



## WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT ABOUT SAPIENTIA EDUCATION TRUST

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V1	March 2022	COO	To originate document
V2	August 2022	Governance Professional	Email addresses changed to xx@setrust.co.uk format
V3	April 2023	Governance Professional	Page 3. Clause inserted regarding confidentiality of documentation and access restrictions.
V4	December 2024	Governance Professional	Annual review carried out by Trustees, with no changes made.
V5	May 2025	Governance Professional	Removal of references to ESFA following its merger into the Department for Education (DfE) on 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2025.

### Introduction

Each school within Sapientia Education Trust ('the Trust') will have its own local complaints policy. If your complaint is about a specific school, then it should be addressed to that school following their complaints procedure. If you have a specific complaint about the Sapientia Education Trust central team, then the

following details set out the procedure for making a complaint. The Trust will not consider complaints that have already exhausted an individual school complaints procedure.

Most complaints can be dealt with quickly and informally by a telephone call, an e-mail, or a quick word with the member of staff concerned.

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

### **Stage One**

If you are not satisfied with an informal approach, you should contact the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Trust at [coo@setrust.co.uk](mailto:coo@setrust.co.uk) setting out the details of your complaint and making it clear that you are invoking the Complaints Procedure.

The COO will respond to your complaint as soon as possible, usually within 5 school days of receipt, and arrange a meeting to explain the outcome if necessary and practical.

If your complaint is about the CEO, you should write to the Chair of the Board of Trustees via the clerk to the Trust or other appropriate individual, dependent on the circumstances (the Governance Professional) at [clerk@setrust.co.uk](mailto:clerk@setrust.co.uk).

### **Stage Two**

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint at Stage One, you may write to the CEO. This should be addressed to the Trust CEO at [ea@setrust.co.uk](mailto:ea@setrust.co.uk). The CEO will respond to your complaint as soon as possible, usually within 5 school days of receipt, and again arrange a meeting to explain the outcome if necessary and practical. The outcome will be documented.

If your complaint is about the CEO, you should write to the Chair of the Board of Trustees via the Governance Professional at [clerk@setrust.co.uk](mailto:clerk@setrust.co.uk).

### **Stage Three**

If you are still dissatisfied, or if your complaint is of a very serious nature, you may complain to the Chair of the Board of Trustees via the Governance Professional at [clerk@setrust.co.uk](mailto:clerk@setrust.co.uk).

Again, your complaint should be in writing, it should explain the reason(s) as to why you were not satisfied with the response at Stage Two and be accompanied by any appropriate documentation. (Please use template on page 5 Appendix A below.) Please make it clear that you are invoking Stage Three of the Complaints

Procedure. Complaints about a decision of the CEO or the CEO's actions in response to a complaint must reach the Governance Professional within four weeks of the CEO's decision or the response to the complaint.

The Board of Trustees will:

- Acknowledge receipt of your letter within 10 school days.
- Tell you what arrangements have been made for your complaint to be considered.
- Arrange for a meeting with a panel of at least two nominated Trustees (who will have no prior knowledge of the matter of the complaint) and one person who is independent of the Trustees at which you will be able to explain your complaint.
- You are entitled to be accompanied by a friend or other advisor at such a meeting. The clerk will provide you with a clear explanation of the Trustees' findings and actions, electronically or otherwise (a copy will also be sent to the person complained about unless disclosure is precluded by other regulations or protocols).

The Board of Trustees will normally complete the investigation of a complaint within 20 school days.

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them or when access is required due to other legal processes or to enable Trustees and the Trust's executive team to undertake their statutory responsibilities.

The records of complaint are normally held for ten years. A written record will be kept of all complaints, and whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing.

### **Vexatious Complaints**

Where a complainant raises an issue that has already been dealt with via the Trust's complaints procedure, and that procedure has been exhausted, the Trust will not reinvestigate the complaint.

If a complainant persists in raising the same issue, the CEO will write to them explaining that the matter has been dealt with fully in line with the Trust's complaints procedure, and therefore the case is now closed. The complainant will be provided with the contact details for the Department of Education if they wish to take the matter further.

Unreasonable complaints include the following scenarios:

- The complainant refuses to co-operate with the Trust's relevant procedures
- The complainant changes the basis of the complaint as the complaint progresses
- The complainant seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Excessive demands are made on the time of staff and Trustees and is clearly meant to aggravate
- The complainant acts in a way that is abusive or offensive

### **Further Action**

The decision of the Board of Trustees is final. The Board will not consider any subsequent complaint that is materially the same as a complaint that has already been considered at Stage Three nor will it enter into any further correspondence with a complainant in these circumstances save to bring to their attention the right to complain to the Department for Education (DfE).

If the complainant believes 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 DfE after they have completed Stage Three.

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the Trust. They will consider whether the Trust has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed [Part 7 of the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

Complaints should now be raised through the Customer Help Portal to the Department for Education using this link: [Home - Customer Help Portal](#)

# Complaint Form

Please complete and return to [clerk@setrust.co.uk](mailto:clerk@setrust.co.uk) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Address:</b>
<b>Postcode:</b> <b>Day time telephone number:</b> <b>Evening telephone number:</b> <b>Email address:</b>
<b>Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the Trust about it.</b>
<b>Please explain what steps you have taken to try and resolve this informally.</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:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By who:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Action taken:**

**Date:**