

GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Mission Statement

WeST holds a deep seated belief in education and lifelong learning. Effective collaboration, mutual support and professional challenge will underpin our quest to ensure that all of the children and adults we serve are given every opportunity to fulfil their potential and succeed in life.

Westcountry Schools' Trust adopted this policy on 21 March 2019

Westcountry Schools' Trust will review this policy biannually

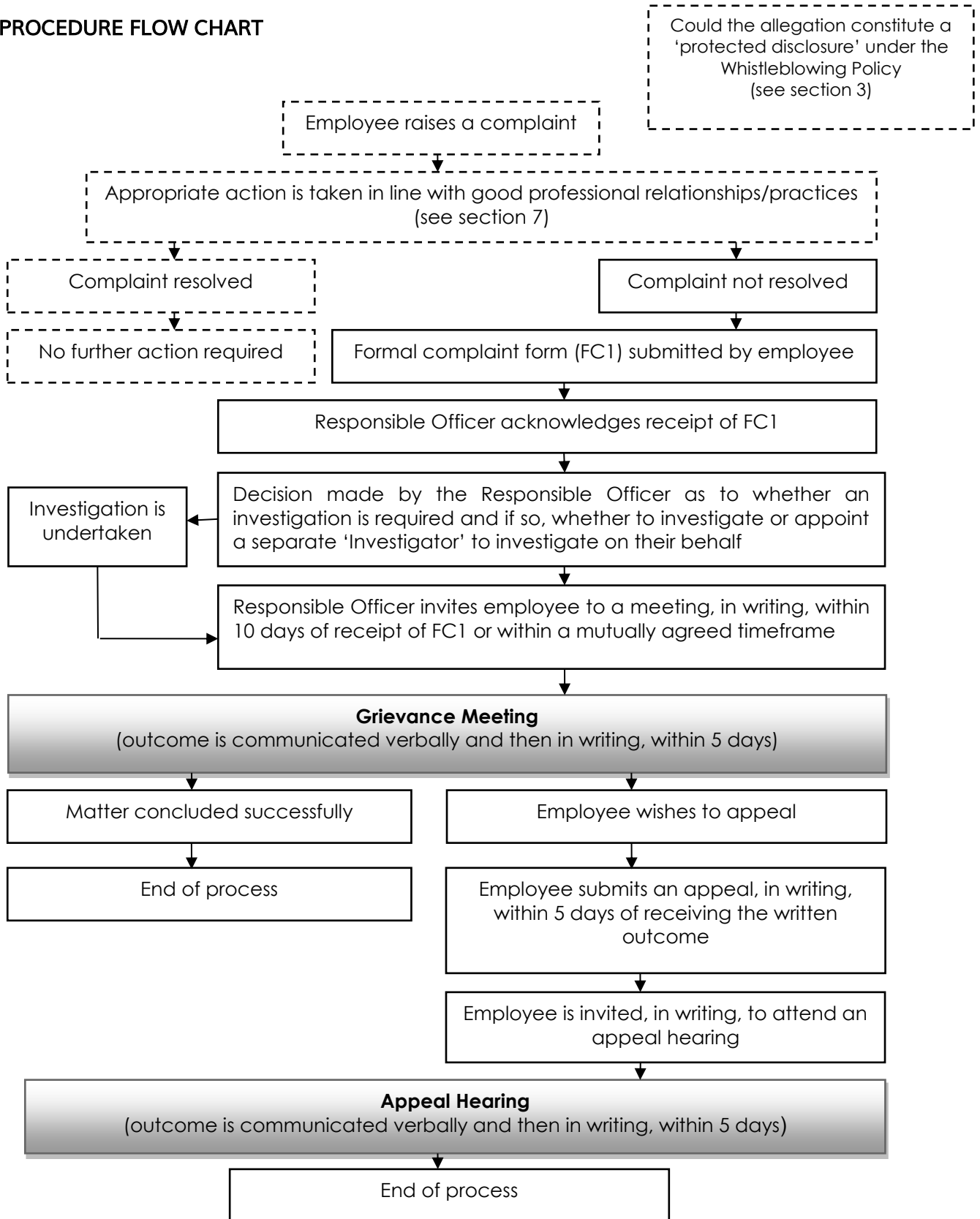
Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST)

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Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST)

PROCEDURE FLOW CHART



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1. Delegation of Authority

Purpose

The Trust is committed to ensuring a consistent, fair, and equitable approach in all staffing matters, and will not discriminate either directly or indirectly on the grounds of an employee's gender, age, disability, gender re-assignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity status, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

In order to achieve this aim, there needs to be a clear delegation of authority throughout the structure of the Trust.

