

GLC COMPLAINTS POLICY

- This policy was originally created in 2008. GLC Staff were consulted on the latest version of this policy:	Autumn 2020
- This policy was ratified by the GLC Board of Directors on :	Autumn 2023
- This Policy will be reviewed by the GLC Board on :	Autumn 2024

GLC Mission Statement

The GLC's mission is to develop active and thriving citizens within a diverse, truly fair and equal community. This will be achieved through:

- High quality teaching that deliberately develops competencies of curiosity, creativity, communication and critical-thinking;
- An inspiring and meaningful curriculum;
- The development of productive relationships by instilling the values of compassion, resilience, responsibility and aspiration to prepare our young people for learning and life;
- A commitment to the wellbeing of our staff;
- A culture of professional generosity, collaboration, challenge and support throughout the GLC;
- The development of effective external partnerships for the benefit and wellbeing of our community.

Equalities Statement

The GLC's commitment to equality is enshrined in our mission statement to develop 'active and thriving citizens within a diverse, truly fair and equal community'.

We are a vibrant, innovative and successful organisation: we work hard to be the place of choice to work and to learn. Across the 5 academies of the GLC, we pledge that everyone enjoys an equality of opportunity. We work tirelessly to ensure that individual characteristics including age, ethnicity, socio-economic background, academic ability, disability, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation are not discriminated against in any way. We create inclusive environments characterised by mutual respect where difference is celebrated.

The GLC Complaints Policy

Aim: The aim of this policy is to ensure that a complaint [should it arise] is handled sympathetically, efficiently, at the appropriate level or seniority, and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is:

- good for relationships;
- in the best interests of the pupil;

A **complaint** is defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'. The GLC intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage. There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints. The requirements to have a complaints procedure do not, in any way, undermine the efforts to deal with issues informally in the first instance.

When responding to complaints, the GLC staff aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial;
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary;
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response;
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality;
- Treat complainants with respect;
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process;
- Consider how the complaint can feed into an academy/ GLC improvement processes.

Policy Statement:

Academies within the GLC need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. Parents and pupils should never feel - or be made to feel - that a complaint made in a reasonable and appropriate way, will be taken amiss or will reflect adversely on the pupil or his/her opportunities at their GLC Academy.

The GLC expects that complaints will be made as soon as possible after an incident arises and no later than three months afterwards. The GLC will consider exceptions to this time frame 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.

This policy only allows for complaints in relation to one or more pupils currently on roll at a GLC Academy; The GLC will investigate and try to resolve every complaint in a positive manner and will treat every complaint as an opportunity to 'improve upon our best'.

The GLC will make every effort to address complaints as quickly as possible. To achieve this, realistic and reasonable time limits will be set for each action within each stage;

Where additional investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set, and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline with an explanation for the delay.

We recognise that a complaint which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment, damaging to relationships and also to our internal culture.

Complaints Procedure

- 1 At each stage, the person investigating the complaint will make sure they:
 - Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved;
 - Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved;
 - Meet with the complainant or contact them;
 - Clarify what the complainant believes would put things right;
 - Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
 - Conduct the interview with an open mind and is prepared to persist in the questioning;
 - Keep notes of the interview;

2 Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure the GLC academy will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology;
- An explanation;
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- An assurance that the event complained of will not recur;
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again;
- An undertaking to review GLC policies in light of the complaint.

3 Informal Procedure

In the first instance each GLC academy will try to resolve a complaint through an informal process of meeting to discuss the concern and to try to find a satisfactory resolution. Each GLC academy 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 their complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff either in person or by letter, telephone or email. Please see Section 4 below for further details.

The GLC Academy will aim to acknowledge complaints within **3 working days**, and investigate and provide a response within **15 working days**.

4 Who to complain to:

- **Education Matters:** If the concern relates to the classroom or the curriculum, please ask to speak with, or write to your child's class teacher. If the matter is not resolved, speak with or write to the relevant Head of Faculty [Secondary] or Phase Leader [Primary];
- **Pastoral Care:** If the concern relates to matters outside the classroom, please speak or write to your child's Tutor/Head of College [Secondary] or class teacher [Primary].
- **SEND:** Where a complaint is about the provision for an SEND pupil, the SENCo will hear the complaint unless the complaint itself is about the SENCo, in which case their line-manager will liaise with the complainant.
- **Financial Matters:** A concern or complaint about a matter relating to financial matters should be stated in writing to the GLC Finance Director c/o the Gateway Academy.
- **Head of Academy or senior GLC staff:** If a concern is about the Head of Academy or senior GLC staff, please write to the CEO.
- **CEO:** If a concern is about the CEO please write to the Chair of the GLC Board;
- **Other Complaints:** A parent who is dissatisfied with an aspect of their GLC Academy's policies, procedures, management or administration should write to the Head of Academy with details of the complaint.

