

Riverstone Academy

Complaints Procedures Policy

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Next review: September 2027

Signed: K Bowe

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Statement of intent

Riverstone Academy aims to resolve all complaints at the earliest possible stage and is dedicated to ensuring all complaints are managed sympathetically and efficiently.

Any complaint or concern will be taken seriously, whether formally or informally, and the appropriate procedures will be implemented. This policy has been created to deal with any complaint against a member of staff, or the school as a whole, relating to any aspects of the school or the provision of facilities or services.

The school will ensure the complaints procedure is:

- Easily accessible and publicised on the school's website.
- Simple to understand and put into practice.
- Impartial and fair to all parties involved.
- Respectful of confidentiality duties.
- Continuously under improvement, using information gathered during the procedure.
- Fairly investigated, by an independent person when necessary.
- Used to address all issues to provide appropriate and effective responses where necessary.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education and Skills Act 2008
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018

This policy also has due regard to related guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE 'The Independent School Standards: guidance for independent schools' (current guidance), including Part 7, paragraph 33

2. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:

- A “**complaint**” can be defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction’ towards the actions taken or a perceived lack of action taken.
- A “**concern**” can be defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt’ where reassurance is required; concerns will be classed and addressed as complaints.
- “**Complainants**” are those who have raised a concern or a complaint.
- A “**grievance**” is an issue raised by a member of staff where they feel the school has not implemented a policy or process fairly or properly. Grievances will be dealt with in line with the school’s Grievance Policy.
- “**Days**” relate to school days.

3. Eligibility to make a complaint

Parents/carers of pupils currently being educated at the school are able to make a complaint in line with this policy. The complaints procedure will be made available to parents of current pupils and prospective pupils, including on the school website, and a copy will be provided free of charge on request.

All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Parents/carers will be assured that their children will not be penalised if they raise a complaint.

This policy does not cover complaints made by the following:

- Parents of pupils who have left voluntarily or following exclusion (except where the complaints process was started while the pupil was still being educated at the school). The school may, at its discretion, consider complaints about serious matters arising while a pupil was on roll, particularly where safeguarding or pupil welfare is involved.
- Pupils – pupils will be supported to raise concerns through the school’s accessible pupil voice, pastoral and safeguarding arrangements. Any safeguarding concern raised by a pupil will be dealt with under the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Prospective pupils and their parents, and the failure to admit such pupils

- Staff grievances, disciplinary matters and whistleblowing concerns, which will be managed under the school's relevant employment, disciplinary or Whistleblowing procedures.

4. Timescales

Complaints are expected to be made as soon as possible after an issue arises to ensure the issue is addressed in an appropriate timescale.

The school upholds a **three-month** time limit in which a complaint can be lodged following an incident. Complaints made outside this time limit will not be automatically refused and exceptions will be considered.

Timescales for managing complaints at specific stages are outlined in the relevant sections of this policy. In the case of any timescales changing, all parties involved will be informed of the changes in a timely manner.

5. Informal raising of a concern

The school will endeavour to resolve most concerns informally.

Concerns will be raised initially as follows:

(Please note these are examples only and not an exhaustive list)

Type of concern	Individual to whom a concern should be raised
Educational issues	The relevant teacher – the concern will be passed to a more senior member of staff if appropriate.
Pastoral care issues	The headteacher
Behavioural issues	The staff member who imposed the behaviour sanction
Financial matters	The headteacher
Other concerns	The headteacher
Concerns regarding the headteacher	The nominated Director responsible for handling complaints about the headteacher.
Concerns regarding a Director or the proprietor body	A Director or independent person with no prior involvement and no conflict of interest.

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone or in writing. Any concern or complaint that includes an allegation of abuse, neglect, safeguarding concern or child protection issue will be referred immediately to the DSL and will not wait for progression through the standard complaints process. Where appropriate, the safeguarding matter and the complaint about the school's handling of that matter may proceed separately, provided this does not prejudice safeguarding enquiries or any external investigation. A written record will be kept of all concerns and the date on which they were received. A concern provided in writing will

be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within two days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays.