Responsibility for Taking Action – First Stage

For a Grievance raised by Secondary School teaching and non-teaching Staff – it will be the Principal who will be responsible for initiating the first stage of the grievance process.

For a Grievance raised by Primary School teaching and non-teaching Staff – it will be the Primary Headteacher who will be responsible for initiating the first stage of the grievance process.

For a Grievance raised by TLI Staff – it will be the Director who will be responsible for initiating the first stage of a staffing matter such as disciplinary.

For a Grievance raised by a member of the Central Services Team – this group covers all staff that work in a non-teaching function directly for the purpose of the overall Trust's operations. The Trust's CEO will be responsible for initiating the first stage in any staffing matter involving the Central Services Team.

For a Grievance raised by a Secondary Principal – the CEO will be responsible for initiating the first stage of the grievance process.

For a Grievance raised by a Primary Headteacher – the EPP will be responsible for initiating the first stage of the grievance process.

For a Grievance raised by the Executive Primary Principal – the CEO will be responsible for initiating the first stage of the grievance process.

For a Grievance raised by the Director TLI – the CEO will be responsible for initiating the first stage of the grievance process.

For a Grievance raised by the CEO – the Trust Board will be responsible for initiating the first stage of the grievance process.

For the purpose of this Policy the term **"Responsible Officer"** will refer to Principal, CEO or Executive Primary Principal as detailed above.

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Where Grievances are made against a governor or a trustee:

For Grievance against a Local Governor – the Chair of Governors will be responsible for initiating the first stage of the grievance process.

For Grievance against a Trustee – the Chair of Trust will be responsible for initiating the first stage of the grievance process.

For Grievance against a Local Chair of Governors – the Chair of Trust will be responsible for initiating the first stage of the grievance process.

For Grievance against the Chair of Trust – the CEO will be responsible for initiating the first stage of the grievance process.

Responsibility for the Appeal Stage

All employees have the right to appeal against a decision made in a range of staffing matters. To ensure transparency and a fair process is maintained, the appeal will be heard by a separate panel to the original hearing. Ideally, the Appeal Committee will consist of 3 trustees, however, where this is not possible at least two trustees must be present, and the other member will be a school governor from the MAT. Members of the Appeal Committee must not have been involved in the original hearing or investigation, or be in any way employed by the Trust.

POLICY AND PRINCIPLES

2. Definition

A grievance is a concern, problem or complaint raised by an employee regarding their work, working conditions or relationships with work colleagues.

3. Purpose

This policy should be used to manage a complaint from an employee about their work and/or working conditions and/or a work colleague, fairly and without delay.

4. Application and Exclusions

This policy is based on good practice to ensure a consistent and effective approach. The application of this policy will be fair, equitable, objective and will not discriminate either directly or indirectly on the grounds of an employee's gender, age, disability, gender re-assignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity status, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This policy:

- does not cover complaints from or about Governors/Trustees unless the complaint relates to the Governors/Trustees role as the employer of the Principal/Headteacher. In other cases the relevant Complaints Procedure should be used
- may only be used by individual employees; group complaints will not be accepted. This may however be varied by mutual agreement and individual complaints may be looked at collectively where appropriate
- does not apply to those employed by other organisations, employed under another organisations' terms and conditions of employment which includes a contractual grievance policy, casual workers or volunteers
- is not for use by a manager who has concerns and/or complaints about employees they manage. These concerns should be dealt with through the application of the appropriate HR policies, for example the disciplinary or capability policy and procedure.

The following matters are excluded from this policy because separate procedures exist:

- overpayments or pay issues
- evaluation and grading of jobs matters that are in the public interest and may constitute a 'protected disclosure' and are or maybe:
- an unlawful or a criminal offence;
- a breach of a legal obligation (but not a personal contractual breach unless such breach involves a matter of public interest);
- a miscarriage of justice;
- mistreatment or abuse of a client or a member of the public for whom the Trust has a responsibility;
- in disregard of legislation governing health and safety at work;

- seeking undue favour over a contractual matter or a job application; or against the Trust's Financial Regulations;
- improper conduct or an unauthorised use of public funds;
- actions which have led to or could lead to damage to the environment; or
- an action which deliberately covers up information tending to show any of the above.

In these circumstances it would usually be appropriate to invoke Westcountry Schools' Trust Whistleblowing Policy instead of the Grievance Policy.

- selection for redundancy (see applicable redundancy policy)
- disciplinary and/or capability issues (see disciplinary and/or capability policy)

5. Time Limits

The time limits included in this policy may be varied by mutual agreement. The policy makes reference to a number of 'days' within which certain actions/events are to occur. A 'day' is defined as any Monday to Friday excluding public holidays as defined by ACAS.

If a concern is raised during a period of School closure, the timeframes indicated in the policy will commence from the first day of the School being open. Where a concern is raised immediately prior to a period of School closure, the availability of any person(s) who may need to be interviewed as part of any investigation will be taken into consideration by both parties when mutually agreeing any required extension to the timeframes.

6. Good Professional Relationship/Practices

It is the responsibility of all employees to take all reasonable steps to develop and maintain good working relationships with colleagues and to deal with workplace issues in a professional, practical and constructive manner.

Employees should try to resolve any difficulties at the earliest opportunity without having to use a formal process. This should be done in such a way as to have the minimum impact on the School, Trust and other work colleagues and to preserve working relationships.

Resolving issues in a sensible and sensitive way will require all parties to recognise their part in the issue/difficulty and how their behaviour may be contributing to the circumstances. Employees should be willing and open to looking at ways of resolving the issues without resorting to formal processes, for example by using:

- an informal setting to discuss the matter with the colleague
- the line manager or an appropriate colleague as a facilitator
- mediation

Employees should be able to resolve issues professionally and respectfully by agreeing that when discussions take place there should be:

- effective listening - so that each person fully understands the issues at hand and each other's view

- effective understanding so that each person is able to respond, knowing what the issues are
- a calm environment - no raised voices or inappropriate body language
- common ground – identifying and agreeing common understanding
- the taking of responsibility – each person should admit when they are wrong, if appropriate, and take steps to make professional relationships work
- agreed action – offering apologies if appropriate, agreeing the way forward and agreeing to meet again, if appropriate.

Every attempt should be made to resolve the issues informally. If the matter cannot be resolved by way of professional dialogue the formal process should be used.

Failure to foster good professional working relationships could, in certain circumstances, lead to a decision to terminate the employment of one or more parties involved on the grounds that substantial reasons exist that make appropriate working relationships impossible and this is directly affecting the academy. This may be an irretrievable breakdown in working relations or irresolvable personality differences between employees at work. This is known as dismissal for Some Other Substantial Reason (SOSR) and will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

7. Being Accompanied

The Employment Relations Act 1999 determines that an employee has a statutory right to request to be accompanied at any disciplinary or grievance hearing. To invoke that right an employee must make a reasonable request to the employer to be accompanied by either:

- a paid official from a recognised trade union/professional association
- an official of a trade union/professional association whom the union has reasonably certified, in writing, as having experience of, or as having received training in acting as an employee's companion at disciplinary or grievance hearings
- an appropriate work colleague.

Friends/family members are not permitted unless they fall under the above criteria and it is agreed as appropriate. It would not normally be reasonable for an employee to be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union/professional association representative whose presence would prejudice the hearing and/or was from a remote geographical location, if someone suitable and willing was available on site.

If an employee's chosen representative is not available on the day proposed for the meeting, the employee can propose an alternative date within the following five days of the original proposed date.

8. Non Attendance

If an employee fails to attend a meeting through circumstances beyond their control, such as certified illness, an alternative time and date may be offered. Alternatively they may submit a written statement or nominate a representative to attend on their behalf.

Where an employee is persistently unable or unwilling to attend the meeting without good cause, it will proceed in their absence and a decision based on the evidence available will be made.

PROCEDURE

9. Formal Process

The employee must set out their complaint, the basis for it and the resolution they are seeking using the formal complaint form (FC1) and should forward this to the Responsible Officer. Any documents relating to the complaint should also be submitted at this stage.

Where an employee raises a complaint about the Principal/Headteacher, this should be submitted to the CEO/EPP.

Receipt of the formal complaint form should be acknowledged in writing as soon as is reasonably possible. If there is a potential for the complaint to constitute a 'protected disclosure' under the Whistleblowing Policy, the Responsible Officer should seek advice from HR Director.

