St Richard's C of E Primary School

Complaints Procedure

This policy was last reviewed:	Spring 2026
This policy will be reviewed again:	Spring 2027
This policy will be reviewed by:	School Community Committee/GB
Statutory policy:	Yes
Source:	Governing Body

Complaints Procedure

Introduction

At St Richard's CE Primary School, we are committed to providing a safe, supportive, and high quality learning environment for all our pupils. We value open communication with parents, carers, and members of our school community, and we aim to address any concerns promptly and fairly.

Where concerns are raised the school intends for these to be dealt with:

- Fairly
- Openly
- Promptly
- Without Prejudice

This complaints procedure is designed to help you raise any concerns or complaints about the school in a structured and transparent way. It ensures that every concern is listened to, taken seriously, and resolved wherever possible

This complaints procedure applies only to matters that relate directly to the school and to incidents or issues that have taken place on school premises or during school -organised activities. The school is not able to investigate or become involved in matters that occur outside of the school, including those that take place offsite, outside school hours, or on social media where the school has no direct involvement or responsibility.

Where appropriate, the school may offer guidance or sign post parents and carers to other relevant agencies or sources of support.

Most issues can often be resolved informally by speaking directly with your child's teacher or the relevant member of staff. However, if a concern cannot be resolved informally, this procedure outlines the formal steps you can take to ensure your complaint is investigated thoroughly and objectively.

Our goal is to work together to maintain a positive and respectful environment for all members of our school community while ensuring that every complaint is handled in a timely and professional manner.

In order to do this, the governing body has approved the following procedure which explains what you should do if you have any concerns about the school. All members of staff will be familiar with the procedure and will be able to assist you.

Which procedure do I need?

Sometimes, when concerns are more specific, there are alternative and more appropriate policies for dealing with them. The following list details specific topics of complaints, and the correct policy to refer to. You can access these policies on the school website or ask for a copy from the main school reception.

- Pupil admissions; please see the school's admissions policy or contact London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Admissions department.
- Pupil exclusions; please see the school's behaviour policy.
- Staff grievance, capability or disciplinary; these are covered by the school's documents on disciplinary grievance and capabilities procedures
- Where the complaint concerns a third party used by the school; please complain directly to the third party themselves.
- Anonymous complaints – please refer to the whistleblowing policy.
- Subject Access Requests and Freedom of Information Requests – please see the school's Data Protection and Freedom of Information policy

Raising concerns

Most concerns can be resolved without the need to follow the formal complaints procedure. If you have a concern about any aspect of the school, your child's education, or the wellbeing, you should raise it directly with the child's class teacher, either by phone, or email or in person. In many cases, the teacher will be able to address your concern immediately or arrange a meeting to discuss the matter further.

All concerns will be treated confidentially. Staff members may need to take notes if they believe the matter could require further action or may arise again in the future. These notes will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Should the concern progress to a formal complaint, these notes may be used as part of any subsequent investigation.

Safeguarding

Wherever a complaint indicates that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, the school is under a duty to report this immediately to the local authority. Any action taken will be in accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding policy available on the school website.

Social Media

To ensure that complaints are resolved as quickly, fairly and effectively as possible, St Richard's School requests that complainants are not discussed publicly on social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formally Twitter) or similar forums.

All complaints will be handled confidentially by the school, and we asked that complainants also respect this confidentiality while a concern or complaint is being addressed. Public

discussion of complaints can make it more difficult to resolve matters appropriately and make cause unnecessary distress to those involved.

