

Complaints policy

This policy is concerned with how The Rise School will respond to feedback and complaints from families, pupils, key stakeholders and other members of the school's local community.

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This policy is to be implemented by:

- teaching staff
- the governing body.

This policy is addressed to all:

- teaching staff
- pupils
- other relevant stakeholders.

At The Rise School we:

- take all concerns and complaints seriously
- make every effort to deal with complaints informally and at an early stage, in the spirit of partnership
- resolve all complaints within 28 working days of the complaint being received
- ensure that complaints are dealt with in line with the procedures set out in this document
- ensure that complaints are resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils
- ensure that, where appropriate, a full and fair investigation of the issue is undertaken
- ensure that no-one, including pupils, are penalised for making a complaint in good faith
- keep a written record, for at least three years, of all complaints, the action taken and at what stage they were resolved (note: This information is provided to Ofsted at their request)
- review regularly at senior leadership level the written record of complaints and their outcomes
- keep confidential all records relating to individual complaints except where the secretary of state or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Education Act, as amended, requests access to them.

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Guidance & procedure

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Basic information

1. Objectives

- 1.1 This policy provides a framework for the listening and responding to all feedback and complaints and is specifically for pupils, parents, key stakeholders and other members of the school's local community. Where staff wish to provide feedback, raise concerns or complain they should refer to the whistleblowing policy and the grievance policy.
- 1.2 We aim to ensure that everyone feels able to give both positive and negative feedback in a safe, non-judgemental environment; in the knowledge that they will be heard and responded to.
- 1.3 We aim to create a sense of community and belonging, and will seek to protect our pupils, parents, staff and governors from vexatious, unsolicited criticism and complaint.
- 1.4 We are committed to self-evaluation and professional growth and are striving to be a learning organisation changing how we do things where feedback or evaluation indicates that this will lead to improvement. We believe in cooperation and partnership with families, as well as with others in the local community and further afield, who share our commitment to improving the lives of children and young people with autism.

2. What is a complaint?

- 2.1 At The Rise School we recognise that there will be aspects of school life that don't meet the expectations or satisfaction of our pupils, parents and other key stakeholders and we would expect, from time to time, normal and legitimate concerns about the progress, achievement, behaviour or welfare of pupils. Parents are encouraged to make those concerns known to staff so that they can be addressed in partnership with the school.

3. What is feedback?

- 3.1 Feedback can be positive or negative and will usually not require a formal response. We expect to receive feedback daily in passing, during phone conversations, via email, through home-school communication and in writing. All feedback will impact on the development of The Rise School and will be logged for discussion and consideration as appropriate.

4. Roles & responsibilities

The role of the governing body

- 4.1 The governing body has a statutory duty to ensure that the necessary provision is made for complaints and feedback to be heard and responded to appropriately. The governors oversee the school's provision and report annually on complaints resolution.

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The role of the head teacher

- 4.2 The head teacher has responsibility for the day to day management of all aspects of the school's work including dealing with complaints and feedback. She/he shares responsibility with the governing body for developing and implementing the policy for complaints. She/he works closely with the class teachers and keeps the governing body informed of this area of the school's development, through the termly report to governors.
- 4.3 In particular the head will report:
- the number of complaints received
 - how each complaint is resolved
 - exceptional feedback.

The role of the staff team

- 4.4 All members of the staff team may receive complaints and be party to feedback. Staff will follow recording and reporting procedures.

How to make a complaint and/or give feedback

5. Pupil voice

- 5.1 We are committed to listening to and hearing the voice of our pupils both on an individual basis and as a group.
- 5.2 We will take account of pupil views in every aspect of their education and school life, encouraging self-advocacy, independence and participation in pupil council activity.
- 5.3 All pupils are given 'Talk. We Listen'. They are referred to it and supported to use it should they wish to make a formal complaint.

6. Parents

- 6.1 There are a number of avenues for parents to give feedback via the class teacher, the family liaison officer, the senior leadership group, the head teacher and the governors. We welcome feedback in an informal way or in writing.
- 6.2 Where a parent wishes to make a formal complaint this should be directly to the head teacher (or the deputy head in his/her absence), and can be verbally or in writing.

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7. Key stakeholders and other members of the school's local community

- 7.1 There are a number of avenues for people to give feedback via members of the school team, the head teacher and the governors. We welcome feedback in an informal way or in writing.
- 7.2 Where a person external to the school wishes to make a formal complaint this should be directly to the head teacher (or the deputy head in his/her absence), and can be verbally or in writing.

How will the complaint/feedback be handled?