If the concern is not resolved within **five days** or, in the event that the complainant is not satisfied with the response to their concern, the complainant will be advised to proceed in accordance with the '[Formal complaint](#)' stage of this procedure.

6. Formal complaint

The complainant should submit their complaint in writing to the headteacher. The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within two days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays, indicating that action is being taken and the likely timescales. Where the complaint concerns the headteacher, a Director or another person who would otherwise be responsible for handling the complaint, it will be referred to a person with no prior involvement and no conflict of interest.

The headteacher, or other person appointed to manage the complaint, will meet with the complainant within five school days of acknowledging receipt of the complaint to discuss the matter. Where the complaint concerns the headteacher, the nominated Director will manage this stage. Where a complaint concerns a Director, the nominated Director or the proprietor body, another suitably impartial Director or an independent person will be appointed to manage the complaint.

Where a complaint raises concerns relating to safeguarding, child protection, pupil welfare, staff conduct towards pupils, or any matter that may place a child at risk of harm, the matter will be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and managed in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Where appropriate, external agencies may be consulted or informed.

During the meeting, the person managing the complaint will attempt to reach a resolution; however, it may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out by that person or another suitably impartial person. No person directly involved in the matters complained of will investigate the complaint.

Written records will be kept of all meetings and other communications held in relation to the complaint.

Once all facts are established, the person managing the complaint will inform the complainant of the decision and the reasons for it in writing.

Where the complaint concerns the headteacher, a Director or the proprietor body, the outcome will be issued by the person appointed to manage that stage and who has had no prior involvement in the matter.

The complainant will be informed of the decision within 10 school days from receipt of the formal complaint. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay, the complainant will be notified of this and informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.

[Panel hearing](#) If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at the formal stage, they will be advised of their right to request progression to the Panel hearing stage. Where such a request is made, the school will convene a panel hearing in accordance with this policy.

7. Panel hearing

Where a complaint cannot be resolved and the complainant requests progression following the formal stage, a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the school's proprietor will be arranged.

The panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school and will have no conflict of interest in relation to the complaint.

A hearing will be scheduled to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 school days of the request for a panel hearing. Reasonable arrangements will be made to ensure the complainant can attend the panel hearing. If the complainant does not exercise the right to attend, the hearing will still be held.

The complainant will be informed that they may attend and be accompanied at the hearing if they wish. The school will make reasonable adjustments where required to support access to the process. Legal representation will not normally be necessary, although the school may consider requests on a case-by-case basis.

The panel will conduct the hearing fairly and impartially and will give the complainant a reasonable opportunity to present their case.

If the panel deems it necessary, it may require that further details of the complaint or any related matters be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such information will be supplied to all parties no later than **five days** prior to the hearing.

After considering all of the relevant facts, the panel will make findings and recommendations. The decision, findings and recommendations will be provided to the complainant in writing within five days of the hearing. A copy of the decision, findings and recommendations will be sent to, where relevant, the person complained about, the headteacher and the nominated Director.

The decision of the panel will be final and represents the conclusion of the school's complaints procedure.

If it is found that the school has not met its requirements in relation to managing complaints because of the way a particular complaint has been handled, the Secretary of State has no power to compel the school to alter its decision on that complaint, only to take regulatory action designed to address the failure to meet the complaints standard, so that future complaints are dealt with properly.

8. Recording complaints

A written record will be kept of any complaint made, detailing:

- Whether the complaint was resolved following an informal route, formal route or panel hearing.
- Actions taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld).

Additional records may be kept containing the following information:

- The date the issue was raised
- The name of the complainant and, where relevant, their child
- A description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations
- Witness statements
- The name of the staff member responsible for handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of correspondence on the issue

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where disclosure is required by law, requested by the Secretary of State, the Department for Education, or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, or where disclosure is otherwise necessary for safeguarding or regulatory purposes.

9. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the headteacher and Directors. The Directors will receive anonymised information about formal complaints, themes, outcomes, timescales and actions taken so that they can assure themselves that the procedure is effective and that the requirements of Part 7, paragraph 33 of the Independent School Standards are met.

All changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

Number of complaints registered under the formal complaints procedure during the preceding school year: 0