



An Daras Trust
Igniting Curiosity Growing Capabilities

An Daras Multi-Academy Trust

Parental Complaints Policy

The An Daras Multi Academy Trust (TRUST) Company

An Exempt Charity Limited by Guarantee

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1. Statement of Intent

An Daras Multi Academy Trust and its schools are committed to working in partnership with parents, carers and the wider community, and to dealing with any concerns or complaints openly, fairly and promptly. We recognise that parents are people too: raising a concern about a child can be an anxious experience, and we aim to listen with empathy, acknowledge feelings as well as facts, and resolve issues at the earliest possible stage.

Most concerns can and should be sorted out quickly and informally through everyday contact between parents and staff. This policy sets out how the school handles concerns that cannot be resolved this way, and the formal process that applies if a parent remains dissatisfied.

This policy has been drawn up in line with statutory requirements and current Department for Education (DfE) guidance, including the joint DfE, Ofsted and Parentkind guidance on parent and school complaints (2026), and reflects our commitment to being open, accessible, transparent and proportionate in how we respond to concerns.

2. Legal Framework and Status of this Policy

This policy has regard to the following legislation and statutory and non-statutory guidance:

- Education Act 2002, section 29 — the duty on governing bodies of maintained schools to have a procedure for dealing with complaints that are not required to be dealt with under separate statutory arrangements.
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (relevant to academies, which must have regard to a complaints procedure that meets Part 7 of the Standards, made available to parents and published on the school website).
- School Complaints Procedures: Guidance for Maintained Schools and the accompanying Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures (DfE, most recently updated 2021).
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014, and the SEND Code of Practice 0–25 (2015), which require schools to publish, as part of their SEND Information Report, arrangements for handling complaints from parents of children with SEND about the support provided.
- Equality Act 2010, including the public sector equality duty and the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and parents when handling complaints.
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018, as applied to the handling and retention of complaint records and, where relevant, data protection complaints.
- The joint DfE, Ofsted and Parentkind guidance for parents and schools on raising and handling concerns and complaints (published January 2026), which sets out a five-step process for parents and best-practice advice for schools on accessibility, tone and de-escalation.

This policy is non-statutory in its detail (the governing board may determine the exact procedure) but the duty to have a procedure, and to publish it, is a statutory requirement. Where the words "must" or "will" are used below, the action is required; where "should" is used, it reflects best practice which the Trust or school will follow unless there is good reason not to.

3. Aims and Principles

This policy aims to ensure that:

- Any person, including a member of the public, can make a complaint to the school or Trust and know how to do so.
- Concerns and complaints are welcomed and dealt with courteously, sensitively and promptly, at the earliest possible stage.
- The process is clear, easy to find, easy to understand and free to use, and takes account of pupils and parents with additional needs or disabilities, including through the provision of reasonable adjustments (for example, translated summaries, an interpreter, or a meeting instead of a written response).
- Everyone involved is treated fairly, with respect and without fear of victimisation.
- Complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and relationships repaired without the need for formal procedures.
- Complaints are investigated impartially, thoroughly and in a timely way, with facts and feelings both taken seriously.
- Confidentiality is maintained throughout, and information is only shared with those who need to know.
- The outcomes of complaints, and any lessons learned, are used to improve the school or Trust's practice.
- Staff wellbeing is protected, and complainants are supported to raise concerns respectfully and without resorting to abusive, threatening or discriminatory behaviour.

4. Feedback, Concerns and Complaints — Know the Difference

In line with the 2026 national guidance for parents and schools, we ask parents and carers to consider which of the following best describes what they want to raise, as this affects who to contact and what to expect:

Type	What it means	What happens
Feedback	A general comment, suggestion or observation — not something you're unhappy about, but something you'd like the school to know.	Share it with the class teacher, office or via school communication channels. No formal response is required, though we welcome and value it.
Concern	Something you're unsure or unhappy about and would like explained, looked into or put right, but you haven't yet decided to make it a formal complaint.	Raise it informally with the class teacher or relevant staff member (Stage 1). Most concerns are resolved quickly at this stage.
Complaint	You are dissatisfied with the school's action, decision or lack of action, and want the school to formally look into it and respond.	Follow the formal procedure set out in Section 6 of this policy (Stages 2 and 3). Stage 2 aiming to resolve the issue and providing time for recommendations to be implemented and have impact.

We would always rather a concern was raised early, directly and constructively than left to grow into a formal complaint. If you are ever unsure which of the above applies, contact the school office and staff will help you decide.

5. Scope of this Policy

5.1 Who can complain

This procedure is open to parents and carers of registered pupils, and to any other member of the public with a concern about the school or Trust. Pupils wishing to raise a concern are encouraged to speak to any trusted adult in school, who will support them to be heard, using this policy where appropriate.

