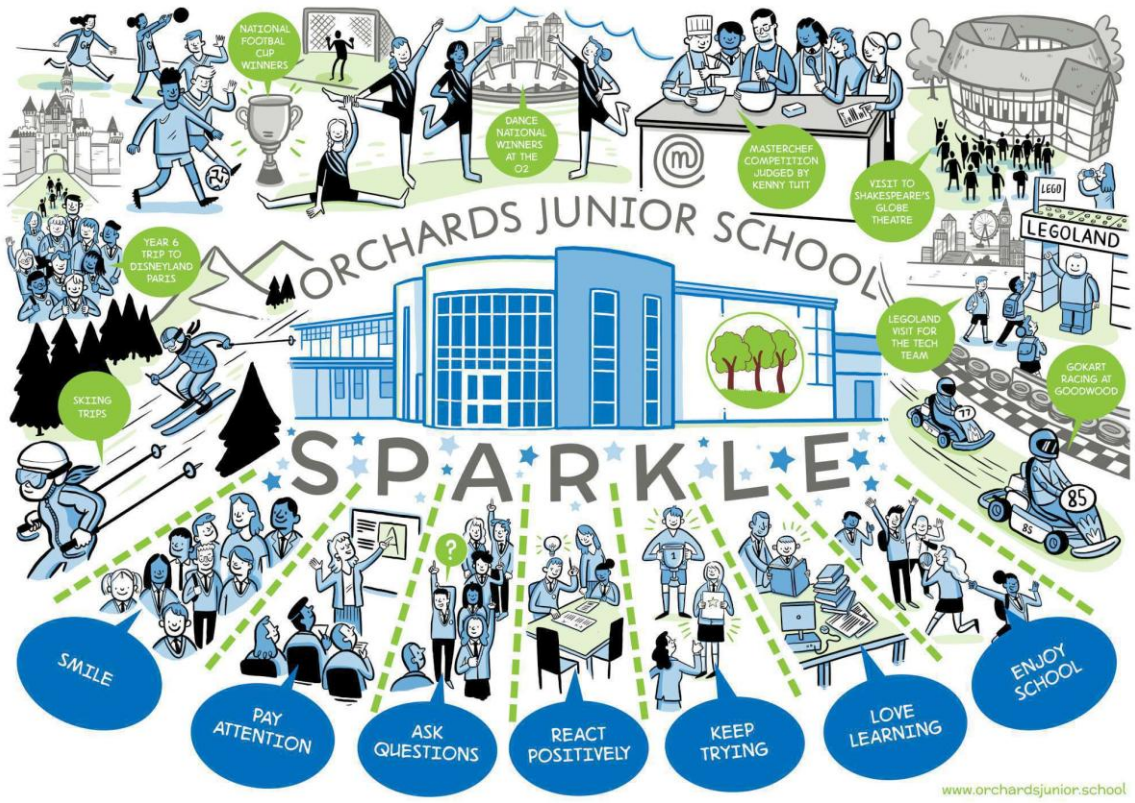
Being the best we can be

SPARKLE MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST



ORCHARDS INFANT & JUNIOR SCHOOL

POLICY FOR COMPLAINTS

REVIEWED SEPTEMBER 2026

1. PRINCIPLES

The academy tries to resolve problems informally wherever possible. An effective response and appropriate redress will be provided to all complaints as quickly as possible dependent upon the complexity of the issues raised

2. STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS

• Complainants must be aware that there is a complaints procedure and copies of this policy will be available on request or on the website.
• If the process results in an appeal to the Advisory Board (see below), this procedure is statutory.

3. DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

a) At each stage, the person investigating the complaint will ensure that they:
• Clarify the nature of the complaint and unresolved issues
• Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
• Interview those involved in the matter and/or those who are the subject of a complaint allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
• Keep appropriate notes of any interview(s) held.

b) At each stage, the person investigating the complaint will seek ways to resolve the complaint satisfactorily. It may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:
• An acknowledgement that the complaint is valid in whole or in part and/or acknowledgement that the situation could have been handled differently or better (this is not the same as an admission of negligence)
• An apology
• An explanation
• An assurance and an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
• An undertaking to review academy procedures in light of the complaint

