



Spencer Alliance for Leadership and Teaching: Complaints Policy 2024 – 2026 v3

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The Spencer Alliance of Leadership and Teaching wish to ensure that every person, from course participants to leaders and assessors, engaged with our programme and course delivery, is treated fairly and equitably at all times. This includes all arms of work:

Spencer Teaching School Hub, including all CPD courses
Spencer Teaching School Hub AB Services
George Spencer Academy SCITT
Spencer Apprenticeships
The Derby Research School at Wyndham Primary Academy
Maths Hub East Midlands West
Spencer Academies Trust End Point Assessment Organisation



This policy sits alongside the wider umbrella of the Spencer Academies Trust policies which sit [here](#). This policy adds to the global one with strand specific threads for the work the SALT team delivers on.

Definitions

The term 'learners' is used here to cover apprentices, SCITT trainees and participants on programmes and engaging with our AB Services as part of the Teaching School Hub. This reflects the broad scope of our engagement with young and adult learners.





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Making a Complaint

What is a complaint?

We consider a complaint to be any expression of dissatisfaction with a service provided by the Spencer Alliance for Leadership and Teaching. This dissatisfaction might arise from the actions of a member of staff, or from an area or programme of work the Spencer Alliance is involved with.

The complaints we receive may be about:

- the tone of our correspondence or the attitude of our staff
- the handling and timeliness of the individual's correspondence
- the quality of provision
- a judgement made regarding assessment
- the venue
- the quality and accuracy of information provided in our earlier responses

This policy has been developed taking into account the requirements of the DfE guidance last updated 12 March 2021, ESFA Guidance March 2021 and the Equality Act 2010. Guidance on managing the procedures is available from senior leaders within the SAT leadership team and the Trust HR Team. Template letters and forms to support the procedures are also available on the Google Drive.

The aim of this procedure is to:

- provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use
- attempt to resolve concerns through informal discussions at the earliest stage
- provide clarity of who will be co-ordinating the process in the organisation
- give clear timelines for resolution
- encourage resolving the issues and finding a way to move forwards
- demonstrate a fair approach to managing complaints and concerns
- explain how vexatious and unreasonable behaviour by complainants is dealt with

Complaints will be managed in line with the Complaints Process set out within this procedure, as linked to the Trust Complaints Policy. For those situations where an informal resolution is not reached, there is a more formal process to investigate and deal with complaints. Our aim is to address all concerns/complaints as soon as possible after they arise and to resolve matters amicably at an early stage. With that in mind, complainants will be asked at the outset what they think might resolve the issue.

The SAT Complaints Policy is a Four-Stage Process:

- Stage 1: Concern/complaint heard by staff member (Informal stage)
- Stage 2: Concern/complaint heard by the Director of SALT (formal stage)
- Stage 3: Complaint heard by an appointed Panel (formal stage)
- Stage 4: Complaint referred to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)





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

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, discuss the matter with the Principal or member of the leadership team and arrangements can be made to refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the employee directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, arrangements will be made to 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, the Trust and individual Academy will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within the complaints procedure.

Resolution of Initial Concerns

Initial or informal concerns or complaints can be made either in person, by telephone or in writing to the facilitator, appropriate administration coordinator or the SALT Director. In all cases the concern should be marked as Private and Confidential.

We will try to resolve as many of these concerns as possible at local level by the person who originally dealt with correspondence from that individual. The member of staff will undertake an initial investigation and decide on appropriate action, advising the SALT Director and supporting the organisation in keeping a record of the response.

If the issue is not resolved at this level then it is usually escalated to a more senior line manager or team leader. If the correspondence between both parties continues and the concern has not been resolved, then it becomes necessary to escalate the complaint to trust level.

In order to do this, the correspondence will include an explanation of the procedure for making an official complaint to the Spencer Academies Trust, as set out in the [Trust Complaints Policy](#).

When to raise a formal complaint

When you have tried to resolve your complaint with the individual and this has ultimately failed, then you can register an official complaint to the Spencer Academies Trust.

How to make a complaint

- Complaints against training provision and/or employees (except the SALT Director) should be made in the first instance, to the SALT Director Tammy Elward – tammyelward@satrust.com
- Complaints that involve or are about the SALT Directors and Leadership Team or member of the Trust central team should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer, via the Trust office.

You can contact the Spencer Academies Trust’s Central Team using one of the following methods:

- Email: info@satrust.com FAO: Complaints Manager, or





- **Phone** number; 08455 651 870 (lines are open from 08:30 to 17:30, Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays)

What you need to provide

You should provide as much information as possible to allow us to investigate your complaint. This should include some or all of the following:

- your name and a valid email or home address for receipt of reply;
- a clear description of your complaint;
- copies of earlier associated correspondence between yourself and the SALT team;

A template complaint form is included at the end of Trust Complaints Policy. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the academy office. You can also ask a third-party organisation for example like the Citizens Advice to help you.

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.

Time Scales

Complaints must be raised by the complainant 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 consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

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.

Investigating the Complaint

At this stage, as formal complaint is dealt with following the Complaints Process outlined on the Spencer Academies Trust Policies Page which follows a four stage process.