5.2 What this policy covers

This policy covers complaints about any aspect of the school or Trust's provision, facilities or the actions of staff, volunteers or governors, except where a separate statutory procedure applies (see 5.3 below).

5.3 What this policy does not cover

The following matters are dealt with under separate procedures and are not "in scope" of this policy. Where a complaint is received that falls into one of these categories, it will be redirected accordingly and the complainant informed in writing:

- Admissions to the Trust's schools — see the Local Authority's / school's admissions arrangements and the statutory admission appeals process.
- Exclusion of a pupil — see the school's Behaviour Policy and the statutory exclusion review/appeal process.
- Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans — see the Local Authority's SEND procedures and the right of appeal to the SEND Tribunal.
- Child protection and safeguarding matters — dealt with under the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy; concerns about a staff member's conduct towards a child are referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- Whistleblowing disclosures by staff — see the school's Whistleblowing Policy.
- Staff grievance, conduct, capability or performance-management matters — dealt with under the relevant HR/staff policy; complainants will not be informed of the details or outcome of any staff disciplinary process, though they will be told that the matter is being addressed.
- Complaints about services provided on the school site by a third party (for example, wraparound childcare, catering or lettings providers) — these should be directed to the relevant provider's own complaints procedure.
- Freedom of Information or Subject Access requests — see the school's Freedom of Information Policy and Privacy Notice.
- Complaints about the content of the National Curriculum — these should be directed to the DfE, as schools cannot change what the curriculum requires them to teach (complaints about how the curriculum is delivered remain in scope of this policy).
- Matters relating to religious education or collective worship where a locally agreed syllabus applies — these may be referred to the relevant Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) or diocese.

Where a complaint from a parent of a child with SEND concerns the special educational provision made for their child, this policy applies, and the arrangements are also summarised in the school's SEND Information Report, as required by the SEND Code of Practice.

5.4 Anonymous and third-party complaints

The school or Trust will consider anonymous complaints at its discretion, particularly where they raise a safeguarding concern, but is limited in how it can investigate or respond where the complainant cannot be contacted. Complaints made on behalf of a parent by a third party (for example, a relative, friend or advocate) will only be progressed with the written consent of the parent, except where the third party has parental responsibility or legal authority to act.

6. The Complaints Procedure

1. This Trust and its schools operate a three-stage procedure. The aim at every stage is to resolve the complaint as close to the point of concern as possible. A complainant may not skip a stage, but must be allowed to progress through every stage without obstruction if they remain dissatisfied. Concerns and complaints must be raised within 3 months of the incident causing concern. It is expected that parents communicate in a polite and respectful manner throughout the process.

Stage 1 — Informal Resolution

Most concerns are resolved quickly and informally. Parents should, in the first instance, raise the matter with:

- the class teacher, for day-to-day matters relating to their child;
- the relevant subject leader, SENCo or phase leader, for matters relating to a particular area of the curriculum or additional need; or
- a member of the senior leadership team, if the matter is more serious or the parent has already spoken to the class teacher.

Staff will acknowledge the concern promptly — the same day where possible — and aim to resolve it within 5 Academy Trust working days. If more time is needed to investigate, the parent will be told why and given a revised timescale. A brief written or verbal record will be kept of informal concerns raised, so that patterns can be identified.

Stage 2 — Formal Complaint to the Headteacher

If a concern has not been resolved informally, or is serious enough to require a formal response from the outset, the complainant should submit a formal complaint in writing (letter, email, or using the complaint form at Appendix A) to the Headteacher, setting out:

1. what the complaint is about, including relevant dates;
2. what has already been done to try to resolve it;
3. what outcome the complainant is hoping for.

The Headteacher (or a senior leader they nominate, who was not involved in the original matter) will:

- acknowledge the complaint in writing within 3 school days;
- investigate the complaint thoroughly, fairly and impartially, meeting with the complainant if this would help clarify the concern or the desired outcome;

- provide a full, written response within 10 school days of acknowledgement, explaining the outcome, the reasons for the decision, and any action the school will take. If this timescale cannot be met, the complainant will be told why and given a new date.

Where the complaint is about the Headteacher personally, it should be addressed to the Chair of Governors instead, who will follow the same process.

The aim of Stage 2 is to make recommendations in order to resolve the issues raised. There must be time given to implement and see improvement and impact of recommendations made before any progression to stage 3 can be considered. The deadline for a stage 1 concern to be escalated to a stage 2 formal complaint after which the matter will be considered resolved is 3 months.

Stage 3 — Formal Complaint to the Governing Board (Complaints Panel)

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 2, where time has been given to implement and see improvement from any recommendations made, they may ask, in writing for the complaint to be considered by a Complaints Panel of the governing board.

