

United Learning Complaints Policy

Policy Statement

United Learning recognises that parents may, from time to time, have normal and legitimate concerns about their child's education and may not be satisfied with their child's school. It is important that we work together to resolve these concerns, aiming to do so informally where possible and to ensure that all pupils are happy and fulfilled at school.

This document sets out the process for raising a complaint and how it will be dealt with by United Learning. All United Learning academies must have a complaints procedure which is published on line. Each school must ensure their procedure sets out how complaints will be handled by the school and that this reflects the United Learning Complaints Policy, outlined below. This Policy meets the standards set out in the Education Independent School Standards (England) Regulations 2014, Schedule 1, Part 7.

1. Stage 1: Informal Complaint

Our intention is that the vast majority of concerns can be raised and dealt with informally before there is a need to raise a more formal complaint. Parents and carers are encouraged to make their concerns known to the school informally at an early stage so that they can be addressed in the spirit of partnership. In the first instance, a concern should be raised with the member of staff most closely involved, such as the child's class teacher or Head of Year. If that does not provide a satisfactory outcome, then an informal complaint should be made to the Principal with a view to resolving the issue informally before moving to the formal stage.

Where someone is not satisfied with the response they have received informally, a formal complaint may be made in line with the individual school's complaints policy and procedure, which is available on the school's website.

If a parent is claiming that a member of staff has harmed their child, this is an allegation not a complaint and should be dealt with differently – please see below.

United Learning will take seriously complaints from any party, but must prioritise its provision for existing pupils. There is no automatic right to proceed to Stages 3 or 4 of the complaints procedure for anybody other than existing parents.

There are special arrangements for dealing with the following matters which are subject to separate statutory procedures and must not be dealt with under individual complaints procedures:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding (including allegations)
- Admissions

- Exclusions
- Special Educational Needs

2. Stage 2: Formal Complaint

A formal complaint must be made in writing to the Principal / Headteacher of the school. If the complaint relates directly to the actions of the Headteacher, the formal letter should be directed to the Chair of the Local Governing Body.

Each school is expected to take all concerns and complaints seriously and to deal with issues in a respectful, impartial and non-adversarial manner within 14 days. United Learning expects a full and fair investigation of the issue to be undertaken and no one is penalised for making a complaint in good faith.

3. Stage 3: Local Governing Body Appeal Panel

Where a complainant is not satisfied with the response to their formal complaint at Stage 2, they may ask for it to be heard by the school's Local Governing Body Complaints Appeal Panel. This is Stage 3 of the complaints process and will consist of at least three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, and one panel member must be independent of the management and running of the school. Parents are welcome to attend the panel and may be accompanied if they wish.

It is United Learning's intention that all complaints are resolved by this point, either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils, within 28 working days of the complaint being registered.

Complainants should be given a written response to their complaint where appropriate and if requested.

4. Stage 4: United Learning's Central Office

However, there may be very rare occasions when the complainant feels that the individual school and the LGB have failed to appropriately address their complaint and that they must escalate it beyond the LGB. They can do this by moving to the fourth and final stage of the complaints process, Stage 4, by contacting United Learning's central office where the complaint will be picked up by a designated representative who will investigate and respond to the concern.

Please be aware that we won't respond at this stage unless there is clear evidence that all other stages have been exhausted. The complainant should contact our Peterborough Reception at Reception.Oundle@unitedlearning.org.uk or 01832 864 444. A brief overview of the issue, the school involved, and the steps taken thus far to resolve it, should be set out. The earlier steps in the complaints process must have been completed and a formal response given by the LGB before this escalation route is used, and it must be initiated within 14 days of the LGB panel's decision being communicated to the school.

Once the designated Central Office representative have details of the complaint, he / she will investigate further, including a review of the complaint and the action taken by the school up to this point. They will then give a direction and ensure the complainant is appropriately informed.

The decision of the designated representative is final and binding. Complainants will be given a written response to their complaint within 21 days from the receipt of the complaint by United Learning's central office.

5. The role of the EFA

Parents of pupils at United Learning academies who are not satisfied about the handling of their complaint should be signposted to the EFA via their School Complaints Form.

[<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>]

6. Vexatious Complaints

There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, that the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the relevant United Learning Director and the Chair of the LGB will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

If the complainant writes again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be recognised as vexatious and there will be no obligation on the part of the school or central office to respond. Should a complainant raise an entirely new, separate complaint however, it must be responded to in accordance with the complaints procedure. It is not the complainant who is vexatious; it is the correspondence.

7. Regulatory Bodies

Individuals are also free to make a complaint directly to the relevant regulatory body.

Independent Schools:

- ISI: CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA
- Phone: 020 7600 0100 or e-mail via the ISI website: www.isi.net

Academies

- OFSTED: Piccadilly Gate, Store St, Manchester M1 2WD
- Phone: 0300 123 4666 or e-mail enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

8. Written records and confidentiality

All United Learning schools keep accurate written records, for at least three years, of all complaints, the action taken and at what stage they were resolved. A record of complaints and their outcomes is reviewed regularly by the Headteacher (or other designated senior member of staff) at each school so that any patterns can be identified and appropriate interventions made. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during a school's previous academic year is available from the school.

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential wherever possible, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them.

United Learning is committed to ensuring that the application of this policy is non-discriminatory in line with the UK Equality Act (2010). Further details are available in the United Learning Equal Opportunities policy. This policy is applicable to all members of the United Learning community and is available to all interested parties on the United Learning Hub. This document is reviewed annually or as events or legislation requires.

9. Procedure

All United Learning academies must have a complaints procedure which reflects the Group-wide policy above. This policy meets the standards set out in the Education Independent School Standards (England) Regulations 2014, Schedule 1, Part 7.

All complaints policies must reflect the academy's funding agreement.

Each school must ensure its complaints policy is published online.

Owner	Northern Secondary Improvement Team
Department responsible	Northern Secondary Improvement Team
Reviewed	Annually
Date Authorised	February 2017
Review Date	February 2018