- AI Usage in raising a complaint

We encourage clear, respectful and human-led communication rather than automated or highly formal AI generated text. AI generated documentation may make reference to inaccurate information and make complaints more complex than necessary. Complainants are reminded that publicly available Artificial Intelligence (AI) platforms and chatbots are not confidential. Complaints, and in particular those containing the personal data of students, staff and other individuals, should not therefore be uploaded to or processed via such platforms. Staff will not spend a disproportionate amount of time attempting to interpret and respond to

communications with these characteristics, ie, a complaint which is unclear, unduly lengthy or complex, introduces inaccurate information, overly legalistic or misstates the law. In those circumstances, we will pause the process until the person dealing with the complaint receives the required clarification or summary

4. RECORDS

All complaints will be recorded by the academy, including informal complaints. The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that members of staff record all complaints and their outcome.
• Records relating to individual complaints are confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a statutory body conducting an inspection requests access to them.
• The Advisory Board will monitor the level and the subject matter of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis through the mechanism of performance and data reporting.

The officer with responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented in Orchards Infant & Junior is the Headteacher or in the case of a complaint against the Headteacher, The Strategic Business Manager

5. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

a) Informal complaints – verbal informal complaints may be made to teachers at an appropriate time and to Headteachers by appointment. A verbal or written response may be given to an informal complainant.

b) Formal complaints- The complainant will write to the academy with details of:
• The complaint
• Any attempts they made to raise/resolve the complaint (who they spoke to and when)
• Actions they feel might resolve the problem
• Any staff they would prefer not to discuss the issue with.

The Headteacher will respond within 5 working days of a complaint being lodged. This time scale may be reasonably extended if the nature of the complaint is judged by the Headteacher to be of a complex nature.

c) If the complainant is not satisfied with this response, they must inform the academy in writing, with details of their previous communication and the reason why they are still not satisfied. The Headteacher or member of the senior leadership team will respond within 5 working days. This time scale may be reasonably extended if the nature of the complaint is judged to be of a complex nature.

d) If the complainant is still not satisfied, they can appeal to the Advisory Board of the academy (AB) (see below). A complaint panel will be convened within a reasonable period of time depending on the availability of trustees and other members making up the panel. Every effort will be made to deal with complaint appeals expeditiously.

e) Sparkle Multi Academy Trust reserves the right to deny investigation of any complaints which are considered to be malicious, and those relating to a previous complaint that has already been investigated.

6. APPEALS TO THE ADVISORY BOARD.

The Headteacher will convene a complaints panel

(a) Constitution of the panel
• The panel will consist of at least three people
• No member of the panel can have been directly involved in previous consideration of the complaint
(b) Remit of the panel
The panel can:
• Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
• Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
• Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
• Recommend changes to the academy's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur

(c) Proceedings of the panel
• The appeal will be closed to the public
• The complainant may attend and be accompanied
• Witnesses will only be required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence
• The panel may ask questions at any point
• The panel will deliberate in private
• The panel will inform the complainants of the decision in writing as quickly as possible and in an expeditious manner.
• The decision of the appeal panel is final.
• However, it is possible for complainants to refer the matter to the Education Funding Agency **(see note at foot of policy)**

(d) Role of the Headteacher
The Headteacher will be the contact point for the complaint and will be required to:
• Set the date, time and venue of the hearing

• Collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing
• Record the proceedings
• Notify parties of the panel's decision

7. DEALING WITH PERSISTENT COMPLAINTS

In the case of persistent complaints, the Headteacher will inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

8. RESPONSIBLE PERSON

The person in charge of coordinating the complaints at the academy is the Headteacher. Overall responsibility is retained by Sparkle Multi Academy Trust. The role of School Advisory Board members arises only in respect of appeals as set out above.

9. COMPLAINTS MADE ABOUT A HEADTEACHER OF AN ACADEMY.

• Sparkle Multi Academy trust recognises that in exceptional circumstances parents/carers may wish to complain about a Headteacher where issues have been raised with the latter and not resolved in a way which is satisfactory to the parent/carer.
• In these cases the correct procedure is for the complainant to write to Peter Neale Sparkle Multi Academy Trust c/o Orchards Infant & Junior School, Nelson Road, Worthing BN126EN. On receipt the complaint will be acknowledged and an investigation will be undertaken and a response subsequently made to the complainant.

• The response will be dealt with in an expeditious manner and the timeframe that applies will depend on the complexity of the matter raised and the depth of investigation it requires.

Note Education Funding Agency (EFA) : In limited circumstances it is possible for complaints to be referred to the EFA. The EFA can consider complaints where it is alleged that a) the academy has not complied with its own complaints policy or the policy does not comply with statutory requirements OR b) the academy has failed to comply with a duty imposed on it under its funding agreement with the Secretary of State. Details of how to complain can be found on the Department for Education's website.