

# How to run an effective complaints review panel

## Example decision letter

**Please refer to the endnotes for supporting information**

Mrs Smith  
5 Road  
Anytown

Date<sup>i</sup>

**CONFIDENTIAL**<sup>ii</sup>

**Re: decision from the complaints review panel – XXX School/Academy**

Dear Mrs Smith,

Following the stage 2/3<sup>iii</sup> complaints review panel held on (date) the panel has concluded its consideration of your complaint to the governing board. This letter is to inform you of the panel's decision.<sup>iv</sup>

The members of the panel conducted a full review of the evidence pack (items 1-21) with evidence submitted by both parties in accordance with the school/ trust complaints policy.<sup>v</sup> They also considered the questions and answers raised at the panel meeting. The panel findings and decision are as follows:<sup>vi</sup>

### **Your complaint**

Your complaint was:

- that your son was being bullied by another pupil in his English lessons and the class teacher was allowing this to happen and was not applying the anti-bullying and behaviour policies properly
- That your son was also being bullied by the same pupil via social media and the school was allowing this to happen and was not applying the anti-bullying and behaviour policies properly
- the lack of an apology from the headteacher
- the lack of action taken by the headteacher to address the bullying after it was confirmed that bullying took place or the failure to provide assurances that it would not happen again, which has resulted in your son feeling anxious in school and the victim of continued bullying

### **The panel's finding**

The headteacher had ensured that there was a full investigation and on the basis of the findings of the investigation report from the investigating officer, the headteacher had agreed that the bullying had taken place both in English lessons and also on social media and was continuing. The evidence from the investigation report also showed that the class teacher had not taken and was not taking any action to address the bullying in class.<sup>vii</sup>

### **Actions taken by the school**

The school had run a school assembly on anti-bullying and the teacher was reminded to read the school anti-bullying and behaviour policies.

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### The panel's decision.

Although a full investigation was carried out and there was a timely response from the headteacher to your complaint, the panel is of the opinion that the actions taken were inadequate, both to address the issues or to prevent them from occurring again. Bullying, in any form, will not be tolerated at our school.

Therefore, the panel's decision is to uphold<sup>viii</sup> your complaint with the following recommendations<sup>ix</sup> to the school to achieve both reconciliation and a resolution:

1. To apologise to you and your son for not taking action to address the bullying at the time
2. To review the anti-bullying, behaviour policies and social media policies as appropriate
3. To ensure all staff members have received training on how to deal with incidents of bullying and poor behaviour in class in order to minimise this happening again.
4. To do some additional curriculum work for pupils around bullying and respect for others and behaviour expectations and to remind pupils of the consequences of failure to comply with these expectations.
5. For the headteacher to consider any appropriate actions that need to be taken regarding the pupil who was bullying Billy and the English teacher in line with school policy and procedure – please note that in line with school policy these actions will not be shared with you.
6. For the headteacher to monitor the effectiveness of these steps and, if necessary, to take any further steps to prevent your son being bullied.

We hope that this resolves your complaint satisfactorily and that reconciliation can be achieved between all parties. This letter concludes the school's complaints process. <sup>x</sup>

### Maintained schools<sup>xi</sup>

If you believe the school did not follow their published complaints procedure or if you feel they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, you can contact the Department for Education (DfE).

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the school. They will consider whether the school has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint. You may contact the DfE online at: [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus)

Or you may write to them at:

Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

### Academies

If you believe the school / trust did not handle your complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, you can contact the DfE. The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by <Academy Name>. They will

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consider whether <School Name> 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](#).

You can refer your complaint to the DfE online at: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe>, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to: Ministerial and Public Communication Division  
Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

Yours sincerely,

XXX  
Panel Chair<sup>xii</sup>

Or

XXX  
On behalf of the panel  
Clerk to Governors/panel clerk

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<sup>i</sup> Check your school policy on the deadline for the decision letter to be sent

<sup>ii</sup> All decision letters from panels should be marked as confidential

<sup>iii</sup> Stage will depend on the context and policy

<sup>iv</sup> Sets out purpose of the letter

<sup>v</sup> Evidencing that policy is being followed

<sup>vi</sup> Shows the panel has taken all evidence, written and verbal, from all parties into consideration

<sup>vii</sup> Key findings

<sup>viii</sup> States what the decision is

<sup>ix</sup> States what actions are being recommended to the school

<sup>x</sup> Stating the process has ended

<sup>xi</sup> All outcome letters must give details on the right to and where to appeal

<sup>xii</sup> Check who sends this letter as set out in your policy