

ACES Academies Trust

Aspiration, Creativity, Excellence, Success



Concerns and Complaints – a Guide for Parents

INTRODUCTION

All the schools in the ACES Academies Trust are committed to developing a strong sense of partnership with parents/carers and other members of the local community. This provides a good basis for understanding and resolution when things appear to go wrong. All concerns and complaints should be addressed to the individual school, unless they are directly related to the operation of the Trust, in which case it should be emailed to ceo@acesacademies.co.uk.

If you have a suggestion or a concern

We would like you to tell us about it. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in the school and want to know if you have any concerns. Be assured that, no matter what you wish to tell us, our support and respect for you and your child in the school will not be affected in any way. If you have a concern, please let us know as soon as possible. It is difficult for us properly to investigate an incident or problem which happened some time ago.

What to do first

We need to help you find the right member of staff. The first contact therefore should be to reception who will be able to guide you to the right person. If you know already where to address your concern, please direct it accordingly. Telephone numbers and email contact details can be found on the individual schools' websites, but for convenience there are a number of suggested contacts in the appendix to this document.

At Cromwell, the front office will discuss the matter with the Headteacher who will decide how best to address your concern or suggestion. You should expect a reply within 24 hours unless there are exceptional circumstances.

At Hinchingsbrooke, if it concerns your child the best person to contact in the first instance will be the Administrator for Lower, Middle or Upper School. Most concerns can be sorted out quickly by speaking with your child's Form Tutor, a Student Support Officer, a Head of Department or Head of Year. Sometimes it may be appropriate for you to speak with a more senior member of staff – a member of the senior team or the Principal. This will be more appropriate for particularly serious or highly sensitive matters.

All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem informally. Please note that, as teaching staff are usually teaching, it is unlikely that you will get to speak to someone who is a teacher immediately. Teachers will usually be asked to ring you back and we are not at liberty to give out personal telephone numbers of staff.

It is our aim to make sure that we understand what you feel went wrong and staff should explain their actions to you. They will ask what you would like the School to do to put things right. Of course, this does not mean that in every case it will be possible to achieve a satisfactory outcome, but it will help both you and the School to understand.

Often a face to face meeting is the best way of dealing with your concern and it may be that more than one member of staff will need to be present if the issue is a complex one. If an investigation is required we will try to do this thoroughly and promptly and if this is going to take a particularly long time, we will try to keep you informed of progress.

If you are still concerned

We will do all that we can to resolve matters straight away but if you are not entirely satisfied with the response you can make a **formal complaint** to the Headteacher / Principal. This **should be made in writing**.

If your complaint is about an action of the Headteacher/Principal personally, then you should refer it to the director designated by the Board to deal with complaints, currently the CEO. You can contact him through his PA, dw@hinchbk.cambs.sch.uk

You may find it helpful at this stage to have a copy of the full statement of the Trust's Formal Complaints Procedure, as this explains in detail how complaints are dealt with in the Trust. This is available upon request. Please note, it is our intention to deal with concerns and complaints without the need for formal procedures.

The CEO (or Designated Director) will contact you to discuss the problem. Usually you will be invited to a face to face meeting. You may take a friend or someone else with you if you wish. The CEO (or Designated Director) will then conduct a full investigation of the complaint and may interview any members of staff or students involved. You will receive a written response to your complaint.

If you are still unhappy

We very much hope and expect that we will have been able to resolve the problem by this stage. However, if you are still not satisfied, you may wish to make a formal complaint to the Board. You should write to the Chairman of the Board of Directors c/o Hinchbrooke School, who will appoint a Director to conduct a further investigation.

Initially your complaint may be dealt with by this director who has been designated by the Board to deal with complaints. He/she will try to see if there is a way forward. Note that at this stage your complaint will not be made known to other directors. This is so that, if it is necessary for the directors to hold a formal hearing of your complaint, they will not be prejudiced in advance.

If the Designated Director is unable to resolve the matter or was involved at the earlier stage because the complaint related to the Headteacher/Principal, your complaint will then be heard by a panel of three directors. As explained above, they will have no prior knowledge of the case and will thus be able to make a fresh, unbiased assessment. You will be invited to attend the Panel meeting, accompanied by a friend or representative if you wish, and to put your side of the matter. The Headteacher/Principal will also attend to give his account. The Trust's Formal Complaints Procedure explains how these meetings are conducted.

Further action

Complaints about the Trust are usually settled within the Trust but, in exceptional cases, it may be possible to refer the matter to an outside body such as the Ombudsman or the Secretary of State for Education. If necessary, we will let you know whom to contact at that stage.

APPENDIX: Suggested contact details (see website of the individual school for a complete list).

Cromwell Academy (www.cromwellacademy.com)

All initial contact should be through the main office.

Tel: 01480 437830

Email: office@cromwellacademy.com

Hinchingbrooke School (www.hinchingbrookeschool.net)

Main reception:

Tel: 01480 375700

Email: communications@hinchbk.cambs.sch.uk

Or possibly one of the following:

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| <i>Lower School Administrator</i> | <i>Mrs N Darbyshire</i> | lowerschool@hinchbk.cambs.sch.uk | <i>Ext. 5766</i> |
| <i>Middle School Administrator</i> | <i>Mrs J Connor</i> | middleschool@hinchbk.cambs.sch.uk | <i>Ext. 5825</i> |
| <i>Upper School Administrator</i> | <i>Ms A Stephenson</i> | upperschool@hinchbk.cambs.sch.uk | <i>Ext. 5448</i> |
| <i>PA to Principal</i> | <i>Mrs D Warner</i> | dw@hinchbk.cambs.sch.uk | <i>Ext. 5675</i> |
| <i>Cambridgeshire County Council</i> | <i>Year 7-11 Admissions</i> | Admissions@cambridgeshire.gov.uk | <i>01223-699200/699662</i> |