8. Responding to a complaint/feedback

Stage 1 – Informal resolution

- 8.1 It is to be hoped that most complaints can be made and considered on an informal basis:
- for a minor day to day issue please contact the relevant class teacher
 - for a more serious subject related academic concern, the deputy head should be contacted
 - for a more serious general academic concern or pastoral matter, the relevant class teacher or family liaison officer are the appropriate people to contact
 - for concerns about the curriculum, please contact the deputy head (curriculum)
 - for any other pastoral or disciplinary concerns, please contact the deputy head
 - in matters regarding finance, fees and non-academic services please contact the school business manager
 - in matters regarding after school care please contact the class teacher.
- 8.2 We will do all we can to ensure that we respond to complaints and concerns in a highly professional manner. However, if you feel that an expression of concern has not been handled properly by a member of staff, please contact the deputy head.
- 8.3 The staff concerned will make a written record of every complaint; this record will include the date on which the complaint was received.
- 8.4 We will endeavour to acknowledge a written notification by telephone, fax, e-mail or letter within five working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable in the school holidays. Should the matter not be resolved within a reasonable period (one not normally exceeding two term-time weeks) or in the event that the relevant staff and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint by writing directly to the head teacher.

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Stage 2 - Formal resolution

- 8.5 If you remain unhappy, please contact the head teacher. This should be in writing.
- 8.6 The head teacher may ask to meet you for a discussion of the problem. The head teacher will conduct a full investigation of the complaint and may interview any members of staff or pupils involved. You will receive a written response to your complaint.
- 8.7 Full written details of the nature of the complaint, any relevant documents and full contact details should be sent by the parents in an envelope addressed to the head teacher. It would be very helpful if you could also indicate what you envisage as the desired outcome.
- 8.8 The head teacher will decide, after considering the complaint, upon the appropriate course of action to take. In most cases, the head teacher will speak to and/or meet with the complainant to discuss the matter, normally within ten days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for the head teacher to carry out further investigations that may delay a resolution. The head teacher may ask a senior member of staff to act as investigator and/or may involve one or more of the school governors.
- 8.9 Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- 8.10 Once the head teacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the complainant will be informed of this decision in writing. The head teacher will also give reasons for the decision.

Stage 3 - Independent hearing

- 8.11 If, having discussed the matter with the head teacher, you still feel dissatisfied then please contact the chair of governors who will appoint an independent person to consider the complaint. This person will not have had any involvement with any matter detailed in the complaint.
- 8.12 You can write to the chair of governors in confidence c/o the PA to the head teacher who is clerk to the governors. The clerk will acknowledge the request within 5 working days.
- 8.13 If possible, the independent person will resolve the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the independent person will decide how it should be carried out.
- 8.14 At the hearing, the complainant(s) may be accompanied by one other person e.g. a relative or friend. Legal representation will only be permitted if the chair considers it appropriate. If it is considered appropriate the chair will inform the complainant(s) to that effect so that they may choose to be legally represented at the panel hearing if they so wish. Should they

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decide to be so represented they shall inform the chair at least 7 days before the date set for the hearing that that is their intention. If the complainant(s) chose to be legally represented the chair will notify the other parties of that decision to enable them to have legal representation at the hearing should they so wish.

- 8.15 After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the independent person will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which they shall complete within seven days of the meeting or hearing or as soon as reasonably practicable. The independent person will write to the complainant(s) informing them of their decision and the reasons for it within seven days of reaching this decision. The independent person's findings and any recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the head teacher, governors and, where relevant, the person(s) about whom the complaint was made. The decision of this hearing will be final.
- 8.16 All concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the secretary of state or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Education Act, as amended, requests access to them; or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- 8.17 All pupils, parents and key stakeholders are always welcome to address their serious concerns on any matter to the head teacher. Written records of all serious complaints and their outcomes (including at what stage they were resolved) will be kept (for at least 3 years) and reviewed at least annually by the head teacher and the senior leadership team as appropriate to identify whether review or change in practice is needed, so that patterns can be identified and so that appropriate intervention is made in accordance with the National Minimum Standards, 2013.
- 8.18 Staff who deal with concerns and complaints at any level should always keep a member of SMT informed of the issues and the proposed solution. They should also pass a copy of the correspondence or their notes to the deputy head, for the consolidated record of complaints. Staff who have any questions about a complaint or the way forward should speak with the deputy head at the earliest opportunity.

9. Who else will listen?

- 9.1 Parents and pupils are advised that they may also take their concerns or complaints to Ofsted: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/complaints-ofsted-about-schools-guidance-for-parents>

Alternatively, parents and pupils are advised that they may contact the Local Authority:
Hounslow Children's Services
Civic Centre, 88 Lampton Road, Hounslow, TW3 4DN

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