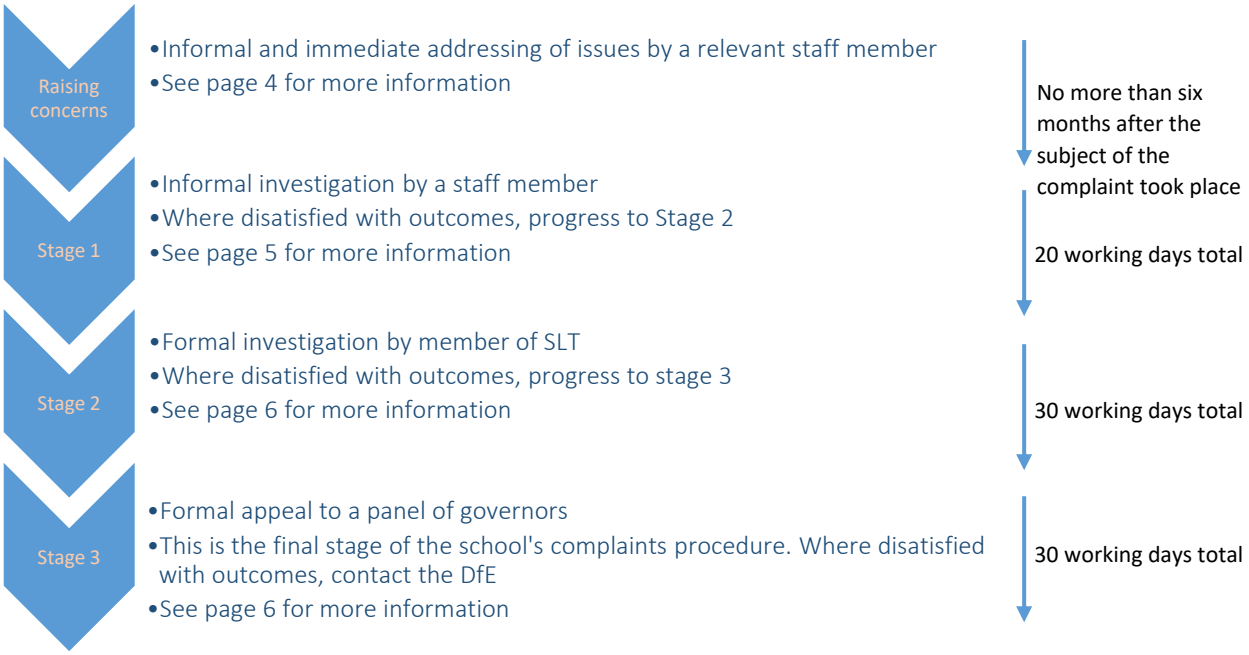
Complaints that result in staff capability or disciplinary

If at any formal stage of the complaint it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability proceedings are necessary in order to resolve the issue, the details of this action will remain confidential to the headteacher and/or the individual's line manager. The complainant is entitled to be informed that action is being taken and the eventual outcome of any such action, but they are not entitled to participate in the proceedings or receive any detail about them.

Procedure

If you need to raise an issue in the first instance, please do so with the relevant member of staff who will be happy to talk to you and seek to establish a solution. If you are not satisfied and with this response and believe the issue has not been resolved, please use the following procedure as detailed below.

Timeline



Timeframes

St Richard's School will endeavour to abide by timeframes stated under each stage but acknowledges that in some circumstances, this is not always possible due to the complexity of information needed to review a complaint or difficulties regarding individual's availability to deal with the complaint, for example. If it becomes apparent that it is not possible to complete any stage of the complaints procedure within a given timeframe, the individual responsible for handling the complaint will contact the complainant as soon as possible and come to an agreed timeframe that works for all parties involved.

St Richard's School reserves the right not to investigate complaints that have been made six months after the subject of the complaint took place, except in exceptional circumstances. What is meant by exceptional circumstances is where new evidence has come to light, where the complaint is of an especially serious matter or where there is reasonable justification for why the complainant has been unable to raise the complaint before this time. The Headteacher will review the situation and decide whether or not to enact the complaints procedure, informing the chair of governors of the decision.

Who should I approach?

- Educational matters: Class teacher
- Pastoral care: Class teacher or Pupil and Family Wellbeing Officer or Wellbeing support
- Disciplinary matters: Class teacher
- Financial/Administration matters: School Business Manager
- Complaint about a staff member's conduct: direct approach to the staff member themselves. Where this does not resolve the situation, the Headteacher should be approached
- Complaints about the headteacher or the governors: Where a complaint regards the headteacher, the complainant should first directly approach the headteacher in an attempt to resolve the issue informally. If the complainant is not satisfied with this outcome they should notify the clerk to the governors (see contact details at the end of the document). The Stage 2 process will then commence, but with the chair of governors as the individual responsible for the investigation rather than the member of SLT.

  Where a complaint regards a governor, the same process applies as for the headteacher. Where a complaint concerns the Chair of Governors, the individual should contact the clerk to the governors. Informal resolution will be sought, but where this fails, the complaints procedure at Stage 3 will take immediate effect. The vice chair or an independent investigator will mediate any proceedings.

Stages of the Complaint

Stage 1 – Informal investigation by a member of staff

Most concerns informally. Parents and carers are encouraged to raise concerns directly with their child's class teacher in the first instance, either in person, email or by telephone.

The teacher will aim to resolve the issue promptly or arrange a meeting to discuss the matter further.

Where, after raising a concern, the complainant the issue is not being resolved, or where the matter requires more detailed investigation than can be addressed formally, the complainant may proceed by making an informal complaint. In these circumstances, the following steps will be followed.

1. Complainant contacts the relevant member of staff here.

2. The complainant must explain in writing
    - An overview of the complaint so far
    - who has been involved
    - why the complaint remains unresolved
    - action they would like to be taken to put things right.

3. The member of staff will respond within 5 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) of having received the written complaint. They will explain what action they intend to take.

4. Where the complaint is about a member of staff or a school governor the member of staff will arrange an informal mediation meeting between the two parties to see if a resolution can be come to.

5. The member of staff will provide a written confirmation of the outcome of their investigation within 15 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) of having sent confirmation of the intended action. Where the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they are able to progress to stage 2 of the complaints process, and launch a formal written complaint.

6. The member of staff will make a record of the concern and the outcomes of the discussion, which will be held centrally for twelve months, in line with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018.

Stage 2 – formal investigation by a member of senior leadership team (SLT)

1. The complainant may submit a formal complaints form to the member of the SLT. See the end of the procedure for the SLT member's contact details and for a copy of this form.

2. The SLT member will respond in writing within 10 working days (excluding those that fall in the school holidays) of the date of receipt of the complaint to acknowledge receipt of the complaint and explain what action will be taken, giving clear timeframes.

3. A log of all correspondence in relation to the complaint will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Principles.

4. The SLT member will consider all relevant evidence; this may include but is not limited to:
    - a statement from the complainant
    - where relevant a statement from an individual who is the subject of the complaint
    - any previous correspondence regarding the complaint
    - any supporting documents in either case
    - an interview with anyone related to the complaint.

5. The SLT member may decide to have a meeting with the complainant (and where relevant, the subject of the complaint) if they feel that it would be appropriate for the investigation.

6. After considering the available evidence, the SLT member can:
   - Uphold the complaint and direct that certain action be taken to resolve it
   - Reject the complaint and provide the complainant with details of the stage three appeals process
   - Uphold the complaint in part: in other words, the SLT member may find one aspect of the complaint to be valid, but not another aspect. They may direct for certain action to be taken to resolve the aspect that they find in favour of the complainant.

7. The SLT member must inform the complainant of their decision in writing within 20 working days (excluding those that fall in the school holidays) of having issued written acknowledgement of the receipt of the complaint. They must explain clearly why they have come to the decision that they made. They must detail any agreed actions as a result of the complaint. Finally, they must provide the complainant with details of how to progress the complaint to stage three if they are not satisfied, providing them with the contact details of the clerk to the governors (see the end of the procedure for these).

Stage 3 – Appeal – review by a panel of the governing body.

If the complainant wishes to appeal a decision by the SLT member at stage 2 of the procedure, or they are not satisfied with the action that the SLT member took in relation to the complaint, the complainant is able to appeal this decision.

They must write to the clerk (see the contact details at the end of the procedure) as soon as possible after receiving notice of the headteacher's decision, briefly outlining the content of the complaint and requesting that a complaints appeal panel is convened.

The clerk will fulfil the role of organising the time and date of the appeal hearing, inviting all the attendees, collating all the relevant documentation and distributing these 5 days in advance of the meeting, recording the proceedings in the form of minutes, and circulating these and the outcome of the meeting.

The complainant must request an appeal panel within 4 weeks of receiving the headteacher decision or it will not be considered, except for in exceptional circumstances. On receipt of this written notification, the following steps will be followed:

1. The clerk will write to the complainant within five working days (not including the school holidays) to confirm receipt of the appeal request and detail further action to be taken.