<http://satrust.com/policies/>

Response Time

- **Stage 1 – Informal complaints:** At the conclusion of their investigation, the appropriate person investigating the complaint will provide an informal written response where possible within 10 working days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint within 5 working days of stage 1 being concluded.
- **Stage 2 – Formal complaints:** Formal complaints must be made to the Principal (unless they are about the Principal), via the school office. This may be done in person or in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form). The Principal will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 working days.
- **Stage 3 – Panel Meeting:** A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Chief Executive Officer, via the Trust office, within 5 working days of receipt of the Stage 2 response. The CEO will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of





the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 working days. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. We will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. We will aim to convene a meeting within 15 working days of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, we will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

The Chair of the panel will provide the complainant and academy with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 working days. The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled.

For further information regarding the handling of each complaint stage, please consult the [Trust Complaints Policy](#).

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure the organisation will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. One or more of the following may be appropriate;

- an explanation
- an apology
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that the event complained about will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review policies in the light of the complaint

If it is considered that mediation would be helpful in resolving the issue, a mediation meeting may be convened between the complainant and appropriate staff. The aim of which will be to identify an agreed solution to the issues raised by the complainant. A summary note of proceedings will be taken. A copy of the note will be provided to the complainant.

For further information regarding the handling of each complaint stage, please consult the [Trust Complaints Policy](#).





Next Steps

If the complainant believes SALT / the 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**.

If after exhausting this process the complainant is still not satisfied, they can escalate their complaint to the Complaints Adjudicator at the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Email: nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk

Phone: 0800 015 0400 or 0247 682 6482

Please note that the ESFA will not usually investigate complaints more than 12 months after the original decision or action has been taken.

Whistleblowing

We have an internal SAT whistleblowing policy 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 academy should complain through the SAT 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.





Appendix 1: Appropriate Body Services Complaints Procedure

This Appendix refers particular to **Spencer Teaching School Appropriate Body Services**. The process regarding solving informal concerns and any escalation to a formal complaint should be followed in the first instance. This appendix provides specific details which relate to the Appropriate Body Services.



Complaints and Appeals by the Early Career Teacher

An ECT who disagrees with the recommendation of the Principal or decision of the Appropriate Body should first raise any concerns about their induction programme with their Induction Tutor in the first instance.

If the matter is not resolved, the ECT may notify the named contact at the Appropriate Body who should, as soon as possible, investigate the issues raised. The ECT will be informed of the investigating office, process and procedure within 7 days of raising the complaint.

If an ECT fails induction, or has their induction extended, the appropriate body must advise the ECT of their right to appeal, who to appeal to, and the time limit for doing so. In England, the Appeals Body is the Teaching Regulation Agency, which acts on behalf of the Secretary of State. For induction completed in Wales, the Appeals Body is the Education Workforce Council. Further guidance about the appeals process is available at: [induction_appeals_procedures_updated_May_2018.pdf](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674442/induction_appeals_procedures_updated_May_2018.pdf) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Complaints by the School

The school is directed in the first instance to the informal and formal means of solving disputes within this main policy. In the first instance the Appropriate Body will work with the Headteacher to solve any issues in an informal manner. If these issues are not solved then the complaint will move to the formal stage outlined in the process in the Complaints Policy.

Complaints by the Appropriate Body

Where the Appropriate Body considers an issue with the quality of the provision at school level, these will be attempted to be resolved in the first instance through an informal measure. The Appropriate Body will inform the school of the exact nature of the concern and work with the headteacher to clarify the expectations and provide advice on the information that is required, fostering a relationship of strong support.

If the headteacher and induction tutor cannot resolve the issue, appropriate bodies may seek to engage the governing body as appropriate to enable the issues to be resolved.

In exceptional circumstances where there is a concern that induction is not being conducted with regard to the statutory guidance and that concern cannot be resolved with the school or its governing body, the appropriate body will notify the Department for Education who will consider appropriate action on an individual basis. The escalation to the Department is rare and will only be taken where collaborative steps to ensure regard is had to statutory guidance have been exhausted. It will not be a proportionate response in most cases where ongoing collaboration between





appropriate bodies and schools is normally the most constructive route to resolving issues.

Investigations and the Governing Body

The governing body can request general reports on the progress of an ECT on a termly basis but are not automatically entitled to have access to an individual's assessment reports. The exception to this would be when an ECT has raised concerns about a particular issue/assessment via the institution's grievance procedures, which would in many cases require the governing body to investigate the situation. If at any stage the governing body has questions or concerns about the quality of the institution's induction arrangements and the roles and responsibilities of staff involved in the process, they can seek guidance from the appropriate body.

Contact Email Addresses:

Tammy Elward

tammyelward@satrust.com

AB Services

ab@spencerteacherschoolhub.com





Appendix 2: GSA SCITT and Spencer Apprenticeships Appeals Policy

There is specific guidance for our teacher trainees which follows in the heart of the our overarching approach for the Spencer Academies Trust, but with additional sector specific guidance.



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APPRENTICESHIPS

The policy includes:

- Appeals made by trainee/apprentice, including appeals made against decision for QTS awarding, Apprenticeship award and for withdrawals
- PGCE Appeals and Complaints
- Information about the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)

To refer to this document, please contact the SCITT team on scitt@george-spencer.notts.sch.uk