



Complaints Procedure

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1. Aims

All Things Sen (ATS) aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils attending the provision, and others.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

Be impartial and non-adversarial

- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Make sure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed. ATS will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full. To support this, we will make sure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

2. Legislation and guidance

Although as a non-regulated alternative provision we do not have to meet the legal standards set out for schools and PRUs, we endeavour to meet such standards in all aspects of our daily operation. This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to the [Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils at the school.

It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on [creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations](#), and refers to [good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE).

3. Definitions and scope

3.1 Definitions

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- A concern is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”
- A complaint is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”

3.2 Scope

ATS intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Suspension and permanent exclusion
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The complainant

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- Follow these procedures
- Co-operate with ATS throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved with respect
- Do not publish details about the complaint on social media

4.2 The investigator

An individual will be appointed to look into the complaint and establish the facts. They will:

- Interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- Consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- Prepare a comprehensive report which includes the facts and potential solutions

4.3 The complaints co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator will be one of the company's Joint Directors. The complaints co-ordinator will keep the complainant up to date at each stage in the procedure and keep records of the procedure. The complaints coordinator will also chair meetings, real or virtual, with the complainant(s) where necessary.

5. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right

5.1 Timescales

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident. We will consider exceptions to this timeframe in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

If at any point we cannot meet the timescales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant

Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

6. Stages of complaint (not complaints against one or both of the Joint Directors)

6.1 Stage 1: informal

ATS will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

The complainant should raise the complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff or one of the Joint Directors, either in person or by letter, telephone or email. The Directors can be reached on the following email addresses:

dean@allthingssen.co.uk

steven@allthingssen.co.uk

ATS will acknowledge informal complaints within 5 working days, and investigate and provide a response within 10 working days.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint.

6.2 Stage 2: formal

The formal stage involves the complainant putting the complaint to the Joint Directors and/or the subject of the complaint:

- In a letter or email
- Over the phone
- In person
- Through a third party acting on their behalf

The complainant should provide details such as relevant dates, times and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents. The complainant should also state what they feel would resolve the complaint.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the Directors on the emails given above.

The Directors will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 working days.

The Directors (or other person appointed by the Directors for this purpose) will then conduct their own investigation. The written conclusion of this investigation will be sent to the complainant within 10 working days.

7. Referring complaints on completion of the ATS procedure, or where complaints relate to one or both of the Joint Directors as representatives of the company overall

7.1 Complaints to Companies House

The governing body for registered limited companies is Companies House, to whom complaints about the company can be made directly.

The type of complaint that Companies House typically handle will relate to the company name, passing off, the registered office and other Companies Act related matters.

To contact Companies House, email enquiries@companieshouse.gov.uk. The Contact Centre is available from Monday to Friday 8.30am to 6.00pm.

7.2 Complaints to the Insolvency Service

If you believe a company has been involved in a serious breach of the law then you may need to raise a complaint with the insolvency service.

This may include a company that-

- Has a disqualified director involved in the management of the company.
- Is causing harm to suppliers or customers
- Breaks the law or is committing fraud (serious fraud should be reported to The Serious Fraud Office)
- Has significant irregularity with its accounts or reports

The Insolvency Service is a government agency that helps to deliver economic confidence by supporting those in financial distress, tackling financial wrongdoing and maximising returns to creditors. The Insolvency Service is an executive agency, sponsored by the [Department for Business and Trade](#).

7.3 Complaints to Trading Standards

For matters relating to the company's general trading activities you may want to make a complaint to the local trading standards office. They can handle complaints relating to incorrect goods, scams, and unfair trading. Trading Standards can take businesses to court or stop them operating, but they won't help you fix your problem - for example, they can't help you get a refund.

Your local trading standards office can be located on the Gov.uk website.

8. Unreasonably persistent complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it's already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure, beyond all reason
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner, e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the timeframes it sets out
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on work time
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

Steps we will take

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#)
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

Stopping responding

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from our site.

9. Complaint campaigns

Where ATS receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

10. Record keeping and confidentiality

ATS will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and stored securely, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint.

This is except where the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and record retention schedule.

11. Learning lessons

The Joint Directors will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the appropriate staff member or members, and respecting confidentiality, determine whether there are any improvements that the provision can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

12. Monitoring arrangements

ATS Directors will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in making sure that complaints are handled properly.

This policy will be reviewed by the Joint Directors every 3 years.

13. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures
- Admissions policy
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures