



PYRAMID
SCHOOLS TRUST

Working in partnership, so future generations achieve, belong and contribute

Staff Grievance Policy

Edition 2: 31/01/2025

Document Control		
Edition	Issued	Changes from previous
1	14/07/2022	New policy. Approved by the Board of Trustees
2	31/01/2025	Minor amendments, the addition of collective grievance and appeals procedure

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Statement of Intent

The Pyramid Schools Trust works to develop good professional relationships between colleagues; however, we understand that sometimes conflicts may arise. Through maintaining open communication, we want individual employees (or a collective group of employees) to feel able to raise any concerns about workplace issues without fear of victimisation and repercussion, and to ensure all grievances are dealt with fairly, fully, and objectively. The intention is that grievances should be settled quickly and first dealt with as close to the source as possible.

A grievance is a concern, problem, or complaint raised with the school by an employee. It can be caused by issues such as working conditions, health and safety concerns, bullying, discrimination or working relationships.

By implementing and following the procedures in this policy, the Trust aims to:

- Provide a platform for grievances to be processed and handled fairly and consistently.
- Constructively resolve grievances in a way that avoids damaging professional relationships.
- Enable any employee to have their grievances heard and addressed.
- Encourage a harmonious working environment.

Link to ACAS advice page: <https://www.acas.org.uk/grievance-procedure-step-by-step>

1. Roles and responsibilities

The Trust board is responsible for:

- Ensuring the effectiveness of this policy by monitoring and reviewing it annually.

The local governing committee is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all members of staff read and understand the provisions in this policy.
- Assuming the Headteacher's responsibilities, where a grievance is in relation to the Headteacher.
- Forming an appeal panel, where necessary.
- Determining the outcome of a grievance appeal.
- Ensuring no member of staff is discriminated against, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

The chair of governors of the local governing committee is responsible for:

- Assuming the role of grievance and investigation officer in the event that the grievance is against the headteacher, or appointing a suitable representative to fulfil this role.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation of this policy.
- Handling any grievances that are brought to their attention.
- Overseeing any grievances raised by employees.
- Acting as the grievance officer, unless the grievance concerns them, or assigning the role to another suitable member of the school's SLT.
- Appointing an investigating officer, who assists the Headteacher in handling any grievances.
- Working with the investigating officer to resolve any grievances as appropriate.
- Assessing information during grievance meetings and investigations and assisting the investigating officer in determining the best course of action.
- Writing and delivering grievance outcome letters.
- Handling any incidents of malicious grievance reporting.
- Handling any disciplinary actions following a grievance being raised.

Line managers are responsible for:

- Monitoring the working environments of colleagues to identify any conflicts.
- Promoting positive working environments.
- Managing the informal stages of the grievance procedure.
- Working with the grievance officer and Headteacher to investigate any grievances within their department.

The grievance officer is typically the Headteacher; however, another suitable member of the school's leadership team may fulfil the role.

The grievance officer is responsible for:

- Resolving employees' formal grievances promptly.
- Assisting with the grievance investigation.
- Presenting information at grievance meetings and during any appeal hearings.
- Making any reasonable adjustments to ensure employees are able to attend meetings.
- Remaining unbiased and listening to all sides of the grievance to uncover the truth.
- Appointing an impartial investigation officer.
- Being a witness at appeal hearings.
- Determining what the grievance outcome will be – unless the grievance goes to an appeal, in which case the local governing committee is responsible.
- Working with the headteacher and keeping them informed of developments, as appropriate, where the grievance officer is not the Headteacher and the grievance does not involve the Headteacher.

The investigation officer is responsible for:

- Investigating the facts of a grievance, as directed by the grievance officer, and Headteacher where applicable.
- Providing evidence during grievance meetings.
- Standing as a witness during any appeal hearings.

Employees are responsible for:

- Raising grievances without unreasonable delay.
- Submitting formal grievances in writing to the grievance officer within ten working days, using the Employee Grievance Form.
- Ensuring any grievances that they raise are truthful and fair.

2. Collective Grievance

Where two or more colleagues have identical grievances and want to raise the matter together, under the same grievance procedure, then the matter will be dealt with as a collective grievance. Colleagues raising a collective grievance must agree (without any pressure being exerted on employees to join the collective process) to engage in one process. Participating colleagues will only be entitled to one meeting at each stage of the procedure and one appeal, if applicable. If all colleagues do not voluntarily agree to this arrangement, or if the grievances are not identical, then the grievances will be dealt with on an individual basis.

Where a collective grievance is raised and all participants are members of the same trade union, the union representative can raise the grievance on their members' behalf should they all be in agreement. Where there are different unions representing each participant, they must nominate one union representative; if they cannot agree, it must be dealt with as individual grievances.

3. When to raise a grievance

Grievances can be raised when employees have issues with the following (this list is not exhaustive):

- Terms and conditions of their employment
- Health and safety at the school
- Work relationships
- Bullying or harassment, including sexual harassment
- Working practices
- Organisational changes
- Discrimination

Staff will be aware of the difference between this policy and the Whistleblowing Policy and will ensure that they report concerns and grievances appropriately.

This policy does not apply to:

- Personal disagreements between employees that are not connected with their duties within the school.
- Restarting grievances that have since been closed unless the facts of the matter have changed. If there has been a change in facts, this policy should be followed.
- Pay gradings – these are addressed by the Pay Policy.

If employees are raising a concern regarding the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults, these should be reported to the Headteacher, unless that concern relates to the Headteacher in which case the Chair of Governors should be informed.

4. How to raise a grievance

Employees will raise any initial grievances with their line manager by writing a letter outlining their grievance – the line manager will conduct an informal meeting with the employee raising the grievance. If the grievance is in relation to their line manager, the employee will raise the grievance with the Headteacher.

Initial grievances will be raised within ten working days of the alleged incident that led to the grievance. If employees wish to raise a grievance outside of this timeframe, additional supporting information may be required, e.g. why it took so long to raise the grievance. If employees wish to submit grievances straight to the formal stage, they will submit the grievances to the Headteacher.

5. Initial handling of a grievance

All information processed during a grievance will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.

Employees will have the right to be accompanied at all stages of a formal procedure and may choose to bring a companion to the informal stages. The employee's companion will be either a:

- Colleague; or
- Trade union official or accredited trade union representative

Companions will not:

- Answer questions on the employee's behalf.
- Address the hearing if the employee does not want them to.
- Pose a conflict of interest to the grievance being raised.
- Prevent the employee from explaining their case.

Informal Stage

Most grievances can be resolved quickly and informally through discussion. If an employee feels unable to speak to the person causing the grievance, then the employee should speak informally to their immediate line manager.

The line manager will inform the grievance officer or Headteacher (unless the grievance is against the Headteacher, in which case it would go straight to the Chair of Governors of the Local Governing Committee) that an informal grievance has been made; however, the identities of those involved will not be provided at this stage.

The purpose of the informal stage is to resolve the issue in an open, honest and positive manner, to avoid formal escalation.

The informal meeting will take place within five working days of the grievance being raised. The line manager will arrange a time for the informal meeting – the employee will be informed of this in writing.

If the employee is unable to attend, the line manager will arrange another suitable time. The reconvened meeting must take account of the availability of all parties and be within five working days of the original date (or by mutual agreement). (Sickness will only be treated as a reason for non-attendance where there is medical evidence to demonstrate that the employee would be unable to attend the hearing or to follow the proceedings taking account of any reasonable adjustments required by the Equality Act 2010).

In the informal meeting, the employee's line manager will determine:

- What the employee is concerned about.
- What outcome the employee is seeking.
- Whether further meetings and escalation to the formal stage are required

The line manager will keep notes during the informal meeting and the employee will be provided with a copy. At the end of the informal meeting, the line manager will agree what action will be taken to achieve the appropriate outcome and by when, e.g. escalation to the formal stage. The line manager will provide the employee with a written outcome letter within five working days of the meeting.

If the grievance relates to another employee, that employee will be informed in writing within five working days and the most senior line manager will hold a meeting with them to explain. The identity of the person raising the grievance will not be provided to any other employee.

If the working relationship between the employees for which the grievance is concerned is breaking down, the line manager will consider whether seeking assistance from the Headteacher/grievance officer is appropriate.

It is anticipated that a number of grievances will be resolved at this informal stage with no need to progress matters further. However, if the matter has not been resolved at the informal stage, it may then proceed to the formal stage of the procedure; employees will complete the Employee's Notification of Grievance Form (Appendix A) to do this.

Formal Stage

If the employee is not satisfied their concerns have been addressed informally, the employee should submit the grievance in writing, indicating that it is a formal grievance, to the Headteacher. The employee should use the 'Notification of Grievance Form' (Appendix A) to state the grounds of their grievance and the desired outcome. For collective grievances, only one 'Notification of Grievance Form' should be filled out and agreed/signed by participating employees. (It is recognised that some grievances will be submitted in other forms and these should be treated equally seriously).

Employees will be advised to keep a copy of their Notification of Grievance Form. Once the Headteacher receives a Notification of Grievance Form, they will, in liaison with the grievance officer, invite the employee to a formal meeting to be held within ten working days.

If the employee or their companion is unable to attend the scheduled meeting, a suitable alternative date will be arranged. If the employee is persistently unable or unwilling to attend the meeting without good reason, the grievance officer will make a decision based on the evidence available.

The grievance officer will lead the meeting and they will ensure that the employee has an opportunity to explain their grievance. The grievance officer will attempt to resolve the grievance at this meeting, so long as no investigations are required, e.g. no fact-checking is required. A suitable member of staff will take minutes during the formal stage meeting – these minutes will be kept confidential and safe, in line with the Data Protection Policy. An electronic copy of the minutes will be shared with the employee.

If no resolution can take place during the formal stage meeting, an investigation will take place and a further meeting will be held within ten working days.

6. The Grievance Investigation

The grievance officer will conduct one of the following two investigations:

- A fact-checking investigation
- A full investigation

The grievance officer will determine which type of investigation is required on a case-by-case basis. Following the initial formal meeting, the grievance officer may need to conduct a fact-checking investigation before resolving the grievance. Fact-checking investigations will be conducted in a professional, timely, and non-intrusive manner. These investigations may involve interviews with line managers and email searches.

For full investigations, the grievance officer will:

- Appoint a suitably independent and senior member of staff, to be the investigation officer within five working days.
- Assist the investigation officer as far as they can without interfering with the investigation.

During full investigations, the investigation officer will:

- Aim to conclude their investigations within ten working days.
- Interview the employee concerned, plus other employees whose information may have a bearing on the case.
- Present their findings in writing to the grievance officer, who will provide a copy to relevant parties involved.

The employee must cooperate fully and promptly in any investigation. This may include informing those handling the investigation of the names of any relevant witnesses, disclosing any relevant documents and attending interviews.

Should the investigation take longer than expected, the employee will be informed and given a new date of expected completion.

7. Grievance Outcomes

Once the investigation report has been received, the grievance officer will call a grievance meeting to which the employees concerned, and their companions, will be invited. At this meeting, employees will be given an opportunity to answer any questions that arose from the investigation.

At the grievance meeting, the grievance officer may decide to invite witnesses, e.g. the investigation officer, to answer questions. The grievance officer and the employees concerned will be permitted to ask witnesses questions. Employees will also be permitted to invite witnesses to this meeting.

Once all the information has been presented, the grievance officer will adjourn the meeting to make their decision. The grievance officer will consider each side of the grievance and make a decision – this will be recorded in the outcome letter. The outcomes possible following a grievance are as follows:

- The grievance is upheld in full
- The grievance is rejected in full
- The grievance is partially upheld, e.g. there is validity to some of the grievance
- Mediation

A 'partially upheld' outcome will not be used as an outcome when a decision cannot be reached. Sometimes, mediation will be used as an outcome; this will involve all parties collaborating to find an acceptable outcome.

The grievance officer will write an outcome letter within five working days and provide a copy of this to the employee. The letter will include information on:

- The chosen outcome.
- The reasons for the decision.
- Any facts that the grievance officer has ascertained in coming to their decision.
- Any recommendations or agreed actions to take.
- The employee's right to appeal the decision.

If it is necessary and appropriate to take disciplinary action, the grievance officer and the Headteacher will meet to determine what action is appropriate in line with the Staff Discipline and Conduct Policy.

Disciplinary action will be proportionate and may include, but not be limited to, the following actions:

- Re-training.
- Verbal warning.
- Written warning.
- Suspension with pay.
- Termination of employment.

Gross misconduct will result in the employee's contract of employment being terminated. If an employee has already received a written warning, suspension with pay may be considered.

