



Raise Education & Wellbeing **School**

Complaints Procedure

Version:	V5
Reviewed:	September 2026
Effective Until:	September 2027 or when there is a change in circumstances, in work practices or the introduction of new legislation.
Lead	Head of School
Approved	

1. Policy Statement

Raise Education & Wellbeing School is committed to providing the highest quality of education and care. We recognise that, on occasion, parents, carers, or others with a legitimate interest in the school may wish to raise concerns or make a formal complaint.

This policy sets out how complaints will be handled fairly, transparently, and without prejudice, in accordance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Complaints should normally be raised within three months of the event.
- Complaints outside this timeframe will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Head of School or the Chair of Proprietorial Body.

2. Scope of this Policy

This policy covers complaints relating to:

- The education and welfare of students
- The application of school policies and procedures
- The behaviour or conduct of staff or students, where not covered by other processes
- The actions or decisions of the school

This policy does not cover complaints relating to:

- Admissions decisions (which are governed by the school's Admissions Policy)
- Child Protection & Safeguarding - Concerns about safeguarding should be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and will be handled in accordance with our Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy. However, if a complainant is dissatisfied with how a safeguarding concern has been handled, they may use this complaints procedure
- Exclusions (which follow the Exclusion Policy and statutory guidance)
- Employment matters (covered by HR procedures and staff grievance/disciplinary processes)
- Matters subject to legal proceedings or where legal action has been threatened

Understanding Concerns vs Complaints

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- **A concern** is defined as "an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought". The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.
- **A complaint** is defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action".

3. Principles

The school will:

- Take complaints seriously and handle them promptly, fairly, and confidentially
- Make reasonable adjustments for students or parents with additional needs, in line with the Equality Act 2010
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- Resolve complaints, wherever possible, at the informal stage
- Consider how complaints can feed into school improvement and evaluation processes
- Ensure complainants are not disadvantaged for raising a concern in good faith
- Investigate complaints impartially and objectively
- Respect the confidentiality of all parties involved

4. Legislation and Statutory Guidance

This document meets the requirements of regulation 33, set out in part 7 of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of young people at the school.

It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations, and refers to good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures from the Department for Education (DfE).

5. Anonymous Complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Head of School or Chair of Proprietary Body may determine that an anonymous complaint warrants investigation if it raises serious concerns (e.g., relating to safeguarding or the welfare of students).

6. Withdrawal of Complaints

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, they should inform the school in writing. The school may still choose to continue investigating if there are safeguarding, welfare, or other serious concerns that require resolution.

7. Stages of the Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Who should I contact?

Concerns should be raised with the relevant member of staff, such as:

- Form teacher
- SENCo
- Key worker
- Head of School

What will happen?

- Most issues will be resolved quickly at this stage through discussion and clarification
- The member of staff will listen to your concern and work with you to find a resolution
- If the concern cannot be resolved informally, you will be advised to escalate to a formal complaint

Timescale:

- We aim to resolve informal concerns within 10 school days
- If the complaint is not resolved informally, the complainant will be advised to escalate to a formal complaint within 5 school days

Special circumstances:

Complaints about the Head of School must be made to the Chair of Proprietorial Body, via the school office.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint (Head of School)

How do I make a formal complaint?

If your complaint has not been resolved informally, you should:

1. Request a Formal Complaints Form by:
 - Phoning 01204 431946, or
 - Emailing office@raise-school.co.uk
2. Complete the form, providing as much detail as possible, including:
 - What happened
 - When it happened
 - Who was involved
 - What you have done to try to resolve it
 - What outcome you are seeking
3. Submit the completed form, along with any relevant documentation, to the Head of School

What will happen?

- The Head of School (or a person appointed by the Head of School who has not been involved in the matter) will investigate
- The investigation may include:

- Reviewing relevant documents and records
- Speaking to relevant staff and witnesses
- Meeting with you to discuss your complaint (if appropriate)
- You will receive a written response setting out:
 - The findings of the investigation
 - Any actions the school will take
 - Your right to escalate to Stage 3 if you remain dissatisfied

Timescale:

- We aim to complete this process within 28 school days of receiving your formal complaint
- If we cannot meet this timescale, we will write to you explaining the reason for the delay and providing a revised timescale
- We will keep you informed of progress throughout the investigation

What if my complaint is about the Head of School?

If the complaint concerns the Head of School, it should be addressed to the Chair of Proprietorial Body via the school office. The Chair of Proprietorial Body will appoint an appropriate person to investigate.

What if I'm not satisfied with the response?

If you are not satisfied with the response and wish to proceed to Stage 3, you must inform the Head of School in writing within 5 school days of receiving the Stage 2 response.

Stage 3 – Review Panel Hearing

When can I request a panel hearing?

If you are not satisfied with the school's response at Stage 2, you may request a review panel hearing.

How do I request a panel hearing?

You must submit your request in writing to the Head of School within 5 school days of receiving the Stage 2 response, explaining why you remain dissatisfied.

Who will be on the panel?

The panel will be appointed by, or on behalf of, the Proprietorial Body and will consist of at least three people who:

- Have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint
- At least one member must be independent of the management and running of the school

For the purposes of this policy, "independent" means a person who:

- Has no current or recent (within the last 5 years) employment, governance, or financial connection to the school,
- Is not a relative of a member of staff or the Proprietorial Body,
- Has no other interest that could reasonably be perceived as affecting their impartiality

Panel members may include:

- Independent governors
- External education professionals
- Retired school leaders or professionals with relevant expertise

What happens before the hearing?

- You will be given at least 10 school days' notice of the date of the hearing
- The hearing may take place in person at the school or via Microsoft Teams

- You may submit written evidence and statements to support your complaint. These must be submitted at least 5 school days before the hearing
- The school will also submit written evidence and statements
- All evidence will be shared with both parties before the hearing
- You may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person (e.g., a friend, relative, or advocate). This person may speak on your behalf but cannot be a legal representative acting in a legal capacity

What happens at the hearing?

- Both you and a representative of the school will have the opportunity to:
 - Present your case
 - Ask questions
 - Respond to questions from the panel
- The panel will consider all the evidence presented
- The hearing will be conducted in a fair and respectful manner

What will the panel decide?

The panel can:

- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Recommend actions the school should take to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to school policies or procedures to prevent similar issues

When will I receive the outcome?

- A written outcome will be provided within 15 school days of the hearing
- The outcome will be sent to:
 - The complainant
 - The Chair of Proprietary Body
 - Where relevant, the person complained about
- The outcome will include:
 - The panel's findings on each aspect of the complaint
 - The reasons for the panel's decision
 - Any recommendations or actions
 - Information about further steps if you remain dissatisfied

Is the panel's decision final?

The panel's decision is final within the school's complaints procedure. However, you may refer your complaint to external bodies (see Section 10).

8. Complaints Against a Member of the Proprietary Body

8.1 Stage 1: Informal

Where a complaint or concern is raised about a Member of the Proprietary Body, the Chair of the Proprietary Body will carry out the steps at Stage 1 (set out in section 7 above).

8.2 Stage 2: Formal

Where a written complaint is raised about a Member of the Proprietary Body, the Chair of the Proprietary Body will carry out the steps at Stage at Stage 2 (set out in section 7 above).

8.3 Stage 3: Review Panel

At least 2 members of the review panel must be independent of the management and running of the school. The panel will otherwise carry out the steps at Stage 3 (set out in section 7 above).

9. Complaints Against the Chair of Proprietorial Body

9.1 Stage 1: Informal

Where a complaint or concern is raised about the Chair of Proprietorial Body, a suitably skilled and impartial person (who has not been involved in the matter) will carry out the steps at Stage 1 (set out in section 7 above).

9.2 Stage 2: Formal

Where a written complaint is raised about the Chair of Proprietorial Body, a suitably skilled and impartial person (who has not been involved in the matter) will carry out the steps at Stage 2 (set out in section 7 above).

9.3 Stage 3: Review Panel

At least 2 members of the review panel must be independent of the management and running of the school. The panel will otherwise carry out the steps at Stage 3 (set out in section 7 above).

10. Unreasonable, Vexatious or Repeated Complaints

While the school welcomes feedback and legitimate complaints, it will not accept behaviour which is unreasonable, abusive, or persistent in nature.

What is unreasonable behaviour?

Unreasonable behaviour may include (but is not limited to):

- Repeating the same complaint with no new evidence after the complaints' procedure has been exhausted
- Persisting in pursuing a complaint after all stages have been completed and the panel has made a final decision
- Submitting multiple complaints which appear intended to disrupt the school's work or harass staff
- Using offensive, abusive, or threatening language (verbally or in writing)
- Making excessive demands on staff time and resources
- Refusing to engage with the school's process in good faith
- Recording meetings or conversations without prior consent
- Making unfounded allegations against staff

What will the school do?

Where a complaint is deemed unreasonable or vexatious, the school may:

- Decline to consider further complaints on the same matter
- Restrict communications to a single point of contact (e.g., in writing only)
- Limit the frequency or duration of contact
- End communication if behaviour is abusive or threatening, while ensuring safeguarding duties are met

How will this be decided?

Any decision to designate a complaint as vexatious or to limit communication will be:

- Approved by the Head of School and, where appropriate, the Chair of Proprietorial Body
- Confirmed in writing to the complainant with clear reasons

- Reviewed periodically to ensure it remains appropriate

Can this decision be challenged?

The complainant may request that the decision be reviewed if circumstances change. This does not prevent the complainant from raising new, separate complaints about different matters.

11. Recording & Confidentiality

What records will be kept?

A written record will be kept of all formal complaints (Stage 2 and Stage 3), including:

- The nature of the complaint
- Whether the complaint was resolved at Stage 2 or proceeded to Stage 3
- The outcome of the complaint (upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld)
- Action taken by the school as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether it was upheld
- Any lessons learned and improvements made to school policies or procedures

How will records be stored?