On receipt of a Stage 3 request, the clerk to the governing board will:

- acknowledge the request within 5 Academy Trust working days and confirm a hearing date, normally within 20 Academy Trust working days;
- convene a panel of at least 3 governors who have had no prior involvement in the complaint and can consider it impartially.
- send all relevant paperwork to the panel and the complainant at least 5 days before the hearing;
- advise both parties of their right to be accompanied at the hearing (for example, by a friend, family member, trade union representative or advocate).

The panel will hear from the complainant and from the school (usually the Headteacher or the senior leader who handled Stage 2), consider all the evidence, and may ask questions of either party. The hearing will be conducted informally and courteously. After the hearing, the panel will consider its decision in private and write to the complainant with the outcome, reasons and any recommendations, normally within 5 Academy Trust working days.

The decision of the governing board's Complaints Panel is final as far as the school and Trust's own internal procedure is concerned. Section 7 sets out what a complainant can do if they remain dissatisfied after this stage.

6.1 Timescales at a Glance

Stage	Acknowledged	Response / hearing	Who deals with it
1. Informal concern	Same day where possible	Within 5 Academy Trust working days	Class teacher / relevant staff member
2. Formal complaint	Within 3 Academy Trust working days	Within 10 Academy Trust working days	Headteacher (or Chair of Governors if about the Headteacher)
3. Governing board panel	Within 5 Academy Trust	Hearing within 20 Academy	Panel of 3+ impartial governors/trustees

Stage	Acknowledged	Response / hearing	Who deals with it
	working days	Trust working days; outcome within 5 Academy Trust working days of hearing	

"School days" excludes weekends, school holidays and INSET days. All timescales may be extended where necessary (for example, during school holidays, or where a complaint is complex), and the complainant will always be told the reason and given a new expected date.

7. If You Remain Dissatisfied — External Escalation

The vast majority of concerns are resolved by the school or Trust without the need to go any further. If, having completed all three stages of this procedure, a complainant remains unhappy, the following options are available depending on the nature of the complaint. The school will always signpost a complainant to the relevant body at the end of the internal process.

7.1 Complaints about how the school or Trust has handled a complaint, or about compliance with education law or statutory guidance

These can be referred to the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE will not usually re-investigate the substance of a complaint or overturn a school's decision, but can consider whether the school has acted unlawfully, unreasonably, or has not followed its own procedure or relevant statutory guidance.

7.2 Complaints relating to SEND

Where a complaint concerns the special educational provision made for a child with an EHC plan, and cannot be resolved with the school or Local Authority, parents have a right of appeal to the SEND Tribunal, or may use the Local Authority's SEND mediation service.

7.3 Complaints about maladministration by the school or Trust

Where a complainant believes there has been maladministration (for example, poor process, delay or unfairness) by a school or the Trust, and this has caused injustice, they may complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

7.4 Data protection complaints

Complaints specifically about how the school has handled personal data, including a Subject Access Request, should first be raised with the school's Data Protection Officer under the Data Protection Policy. If a complainant remains dissatisfied, they may refer the matter to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

7.5 Ofsted

Ofsted does not investigate individual complaints or act as an appeal body against a school's decision, and will not usually intervene in a live dispute between a parent and a school. However, Ofsted may take account of complaints information when planning or carrying out an inspection, particularly where safeguarding is raised, and complaints can be logged for this purpose.

7.6 Safeguarding concerns

Any concern that a child is at risk of harm should never wait for this procedure to be completed. It should be

raised immediately with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead, or, if the concern is about how the school has handled a safeguarding matter, with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or children's social care.

8. Serial, Persistent or Unreasonable Complaints

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly, openly and without bias. On rare occasions, however, the behaviour or actions of a complainant may make it difficult to progress a complaint properly. This may include a complainant who:

- raises the same complaint repeatedly, having already received a full response, or introduces trivial additional concerns to prolong a complaint;
- changes the substance of a complaint as the investigation progresses, or raises a large number of unconnected complaints at once;
- seeks an unrealistic or disproportionate outcome, or refuses to accept that the school has responded fully and appropriately;
- is deliberately abusive, offensive, discriminatory or threatening towards staff, governors or other pupils, whether in person, in writing, by phone or on social media.

Where this occurs, the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors, where the Headteacher is the subject of the complaint) may apply reasonable restrictions to how contact is managed — for example, limiting contact to a single named point of contact, requiring contact in a single format, or setting a reasonable limit on the length or frequency of correspondence. Any restriction will be proportionate, will be explained clearly and in writing, will not prevent a legitimate new complaint being raised, and will be kept under review. The school or Trust will never restrict access to this procedure as a means of avoiding scrutiny of a genuine complaint.

