Complaints Procedure

Effective from 17th March 2026

The Trustees of The Cornovii Trust (TCT) adopted this policy on:
17th March 2026

Shared with TCT Local Governing Boards

Chair of TCT Trustees: Janet Furber

This policy will be reviewed in light of operating experience and/or changes in legislation or every three years whichever is soonest.

Complaints Procedure

From time-to-time parents/carers may be unhappy about the way their child has been treated at a school within the Cornovii Trust. When this is the case parent/carers should communicate in the stages outlined below. The Trust operates a 3-month time frame in which a complaint can be lodged. This means 3 months from when the incident/complaint occurred (or if it is a series of events, when the last incident occurred) to contacting the school/Trust about it.

Throughout the procedure, the complainant can expect to be treated with courtesy, respect, and fairness at all times. We expect that the school/Trust dealing with the complaint will be shown the same courtesy, respect, and fairness. We will aim to respond to a complaint and each stage of the procedure within 10 working days.

The Cornovii Trust (TCT) will not investigate anonymous complaints.

Complaint details, outcomes and actions taken are recorded by TCT and used for service improvement. We will handle your information so that it is processed and retained appropriately and legally, in line with data protection legislation.

1. **STAGE 1** – **INFORMAL -** directly with the member of staff
   Usually, it will be helpful to talk with the member of staff concerned and parents/carers could give a telephone number and time for the member of staff to call. (Please ask your son/daughter for the times of breaks or lunch or suggest a time after school for the member of staff to call you). If the matter is not resolved at stage 1, you should move to stage 2 of the process.

2. **STAGE 2** - **INFORMAL -** If the matter cannot be resolved at stage 1 (with the member of staff) or if the parent/carer feels the matter is so serious that the first contact should be with a more senior member of staff, i.e., a Key Stage or Pastoral Lead, subject, or senior leader. If this fails to resolve the matter, parents/carers should move to stage 3 of the process.

3. **STAGE 3** – **FORMAL (WRITTEN)** if the matter has not been resolved at stage 2, parent/carers should put their complaint in writing within 10 working days of the stage 2 meeting to the Headteacher and then telephone the school and ask for an appointment with the Headteacher. When writing, the parent/carer must make it explicit that it is a formal complaint. Clearly state what the complaint is, what the school/trust has done so far to address it, why they feel it has not been resolved and what their desired outcome is. If this is the first the school/trust is aware of this issue, the parent/carer should go to Stage 1 (see above). In the event that the Headteacher cannot resolve the problem, parents should move to stage 4 of the process.

4. **STAGE 4** - **FORMAL (WRITTEN)** write to the Chair of Governors, (following the same guidance as Stage 3) c/o the school concerned. The Chair will then arrange to meet with the parents/carers.

If the meeting with the Chair of Governors does not resolve the matter parents/carers should then move to stage 5 of the process

5. **STAGE 5** – **FORMAL (WRITTEN)** put the complaint in writing (following the same guidance as stage 3) within 10 working days of the stage 4 meeting to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and then email the Clerk to TCT requesting an appointment with the CEO. They can be contacted at the following email address clerk@thecornoviitrust.org

In the event that the CEO cannot resolve the problem, parents should move to stage 6 of the process

6. **STAGE 6** – **REVIEW FORMAL -** the complainant has the right to **review the complaint before an Independent Complaints Hearing** set up by TCT.

This hearing will comprise of at least three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of which is independent of the management and running of the school or Trust. The complainant shall be allowed to attend the hearing and be accompanied if they so wish.

The hearing's decision is **final** and please remember this is a hearing not an appeal. Written minutes of the hearing will be taken and shared with both parties. The findings and any recommendations from the hearing will be put in writing and shared with both parties within 5 working days of the panel hearing. These are also available for inspection in the school/Trust premises by the proprietor and Headteacher.

Contact and correspondence with this Independent Complaints Hearing can be made in writing.

Please address all correspondence to: TCT, Independent Complaints Hearing, c/o Clerk to TCT, Alsager School, Hassall Road, Cheshire, ST7 2HR. The hearing will be convened **within 4 school/working weeks** of receipt of the complainants' correspondence advising that they wish for the Independent Complaints Hearing to meet to discuss their complaint.

For all complaints which get to the formal stages, the school/trust will keep a written record. This will include how/if the complaint was resolved, and any actions taken by the school/Trust following the complaint. All records of formal complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the 2008 Act request access to them.

NEXT STEPS:
If the complainant believes the school/trust did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the DfE after they have completed Stage 6.

The DfE will not reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the Trust/school. They will consider whether the Trust/school has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Dfe online via the Online Contact Form: Submit a complaint to the DfE, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) or by writing to: Ministerial and Public Communications Division
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
United Kingdom

In summary the complaints procedure is:

1. Contact with the relevant member of staff - informal
2. Contact senior member of staff i.e., Key Stage lead, Pastoral Lead, Subject or Senior Leader – informal
3. Letter to and appointment with Headteacher/Head of School – formal
4. Letter to and appointment with the Chair/Vice Chair of Governing Body – formal
5. Letter to and appointment with CEO – formal
6. Write to the Independent Complaints Hearing c/o TCT - appeal

Complaints must follow this order of procedure

Step 6 is the end of the procedure.
If your complaint is about the Headteacher, please go straight to stage 4. If your complaint is about the CEO, please put it in writing and contact the Clerk to TCT, at clerk@thecornoviitrust.org who will arrange a meeting with the Chair of TCT.

This procedure works alongside the Vexatious / Persistent Complaints Policy.

This procedure does not cover the following areas which have their own policies:

- **Exclusions**
- **Admissions**

Created/updated by: R Middlebrook	Date: March 2026
Date approved by Trustees: 17 March 2026	Date for review: Dependent on legislation or within 3 years (March 2029) whichever is soonest
Previous version by: R Middlebrook	Date: July 2025

Appendix: Complaints Form

1. Complainant Details
Full Name: _____

Relationship to pupil (if applicable): _____

Name of pupil (if applicable): _____

Address: _____

_____

Postcode: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

2. Details of Complaint
Please provide as much detail as possible, including dates, times, locations, and names of staff involved.
_____

_____

_____

_____
(Continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

3. Date(s) of Incident(s)
Date of incident or most recent incident: _____

(Complaints should normally be made within 3 months of the incident.)

4. Previous Action Taken (if any)
☐ Stage 1 – Informal discussion with staff member
☐ Stage 2 – Informal discussion with senior staff
☐ Stage 3 – Formal complaint to Headteacher
☐ Stage 4 – Complaint to Chair of Governors
☐ Stage 5 – Complaint to CEO
Details of actions taken and outcomes:
_____

_____

5. What Outcome Are You Seeking?
_____

_____

6. Supporting Documents
Please list any documents you have attached (e.g. emails, letters, reports):
_____

_____

7. Declaration
I confirm that the information provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge.
Signature: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

8. Submission Details
Stage 3: Headteacher (via school office)
Stage 4: Chair of Governors (c/o school)
Stage 5: CEO via Clerk to TCT – clerk@thecornoviitrust.org
Stage 6: Independent Complaints Hearing (via Clerk to TCT)

Office Use Only
Date received: _____

Stage logged: _____

Acknowledgement sent: _____

Outcome: _____