- **Unresolved Complaints:** If concerns are not addressed, the complainant should write to the Head of Academy [or the CEO if the complaint concerns the Head of Academy] who will either deal with the concern or assign a senior colleague to deal with it;

5 Formal Procedure

If the informal route has not satisfactorily resolved the complaint, the complainant should complete the GLC Formal Complaints Form [see **Appendix 1**] giving as much detail as possible as well as a suggested outcome to the complaint.

Designated Officer: On receipt of a formal complaint form, a GLC board member or governor will be assigned as the Designated Officer to investigate the complaint and to reach a judgment.

The designated officer will be:

- Responsible for investigating and resolving the complaint.
- The first point of contact while the matter remains unresolved.
- Co-ordinate the complaint procedures in their GLC Academy.
- Monitor the storage and confidentiality of records in relation to the complaint.
- Responsible for reporting to the GLC Board, as appropriate.

Acknowledgement: A formal complaint in writing will be acknowledged by telephone on the date of receipt if practicable or in writing within **three working days**. A letter of acknowledgement will state the action being taken and the likely time scale.

Outcome: The outcome of any complaint will be notified to the parent in writing giving reasons for any decisions.

6 Appeals

If the Designated Officer is not able to resolve the situation to the satisfaction of the complainant, the complainant will have the right of appeal to a panel of three GLC Board members/governors. The judgment of the Panel will be final.

To ensure a fair process, the GLC will:

- Allow the complainant to attend to put their case and to be accompanied if they wish [although the details of this accompanying person must be provided in advance of the meeting];
- Ensure that at least one member of the panel is independent of the management of a GLC Academy.
- Form a panel [of three members] all of whom cannot have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.
- Include, on the panel, a suitably independent individual who can fulfil the role and responsibility of being the independent member.
- Provide at least five working-days' notice of panel hearing and will consider an alternate date for the hearing if the initial date is inconvenient for the complainant.
- At the appeal panel meeting, the complainant and representatives from the GLC academy, as appropriate, will be present. Each will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting.
- At the meeting, each individual will have the opportunity to give statements and present their evidence, and witnesses will be called as appropriate to present their evidence.
- The Panel, the complainant and the Academy representative will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions. Once the complainant and academy representatives have completed presenting their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.
- The Panel must then put together its findings and recommendations from the case.

After the panel hearing, the GLC will:

- Provide a copy of the findings and recommendations to the complainant and where relevant, the person complained about.
- Make a copy of the findings and recommendations available for inspection by the GLC Board.

7 Vexatious Complaints

This procedure should limit the number of complaints that become protracted, however, there may be occasions when, despite all elements of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the CEO [or Chair of the GLC Board] is able under this policy to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant subsequently contacts the GLC academy again about the same issue, the GLC academy can choose not to respond and refer to the CEO. The normal circumstance in which this occurs is:

- The GLC has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's needs, *and*
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of the GLC's position and their options [if any], *and*
- The complainant is contacting the Academy repeatedly but making substantially the same points each time.

However, this list is not intended to be exhaustive.

The GLC will be most likely to choose not to respond and refer to the CEO if:

- We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the GLC academy with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience, *and/or*
- The individual's letters/emails/telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive, *and/or*
- The individual makes insulting personal comments about, or threats towards, GLC staff.

Unreasonable behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening may constitute an unreasonably persistent complaint.

Actions the GLC can take against a persistent complainant [once that stages outlined in this policy have been completed] include:

- Verbally informing the complainant that his/her behaviour is becoming unacceptable.
- Informing the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered to be unacceptable.
- Informing the complainant that, except in emergencies, all communication with the GLC should be by letter only.
- Taking legal advice on pursuing a case under anti-harassment legislation.

The GLC will ensure when making this decision that complainants making any new complaint are heard, and that the GLC acts reasonably.

8 Record Keeping

The GLC will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally 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 under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a GLC Academy inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept for 6 years.

The details of the complaints, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole GLC Board in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the Governing Body or GLC board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

9 Learning Lessons

The GLC Board of Directors will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the individual GLC academy where appropriate and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the academy can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

10 Monitoring Arrangements

The GLC Board of Directors will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly and will track the number and nature of complaints and review underlying issues as stated above.

The Gateway Learning Community

FORMAL COMPLAINTS FORM	
This form should be made available on request to any person who wishes to make a formal complaint. It should be addressed to the Head of Academy [or the CEO as appropriate].	
1.	What is the nature of the complaint? (Please tick) <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div> <input type="radio"/> Staff Conduct: <input type="radio"/> Teaching Standards : <input type="radio"/> Condition of Premises: <input type="radio"/> Matters of Regime and Routine: <input type="radio"/> Other (please give details): </div> <div> <input type="radio"/> Parental Conduct: <input type="radio"/> Pastoral Care: <input type="radio"/> Time Tabling: <input type="radio"/> Access to or Regulation of Extra Curricular Activities: </div> </div>
2.	Please give details of your complaint: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> Date/s of Incident: Time/s: </div>
3.	If you are complaining about someone's behaviour please give the names of any witnesses to the incident/s:
4.	What actions, if any, have you taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?
5.	Please indicate the outcome you are seeking.
Name:	Contact Details:
Signed:	Date: