SOUTH DOWNS
LEARNING TRUST

RAISING CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS
A PARENT & CARER GUIDE

WE'RE HERE TO LISTEN

At South Downs Learning Trust and our Academies, we are committed to providing a high-quality education and a positive experience for all students and families. We recognise that sometimes things don't go as expected — and when that happens, we want to work with you to put things right.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CONCERN AND A COMPLAINT?

- A **concern** is when you're worried about something and want to talk it through or get reassurance.
- A **complaint** is when you're unhappy with how something has been handled and want it looked into more formally.

Most concerns can be sorted quickly and informally. We encourage you to speak to us as soon as something feels wrong so we can help resolve it early.

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

Step 1 – Talk to Us First

Speak to the relevant person — for example, your child's teacher, tutor, SENCO or a senior staff member.

We'll do our best to resolve your concern within **15 school days**.

If you feel the issue hasn't been resolved, you can move to Step 2.

Step 2 – Make a Formal Complaint

Write to the **Headteacher** explaining:

- What the issue is
- What you've already tried
- What outcome you're hoping for

We'll:

- Acknowledge your complaint within **5 school days**
- Respond with the outcome (usually within **15 school days**)

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, please write to the **Executive Headteacher**.

Step 3 – Request a Complaint Panel Hearing

If you're still unhappy, you can write to the **Clerk to the Local Governing Committee** to request a panel hearing. This must be within **10 school days** of receiving the Stage 2 outcome.

The panel will:

- Include people with no prior involvement in your complaint
- Hear from you and the school
- Send a final written decision within **5 school days**

There is no further appeal beyond this stage.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO PUT THINGS RIGHT?

Sometimes, resolving a complaint means:

- Offering an apology
- Explaining what happened and why
- Reviewing how we do things
- Making sure it doesn't happen again

Let us know what you think would help resolve the situation.

WHAT IF THE COMPLAINT IS ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE?

Some issues follow different procedures. For example:

- **Admissions**
- **Exclusions**
- **Safeguarding concerns**
- **Special needs assessments**
- **Staff grievances or discipline**

We'll point you to the right policy if that's the case.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFO

- Complaints should usually be made within **3 months** of the issue.
- We'll keep things confidential, fair and timely.
- We don't usually investigate anonymous complaints.
- If you need support accessing this process (e.g. due to a disability or language barrier), let us know — we'll help.

UNREASONABLE OR REPEATED COMPLAINTS

We're here to help, but we may limit contact if someone:

- Repeats the same issue despite responses
- Is aggressive or threatening
- Sends excessive or disruptive communication

In serious cases, we may involve the police or bar access to school sites.

CONTACT US

If you're not sure who to speak to, start with your school's **office or reception** — they'll direct you to the right person.

You can also find the full Concerns & Complaints Policy, contact forms and more details on your school's website.