Where a grievance is raised against an employee during a disciplinary process, the disciplinary process may be temporarily suspended to deal with the grievance. Where the grievance and disciplinary cases are related, the grievance officer will deal with both issues concurrently.

8. Appeals

If the grievance has not been resolved to the employee's satisfaction, they may appeal in writing to the Local Governing Committee's Clerk to the Governors, setting out the grounds of their appeal, within five working days of receiving the written confirmation of the original decision. The employee must detail how they consider the grievance procedure has not been correctly applied, and/or how the outcome was not reasonable or proportionate; the procedure at Appendix B will be followed.

The appeal will normally be heard within twenty working days after receipt of the appeal letter, by an Appeal Committee of not less than two governors, convened by the Clerk to the Governors.

The Appeal Committee may have an HR adviser attend the meeting who may also be involved in its private deliberations. The HR adviser, who should not have had any previous involvement in dealing with the grievance, shall not have a vote in the decision of the Appeal Committee.

The Appeal Committee will confirm its final decision in writing, within five working days of the appeal meeting. This is the end of the procedure and there is no further right of appeal.

9. Malicious grievances

Disciplinary action may be taken against employees making malicious grievances. Bullying, harassment or victimisation will not be tolerated.

Employee's Notification of Grievance

This form should be used to submit a formal grievance.

Send the completed 'Employee's Notification of Grievance Form' (Appendix A) to the Headteacher.

If your grievance relates to your Headteacher then send it to the Local Governing Committee's Chair of Governors (or another governor if the grievance is against the Chair).

You are advised to keep a copy.

Please be aware that the information will, in normal circumstances, be shared with any person/s complained about. Please think carefully about what you write.

Name(s)	
Post(s) held	
Line manager	
The nature of your grievance. Please include all relevant facts, dates and names of people involved and any witnesses. (Continue on a separate page if necessary)	
When did you first raise your grievance, and with whom? Is this a one-off issue or part of a chain of events?	

What action had been taken on your grievance at the informal stage?

Please state how and why the grievance affected you

What steps or action do you want to be taken as a remedy for your grievance?

Declaration: I confirm that the above statements are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. I understand that making any false, malicious or untrue allegations may result in disciplinary action being taken against me.

Printed name	
Signed	
Date	

Appendix B: Procedure at Appeal Committee

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that fair hearings are conducted with regard to grievances reaching the appeals stage of the procedure.

The Chair of the Appeal Committee (which will consist of not less than two governors) will make the introductions and explain the sequence of presentations and questioning and ensure that all persons understand the procedure.

Documents must be exchanged at least five working days before the grievance hearing and it will be important that all members of the Appeal Committee, the aggrieved party and the investigating officer have a copy of the investigation report.

At the Appeal Committee the last person to hear the grievance before it went to appeal will present the case for supporting the decision while the employee will state why the outcome has been unsatisfactory.

Presentation of the Employee's Grievance

The employee, or their representative will put forward their grievance and call each witness (if any) to present their evidence in turn. The employee or their representative may question each witness (witnesses will not be in the room before presenting their evidence and will withdraw immediately after they have presented it).

The Headteacher, or governor, may question each witness in turn.

The employee or their representative may ask any supplementary questions to each witness.

The Appeal Committee may question each witness.

Presentation of the Response

The Headteacher or governor will outline the reason for the decision and call each witness (if any) to present their evidence in turn. The Headteacher or governor may question each witness (witness should not be in the room before presenting their evidence and will withdraw immediately after they have given their evidence).

The aggrieved employee may question each witness in turn.

The Headteacher or governor may ask any supplementary questions to each witness.

The Appeal Committee may question each witness.

Summing Up

The Headteacher or governor summarises the main points to support the original decision regarding the grievance.

The employee or their representative summarises the main points of the grievance and indicates why the decision to date has been unsatisfactory and the preferred resolution.

The aggrieved employee and the Headteacher or governor withdraw.

The Decision

The Appeals Committee and their adviser will then consider the matter in private. If further clarification or information is required before a decision is reached both parties will be recalled or the appeal can be adjourned until the information is provided.

The Appeals Committee will normally report the decision to the parties orally and confirm the decision in writing within five working days.

The decision of the Appeals Committee is final.