The parties may subsequently decide to resolve the complaint by means other than this policy, e.g. mediation. This decision must be confirmed in writing and will not preclude the employee from raising their complaint under this policy at a later date.

9.1 Investigation

Depending on the circumstances of the complaint, the Responsible Officer may decide that an investigation is necessary. The Responsible Officer can either undertake an investigation themselves or arrange for an appropriate person ('the investigator') to carry this out on their behalf and report back to them. The Responsible Officer will confirm with the investigator the extent to which they should gather information.

The investigator should not have had any previous involvement in the circumstances of the complaint, no close relationship with any of the parties involved nor a vested interest.

9.2 The Responder

Where the complaint is related to the actions of another employee or body, for ease of reference and for the purposes of this policy, they will be known as the 'responder'. The responder should be informed of the complaint and given a copy of this policy. They should also be given the opportunity to respond to the complaint and be advised of the likely timescale of any investigation.

9.3 Grievance Meeting

The Responsible Officer will arrange a meeting within 10 days of receiving the formal complaint form. This timescale can be extended by mutual agreement to allow additional time for information to be gathered, although it is important that there is no unreasonable delay. Consideration should be given to arranging for a suitable person to attend the meeting to take notes.

Prior to the meeting, the Responsible Officer will determine the appropriateness of sharing the information gathered and which parties to share this with.

It is important that the meeting allows for free flowing discussion and dialogue in an attempt to find an amicable solution to the complaint. The employee should be invited to re-state their complaint and how they would like to see it reasonably resolved.

The Responsible Officer will listen to all the points raised, consider any additional information gathered and then adjourn the meeting to make a decision. If a decision is reached, the Responsible Officer will confirm this at the meeting. If a decision cannot be made at the end of the meeting, the employee should be informed of the reason why and when a response may be expected.

The decision will be confirmed in writing, within five days, setting out the key factors considered, the reason for the decision and what action was agreed to resolve the complaint. This letter will also detail the employee's right of appeal and where to send the appeal, should the complaint not be fully resolved.

The manager should also ensure that suitable feedback is given to the responder and that this is undertaken within a reasonable timeframe.

10. Appeal

If an employee wishes to appeal against the decision, they must do so in writing, stating the grounds for their appeal, within five days of receiving the written response.

The appeal should be sent to the Clerk of the Trust who will then arrange for the appeal to take place.

An Appeal Committee will be convened and will hear the appeal. The appeal should be heard without unreasonable delay. A minimum of five days' notice will be given to allow for preparation.

The decision will be given verbally to all parties at the end of the appeal hearing unless valid reasons exist not to do so. The decision will be confirmed in writing to the employee within five days. An appeal is not a re-hearing of all of the facts but to determine if the original decision was reasonable given the circumstances. The grievance process ends with the decision of the Appeal Committee.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

11. HR Advice

The HR Director can provide advice and support to any Responsible officer/investigator involved in the application of this policy at any stage. This includes attendance at meetings/hearings where required.

12. Employee Responsibilities

Employees have a contractual responsibility to carry out the requirements of their job satisfactorily, to ensure that their conduct is appropriate and that they have good professional working relationships with their colleagues.

Employees should bring to the attention of management any concerns/problems/complaints that arise in the course of their work so that they can be resolved fairly and promptly.

Employees involved in the investigation and resolution of complaints must participate appropriately and with due regard to the Acceptable Behaviour Policy.

13. Multiple Complaints

If an employee raises multiple complaints relating to different issues, to avoid duplication of this policy and to aid a prompt resolution, the issues will be dealt with together, where possible.

14. Vexatious/Malicious Complaints

False or vexatious complaints will be taken very seriously and will be managed under the Disciplinary Policy where it is clear that an employee has made an allegation(s) of this type against the Trust and/or another employee.

15. Overlapping Issues

Where an employee raises a grievance whilst being managed under another policy e.g. Disciplinary, Capability, Managing Sickness Absence, the Responsible Officer should refer to the applicable policy and take appropriate action. Invoking the Grievance Policy does not necessarily mean that other processes will be put on hold.

16. Mediation

Mediation is a voluntary process, where trained mediators help people in dispute to attempt to reach an agreement. The HR Department will arrange suitable mediation to take place.

17. Confidentiality

Any parties affected by or involved in the application of this policy will be expected to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality. Breaches of confidentiality will be taken seriously, especially if they hinder the application of the policy or the resolution of an issue.

Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in action being taken under the Disciplinary Policy.

Disclosure of information may also be a breach of the Data Protection Act and may lead to action being taken under the provisions of this legislation in addition to action being taken under the Disciplinary Policy.

18. Recording of Information

A written record must be made of all interviews and meetings held during the application of this policy. Those involved in each meeting will be provided with a copy of any records made. The Responsible Officer will ensure there is a record of the process which should include all statements, records and evidence. All records will be retained confidentially, securely and in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

19. Support for Employees

Employees are encouraged to seek support from their trade union/professional association in the first instance. Procedural guidance relating to this policy is available from the HR Department.

Where a referral to the Trust's occupational health or counselling service is necessary, this should be made by the employee's line manager.

20. Consultation

This policy is a Trust version of a policy which was subject to consultation with trade unions/professional associations. It will apply to all employees where this policy has been adopted.

This policy supersedes all previous grievance policies.

Appendix 1 Delegated Responsibilities

Action	Grievance raised by....					
	Core Services Team Staff	Primary School Staff	Secondary School/TLI Staff	Primary Headteacher/ Secondary Principal/ TLI Head of Service	Executive Primary Principal	CEO
Grievance Hearing Panel	CEO + 2 Trustees	Headteacher + 1xGovernor + 1xTrustee	Principal/TLI Head of Service + 1xGovernor + 1xTrustee	EPP/CEO 1xGovernor + 1xTrustee	CEO + 2xTrustees	Chair of Trust Board + 1xTrust Board member + 1xTrustee
Responsibility to hear	CEO of Trust	Headteacher	Principal/TLI Head of Service	EPP/CEO	CEO	Chair of Trust Board (Trust Board)
Appeal Committee	Ideally 3 x Trustees Minimum 2 Trustees with 1 Governor (not part of the original investigation and hearing) and not employed by the Trust				3 x Trustees	3 x Trustees

The Trust reserves the right in exceptional circumstances to vary the composition of the panel in order to ensure that panel meetings proceed without undue delay. In these circumstances the Trust will ensure that the panel maintains appropriate standards of separation and confidentiality.

POLICY HISTORY

Policy Date	Summary of change	Contact	Version/ Implementation Date	Review Date
April 2016	Revised policy for academy schools based on LA policy previously consulted upon with trade unions	HR ONE	14 April 2016	
May 2017	Amendments made with reference to new MAT name and the delegation of authority process	HR WeST	TBC	
September 2017	Revised publication date and inclusion of PCE role	HR WeST	September 2017	Annually
February 2019	Reviewed and updated	HR West	February 2019	Annually
March 2019	Approved by Trust Board subject to local consultation	HR WeST	March 2019	Biannually or at change in statutory guidance
April 2019	Implementation following local consultation	HR WeST	April 2019	Biannually or at change in statutory guidance

FORMAL COMPLAINT FORM (FC1)

PART A: To be completed by the employee raising the complaint.

Employee Name:	Job Title:
Work base:	
Employee contact details: Address for correspondence:	
Telephone:	
Mobile:	
Email address:	
Name of Line Manager/Headteacher:	
Name of Representative (Professional Association/Trade Union): Address for correspondence:	
Telephone:	
Mobile:	
Email address:	
Tel.no:	

DETAILS OF COMPLAINT

Detail your complaint here including what you have done to resolve this matter by way of professional dialogue and explain why this has not resolved the situation to your satisfaction. Alternatively, state why the circumstances are so serious and/or complex that informal resolution by professional dialogue cannot be attempted or would be unsuccessful. Attach any relevant supporting evidence where necessary.

OUTCOME YOU ARE SEEKING

State the outcome that you are seeking and specifically what action or actions, in your view, are needed to resolve your complaint satisfactorily.

Employee signature:..... Date.....

You should now give this form to the Responsible Officer and a copy to HR. You should keep a copy for your records.

PART B: To be completed by the Responsible Officer considering the complaint.

Name of Manager/Head teacher:

Job title:

Service/School:

Contact Details:

Telephone:

Mobile:

Email address:

Date complaint received:

SUMMARY OF ACTION TAKEN AND OUTCOME

The employee should be written to following the Grievance Meeting confirming the outcome of their complaint, any actions that will be taken and their right of appeal. Attach a copy of the letter and any notes taken at the Grievance Meeting to this form.

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

Responsible Officer signature:.....

Date:.....