Reach South Academy Trust Complaints Policy February 2026: Summary of Changes

What: The two existing complaints policies have been consolidated and revised into a single, comprehensive policy that addresses all types of complaints.

Why: A single complaints policy ensures consistent handling of concerns across the trust, aligning with DfE guidance and sector best practices. This unified approach increases stakeholder confidence and ensures issues are addressed fairly and efficiently.

Compliance: The new policy fully adheres to the DfE Guidance on Setting up Academy Complaints Procedures and is modelled after both the DfE template for multi academy complaints procedures and the Governor Hub Knowledge (Key for School Leaders) policy for academy complaints, as approved by Forbes Solicitors. The new policy is live from 25th February 2026, and all complaints received on or after this date should be dealt with in accordance with the new policy

Summary of changes:

Policy Area	July 2025 Trust Complaints Policy	July 2025 Academies Complaints Policy	February 2026 Complaints Policy
Scope	Focuses on complaints against Trust Board, CEO, Executive Team	Applies to parents only; separate appendix for non-parents	Single process for **all** complaints which applies to **all** complainants; includes detailed information about complaints not in scope. States anonymous complaints not normally considered
Stages	3 stages (Informal, Formal, Panel)		3 stages: Informal, Formal, Panel Hearing with flowchart and clear escalation routes. Panel hearings may take place over MS Teams if all parties in agreement
Timescales	Acknowledgment: 5 days; Response: 15 days; Panel: 25 days		Acknowledgment: 2 days; Response: 10 days; Panel: 20 days. Timescales are shorter and clearer, allowing for more efficient resolution of complaints
Independent Panel Member	Requires independence at panel hearing but excludes anyone linked to Trust or academies	Requires independence but vague on MAT governor eligibility	Clarifies explicitly that MAT governor from another school can serve as independent panel member (as set out in DfE guidance)
Accessibility	Brief mention of reasonable adjustments		Detailed provisions for disability, language barriers, literacy difficulties
Learning Lessons	Mentions annual review		Formal monitoring of trends and reporting to Trust Board each term
Unreasonable Complaints	Not mentioned	Basic guidance on serial/persistent complaints	Detailed criteria and steps, including limiting contact and involving third parties.
DfE Referral	Allows escalation; minimal detail	Allows escalation; minimal detail	Clear explanation of DfE remit, links to guidance, and conditions for intervention
Complaint Campaigns	Not mentioned	Brief mention.	Detailed handling strategy (template responses, publication)
Early Years	Not mentioned	References EYFS framework	Dedicated section with 28-day resolution requirement and Ofsted contact details
Training	Mandatory trustee/executive training included		Training has been removed as not relevant to include in policy. New complaints handling training for staff and governors **will** be provided, along with trust wide resources to support complaints management