The school and Trust will not tolerate abuse or threats towards staff, governors, volunteers or pupils, in line with the school and Trust's commitment to staff and pupil wellbeing, and reserves the right to take further action, including seeking advice from the police, where behaviour is threatening or seriously abusive.

9. Confidentiality, Record Keeping and Monitoring

All complaints are handled discreetly and information is shared only with those who need to know, in line with the school's Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice. Complaint records, including the outcome and any action taken, are kept confidentially and securely, separate from pupil records, and retained in line with the school's Records Retention Schedule. Correspondence, statements and records will only be disclosed in accordance with the school's obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK GDPR and, where relevant, the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The Headteacher will report a summary of complaints received (numbers and general themes, anonymised where appropriate) to the governing board at least annually, so that trends can be identified and used to improve policy and practice. The governing board will not normally be told the details of individual complaints resolved informally or at Stage 2, to preserve the impartiality of any governors who may later sit on a Stage 3 panel.

Complaints are confidential and complainants failing to abide by this requirement will jeopardise the ability for the complaint to be heard.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Class teachers / staff	Resolve concerns informally wherever possible; listen with empathy; escalate promptly if a concern cannot be resolved at this level.
Headteacher	Investigate and respond to Stage 2 formal complaints; ensure the policy is implemented consistently and staff are supported to handle concerns well; report complaints data to governors.
Chair of Governors	Deals with Stage 2 complaints about the Headteacher; oversees that the governing board fulfils its statutory duty under this policy.
Complaints Panel (governors/trustees)	Considers Stage 3 complaints impartially; issues a final written outcome with reasons.
Clerk to Governors	Administers Stage 3, including arranging the panel, notices and record of proceedings.
Governing Board	Approves and reviews this policy; monitors complaints trends; ensures the policy is published and accessible.

11. Equality, Accessibility and Reasonable Adjustments

We want every parent and carer to feel able to raise a concern, regardless of language, disability or personal circumstances. This policy and the complaint form are available in large print or another accessible format on request, and the school will arrange an interpreter, a home visit, or a phone or in-person meeting instead of written correspondence where this would help a parent take part fully. This policy is published on the school website in a way that is easy to find, and a plain-language summary of "who to contact and what happens next" is also available from the school office, in line with national guidance that complaints procedures should be visible and easy to follow rather than buried on a website.

12. Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed by the governing board at least every two to three years, or sooner if there is a change in relevant legislation, statutory guidance or DfE best-practice advice. The Headteacher will use complaints data and feedback to keep procedures under continuous review between formal policy reviews.

Appendix A: Complaint Form

You do not have to use this form — a letter or email to the school is equally acceptable — but it may help you set out the key information clearly.

Your name	
Pupil's name and class	
Relationship to pupil	
Contact address / email / phone	
Have you already discussed this with the school? With whom, and when?	
Details of your complaint (what happened, when, and who was involved)	
What outcome are you hoping for?	
Signature and date	

Please return this form to the school office, or email it to [school office email]. It will be treated confidentially and acknowledged within 3 school days.

Appendix B: Further Information and Escalation Links for Parents

If you remain unhappy after completing all stages of the school's procedure, or need more information about raising a concern, the following official sources may help:

Guidance on raising a concern or complaint

How to complain about a school (GOV.UK): <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

Parentkind guide to raising concerns with your child's school: <https://www.parentkind.org.uk/parent-guide-to-raising-concerns-with-your-childs-school> *Joint DfE, Ofsted and Parentkind guidance (2026) setting out a five-step process for parents.*

School complaints procedures: guidance for maintained schools (DfE):
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures>

Escalating a complaint

Department for Education — contact and complaints about a school: <https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe>

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman: <https://www.lgo.org.uk>

Ofsted — how to make a complaint or share information:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

SEND Tribunal (special educational needs and disability appeals): <https://www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-special-educational-needs-and-disability>

Information Commissioner's Office (data protection complaints): <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint>

Cornwall and Devon admissions and SEND local offers:

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/schools-and-education/schools-and-colleges/school-admissions/>

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/schools-and-education/special-educational-needs/send-local-offer/>

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/children-families-education/education/school-admissions/>

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/children-families-education/send-local-offer/>

SACRE and Diocese:

<https://democracy.cornwall.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=617>

<https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=184>

<https://trurodiocese.org.uk/>

<https://exeter.anglican.org/>

Support for families

IPSEA — free, legally based SEND advice: <https://www.ipsea.org.uk>

Parentkind — general advice for parents: <https://www.parentkind.org.uk>

Please note: web addresses can change over time. If a link does not work, search for the organisation's name via GOV.UK or contact the school office for an up-to-date link.