio       | <a href="mailto:complaints@anthemtrust.uk">complaints@anthemtrust.uk</a>                       |
| Lincoln Carlton Academy    | Encarna Aparicio       | <a href="mailto:complaints@anthemtrust.uk">complaints@anthemtrust.uk</a>                       |
| Meadow Park Academy        | Encarna Aparicio       | <a href="mailto:complaints@anthemtrust.uk">complaints@anthemtrust.uk</a>                       |
| Mount Street Academy       | Encarna Aparicio       | <a href="mailto:complaints@anthemtrust.uk">complaints@anthemtrust.uk</a>                       |

### Anthem Complaints Coordinator

**Encarna Aparicio**

[complaints@anthemtrust.uk](mailto:complaints@anthemtrust.uk)

## Appendix 2 – Formal Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the school who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

|                                                                                                                                                     |                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Your Name:</b>                                                                                                                                   | <b>Student's Name:</b>              |
| <b>Your Relationship to Student:</b>                                                                                                                | <b>Student's DOB and Year/Form:</b> |
| <b>Address and Postcode:</b>                                                                                                                        | <b>Daytime Telephone Number:</b>    |
|                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Evening Telephone Number:</b>    |
| <b>Full details of complaint</b> <i>(including the names of all persons involved and the dates of incidents referred to):</i>                       |                                     |
| <b>What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint (for example, who did you speak to and what was the response)?</b> |                                     |
| <b>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?</b>                                                                            |                                     |

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

*For Official Use:*

Date Acknowledgement Sent

Name of Person Complaint Referred To

Signature:

Date: