



Aims of the Policy

This policy is used to resolve all concerns and conflicts associated with the work and effectiveness of Discovery Schools Trust and its partners.

Introduction

The majority of issues raised by sponsored academies partners and professional leads should be raised at the earliest opportunity with the Director of Schools to allow concerns to be dealt with at an early stage and to prevent them from developing into a formal complaint.

Discovery Schools Trust is committed to taking concerns seriously as early as possible, aiming to keep the number of formal complaints to a minimum and to ensure that the Trust can continue to work constructively. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, an individual, academy or school may wish or be asked to follow the Trust's formal complaints procedure.

For Discovery Schools Trust to be able to investigate a complaint, it needs to be made within one year of the incident occurring. If a complaint is older than one year it will not be investigated.

The primary aim of DST policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and as quickly as possible. Formal complaints are dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. Malicious complaints may incur appropriate action by the Trust's Board of Trustees.

The following details outline the stages that can be used to resolve a complaint.

Discovery Schools Academies Trust complaints procedure has four main stages:

- Stage 1 – A concern is raised informally with the Headteachers' Working Group
- Stage 2 – Formal complaint is made to the Director of Schools (or Chair of Executive Board if about the Director of Schools)
- Stage 3 – Formal complaint is heard by the DST Complaints Panel
- Stage 4 – Formal complaint heard by the DST Complaints Appeal Panel

Stage 1 – Raising a Concern

Concerns can be raised at any time and generate an immediate response which often resolves the concern. DST requests that individuals or schools make the Headteachers' working group their first point of contact. Sometimes the concern may require investigation or discussion with others, in which case the person raising the concern will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two. The majority of concerns are dealt with satisfactorily in this way. If after an informal response, the complainant is not satisfied with

the response to the concern, the Trust requests that the complaint is referred in writing to the Director of Schools within 10 school working days.

Stage 2 – Complaint heard by Director of Schools

Formal complaints should be put in writing and sent to the Director of Schools (or the Chair of the Executive Board if about the Director of Schools). The complaint is formally logged, including the date it was received. The Director acknowledges receipt of the complaint within two school working days of receiving it. In many cases this response report on the action the Trust has already taken to resolve the issue. A meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. This meeting normally takes place within 10 school working days, with the aim of resolving the matter as quickly as possible to the satisfaction of all concerned.

If the complainant remains unsatisfied with the outcome at this stage, he or she should inform the Chair in writing, again within 10 school working days and request that the complaint be considered at Stage 3 of this procedure – ‘Complaint Heard by the DST Complaints Panel.’ The Chair of the Trust Board then convenes the Trust’s Complaints Panel. *The Complaints Panel is comprised of members of the DST Executive Directors.*

Stage 3 – Complaint heard by DST Complaints Panel

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 2, the Chair of the Executive Board arranges further investigation of the complaint by the DST Complaints Panel. Following this investigation, the Complaints Panel gives a written response within 10 school working days.

Stage 4 – Complaint heard by HCT Complaints Panel

If the complainant remains unsatisfied with the result at Stage 3 of the complaints procedure, the Chair of the Executive Board should be informed in writing within 10 school working days of receiving the response. The Chair then convenes the DST Complaints Appeals Panel. *The Appeals Panel is comprised of a Director from each of the DST member academies, none of whom has been involved in the consideration of the complaint before.*

The Complaints Appeal Panel considers the complaint within 10 working days of receiving the written request for consideration at Stage 4 of this procedure.

The aim of the Appeal Panel hearing is to consider the complaint impartially and achieve a final resolution of the issue.

All parties are notified of the Panel’s decision, in writing, within three school working days of the date of the hearing. The letter includes guidance on the actions that should be taken by the complainant should they wish to take the matter further.

In cases where the conduct of the Chair is the subject of the complaint, the complaint is handled by a nominated member of the Directors. Where the conduct of a member of the Executive Board is the subject of the complaint, the member concerned is informed of the complaint.

The DST Appeal Panel hearing is the last DST stage of the complaints process.