- Records will be kept securely in electronic and/or written format
- Records will be retained in line with data protection law, our privacy notices, and data retention policy
- Access to records will be restricted to relevant staff and those with a legitimate need to know

Who can access the records?

All correspondence, statements, and records will remain confidential, except where disclosure is required by:

- Ofsted
- The Secretary of State or Department for Education
- Legal proceedings or court order
- Other regulatory or statutory bodies

Records will be made available for inspection by Ofsted and the DfE as required.

12. Monitoring & Review

- The Chair of Proprietorial Body and Head of School will review the record of complaints annually
 - This review will consider:
 - The number and nature of complaints received
 - Patterns or trends in complaints
 - Lessons learned and improvements made
 - The effectiveness of the complaints' procedure
 - Lessons learned will inform policy and practice improvements
 - This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if required by changes in legislation or school circumstances
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13. Appeal to External Bodies

If you remain dissatisfied after the panel hearing, you may refer your complaint to external bodies. Please note that these bodies will not usually investigate until the school's complaints procedure has been exhausted.

Ofsted

For matters relating to welfare, safeguarding, or regulatory standards:

Website: www.gov.uk/complain-ofsted-report

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Phone: 0300 123 1231

Department for Education (DfE)

For concerns about compliance with the Independent School Standards:

Website: www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

Address: Department for Education, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Email: isi.enquiries@education.gov.uk

14. Confidentiality & Data Protection

Records of complaints will be processed in accordance with:

- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- Our privacy notices
- Our data retention policy

Personal data will be:

- Kept securely
- Only accessed by those with a legitimate need
- Retained only for as long as necessary
- Processed fairly and lawfully

Complainants have the right to request access to their personal data held by the school, subject to exemptions under data protection law.

15. Equality and Accessibility

The school is committed to ensuring this complaints procedure is accessible to all. We will:

- Make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 for complainants with disabilities or additional needs
- Provide information in alternative formats on request (e.g., large print, different languages)
- Offer support to complainants who may need assistance in making a complaint
- Ensure meeting venues are accessible

If you require any adjustments or support, please contact the school office.

16. Policy Availability

This policy is available:

- On the school website at [insert website address]
- On request from the school office- 01204 431946 office@raise-school.co.uk

A copy will be provided free of charge to any person who requests it.

For further information or to request a Formal Complaints Form, please contact:

Appendix A: Complaints Procedure Flowchart

STAGE 1: INFORMAL RESOLUTION

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Raise concern with relevant staff member

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Resolved? → YES → End

↓ **NO**

Within 10 school days, advised to escalate

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STAGE 2: FORMAL COMPLAINT

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Complete Formal Complaints Form

Submit to Head of School

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Investigation by Head of School

Written response within 28 school days

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Satisfied? → YES → End

↓ **NO (within 5 school days)**

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STAGE 3: REVIEW PANEL

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Request panel hearing in writing

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Panel hearing (at least 10 days' notice)

Panel includes at least 1 independent member

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Written outcome within 15 school days

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Panel decision is final within school

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**Still dissatisfied? → Contact external bodies
(Ofsted, DfE)**

Formal Complaints Form

Raise Education & Wellbeing School

This form should be used to make a formal complaint under Stage 2 of the school's Complaints Procedure. Please complete all sections as fully as possible to help us investigate your complaint effectively.

Your Details

Full Name: _____

Relationship to School:

- ☐ Parent/Carer
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Staff Member
- ☐ Governor
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

Contact Address:

Postcode: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Preferred Method of Contact:

- ☐ Email
- ☐ Telephone
- ☐ Letter

Student Details (if applicable)

Student Name: _____

Year Group/Class: _____

Details of Your Complaint

1. What is your complaint about?

(Please provide as much detail as possible, including dates, times, locations, and names of people involved)

2. When did the incident(s) occur?

Date(s): _____

Time(s): _____

3. Who was involved?

(Please list names and roles of all relevant people)

4. Have you raised this concern informally? (Stage 1)

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please provide details:

Who did you speak to? _____

When? _____

What was the outcome? _____

5. Why are you dissatisfied with the informal resolution (if applicable)?

What Would Resolve Your Complaint?

What outcome are you seeking?

(Please be as specific as possible about what you would like the school to do)

Supporting Evidence

Are you attaching any supporting documents?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please list the documents you are attaching:

Additional Information

Is there anything else you would like us to know?

Accessibility and Support

Do you require any reasonable adjustments or support to participate in the complaints process?

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

If yes, please specify:

Declaration

I confirm that:

The information I have provided is accurate and truthful to the best of my knowledge

I understand that the school will investigate this complaint in accordance with the Complaints Procedure

I understand that the school will keep me informed of progress and aim to respond within 28 school days

Signature: _____

Date: _____

For Office Use Only

Date Received: _____

Received By: _____

Complaint Reference Number: _____

Assigned To: _____

Target Response Date: _____

Please return this completed form to:

Head of School

Raise Education & Wellbeing School

38, Chorley New Rd., Bolton, BL1

Email: office@raise-school.co.uk

Phone: 01204 431946