2. The clerk will convene a panel of either three school governors or where possible two school governors and one independent member. All three panel members will have no prior knowledge of the content of the complaint.

3. The appeal hearing will take place within 20 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays) of receipt of the date of the confirmation letter from the clerk to the complainant, confirming the appeal.

4. In addition to the panel, the following parties will be invited, where applicable:
   - the complainant
   - the SLT member who dealt with the complaint at Stage 2
   - where the complaint regards a member of staff, the staff member who is the subject of the complaint.

The complainant is also able to bring a companion with them to the hearing if they wish. Where the subject of the complaint is a member of staff, that staff member is also able to bring a companion with them.

The companion will be a friend or a colleague. Neither party is able to bring legal representation with them. If after the hearing any party feels that legal action is necessary, please see the contact details at the end of the procedure.

5. If the attendance of any pupils is required at the hearing, parental permission will be sought if they are under the age of 18. Extra care will be taken to consider the vulnerability of children where they are present at a complaints hearing.

6. Where the complaint is about a governor, the complainant may request that the appeal is heard by an entirely independent panel. It is at the discretion of the governing board who will notify the clerk of their decision. Where an entirely independent panel is required, timescales may be affected while the school source appropriate individuals for the review.

7. The panel can make the following decisions:

   - Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
   - Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
   - Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
   - Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

8. All parties who attended the meeting will be informed in writing of the outcome of the appeal within 5 working days (excluding those which fall in the school holidays).

This is the final stage at which the school will consider the complaint. If the complainant remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the complaint further, please see the contact details at the end of the document. The school will not consider the complaint beyond this.

Unreasonable complaints

Where a complainant raises an issue that has already been dealt with via the school's complaints procedure, and that procedure has been exhausted, the school will not reinvestigate the complaint except in exceptional circumstances, for example where new evidence has come to light.

If a complainant persists in raising the same issue, the headteacher will write to them explaining that the matter has been dealt with fully in line with the school complaints procedure, and therefore the case is now closed. The complainant will be provided with the contact details of the Department for Education (see the end of this document) if they wish to take the matter further.

Unreasonable complaints include the following scenarios:

- The complainant refuses to co-operate with the school's relevant procedures.
- The complainant changes the basis of the complaint as the complaint progresses.
- The complainant seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Excessive demands are made on the time of staff and school governors and it is clearly intended to aggravate.
- The complainant acts in a way that is abusive or offensive.

The headteacher will use their discretion to choose not to investigate these complaints. Where they decide to take this course of action, they must inform the chair of governors that they have done so, explaining the nature of the complaint and why they have chosen not to investigate. If the chair deems it appropriate to, they can redirect the headteacher to investigate the complaint. The full complaints procedure will commence from stage one on this direction.

If the chair upholds the HT's decision not to look into the complaint and the complainant deems this decision to be so unreasonable that no other rational body in the same position would have made that decision, then the complainant may write to the Department for Education (see the contact details at the end of the document).

Contact details for external organisations if not satisfied with the outcomes of the complaints procedure in full.

If you have any queries regarding any aspect of the complaints procedure, please direct these to the clerk to the governors: Clare Blake – cblake@srsa.richmond.sch.uk

If the complainant feels that the governing board acted 'unreasonably' in the handling of the complaint, they can complain to the Department for Education after the complaint's procedure has been exhausted. Please note that unreasonable is used in a legal sense and means acting in a way that no reasonable school or authority would act in the same circumstances. https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

Ofsted will also consider complaints about schools.

Relevant legislation and guidance

The Equality Act 2010 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents
The Data Protection Act 2018 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents
The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/contents/made
Education Act 2002 *http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents*
The Department for Education *Best Practice advice for school complaints procedures*
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures

Formal Complaints Form

Name	
Name of pupil, year group and your relationship to them (where applicable)	
Contact address	
Contact telephone day	
Contact telephone mobile	
Contact email address	
Details of the complaint	
Action taken so far (including staff member who has dealt with it so far) or solutions offered	
The reason that this was not a satisfactory resolution for you	
What action would you like to be taken to resolve the problem?	

Signed:
Date:

Official use
Date received: Signed: