



Complaints Policy

Date	January 2024
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Approved By	Governing Body
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This policy applies to all stakeholders within Ridgeway School

Aim:

- To be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint
- To resolve a complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding
- To put the interests of the students above all else

Procedures:

- The first contact regarding a concern about a student shall be the class teacher
- The parent/carer should follow the escalation procedure outlined if satisfaction is not gained by the above course of action
- A committee of governors and the Headteacher considering a written complaint will not include any governor already involved in the process

Attached information for implementation of policy:

- The complaints process
- Social Media
- Data Protection
- Monitoring and review of complaints

Introduction

From time to time parents may naturally have concerns about an aspect of their child's education. Often those concerns will resolve themselves, but on occasions parents may feel that the issue will need the School's help to be resolved.

As partners in your children's education the School wishes to work with you in the resolution of problems and this policy is designed to show what steps may be taken. The process for the resolution of a concern is described in detail below.

Policy – This policy is compliant with Section 29 of the Education Act 2002.

1 The complaints process

- 1.1 On most occasions complaints can be resolved immediately by speaking to your child's class teacher. It may be necessary for you to make an appointment at a time, which is convenient to both of you. Where you feel that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the form teacher, or that your concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, you should make an appointment to discuss it with the Headteacher. The complaint will be taken very seriously and investigated thoroughly. Most complaints are normally resolved at this stage. However, if the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction stage 1.3 should be followed.
- 1.2 Should you have a complaint about the Headteacher, you 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 contact the Chair of Governors, who will investigate it. The Chair will do all he/she can to resolve the issue through dialogue with the school, but if you are unhappy with the outcome, you can make a formal complaint, as detailed below.
- 1.3 Only if an informal complaint fails to resolve the matter should a formal complaint be made to the Governing Body. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it to date. You should send this written complaint (See Appendix 1 to the Chair of Governors. (See Appendix 2)

- 1.4 The committee of three governors and the Headteacher will consider all written complaints within two weeks of receipt. A meeting with the complainant will be arranged to discuss the problem within a further two weeks. The complainant will be given at least seven days' notice of the meeting.
- 1.5 After hearing all the evidence, the governors will decide on a course of action and inform you in writing. The outcome of the review will:
- 1.5.1 Uphold the complaint, the Panel will give reasons and actions to be taken
 - 1.5.2 Partially uphold the complaint and explain the action to be taken
 - 1.5.3 Dismiss the complaint, with the Panel giving reasons
 - 1.5.4 Cannot uphold the complaint due to lack of evidence
- 1.6 If you consider that the Governing Body has not acted properly in carrying out its investigation into your complaint you have the right to complain to the Local Authority (LA) as it has a responsibility to ensure that Governing Bodies act properly. The LA does not have the power to instruct the Governing Body to reverse its decision but will want to satisfy itself that the Governing Body has conducted the investigation fairly.

In the unlikely event that you will need to complain to the LA about the Governing Body's handling of the complaint please write to the Director of Children's Services. (See Appendix 2). Please note that the LA can only act when each step of the school's complaints procedure has been followed.

If you think that your school's Governing Body or your LA is acting "unreasonably" you can write to the Secretary of State for Education. Complaints to the Secretary of State are handled by the government's Department for Education (DfE). (www.education.gov.uk)

- 1.7 Serial or Persistent Complaints – Every reasonable effort will be made to address the complainant's needs. However, the Chair of Governors will close a complaint if it is deemed to be persistent. This will happen if it is clear there is insufficient evidence to pursue the case, but a complainant is persistently raising the same issue. Equally this may happen if a complaint has been investigated and no justification for the complaint is found.
- 1.8 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 LA. Any action taken will be in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy which is available on the school website.

2. Social Media

In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible we request that the complainants do not discuss complaints publicly via social media such as Facebook and X. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved and we expect complainants to observe confidentiality also.

3. Data Protection

Personal information and a log of all correspondence in relation to the complaint will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Principles.

4. Monitoring and review

4.1 The governors monitor the complaints procedure in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher logs all complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis.

- 4.2 Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents/carers so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.
- 4.3 This policy will be reviewed and updated, if required, every two years.

Appendix 1:
Complaint Form

Please complete and return to Sam Bloomer, Operations Manager at office@ridgeway.beds.sch.uk who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your Name:
Pupil's Name (if relevant)
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:
Date:
Official Use:
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

Appendix 2:

Contact details:

Chair of Governors
 C/o Ridgeway School
 Hill Rise
 Kempston
 Bedford
 MK42 7EB
 Tele: 01234 402402
 Email: b.creasegov@ridgeway.bedssch.co.uk

Director of Children's Services
 Bedford Borough Council
 Borough Hall
 Cauldwell Street
 Bedford
 MK42 9AP
 Tele: 01234 267422

Appendix 3: (Provided by the DfE document ‘Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2016 for Maintained schools.

Complaints not in scope of a procedure

A complaints procedure should cover all complaints about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides with the exceptions listed below, for which there are separate (statutory) procedures.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) • School re-organisation proposals • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Concerns should be raised direct with local authorities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of children from school 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	<p>Schools have an internal whistleblowing procedure for their employees and voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to:</p> <p>WBHL, Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD.</p> <p>The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures 	<p>These matters will invoke the school’s internal grievance procedures. Complainants will not be informed of the outcome of any investigation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities. 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. They should be contacted direct.</p>

Informal concern is raised with staff or Headteacher and a resolution is sorted.

No



Is the complainant satisfied with the resolution?



Yes



Stage 1

A formal complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. Assistance with completing forms will be provided if required.



The Headteacher will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five school days.



Investigator will establish what has happened, take notes at meetings, identify solutions and outcomes and feed these back to all parties.



No



Is the complainant satisfied with the resolution?



Yes



Stage 2

If the complainant is not satisfied that the complaint has been addressed properly they may request that the Governing Board reviews the handling of the complaint within 7 school days of receiving the written conclusion of the previous investigation. This will normally be made to the Chair of Governors unless the complaint is about the Chair.



The complaint will then be reviewed by the Governing Board's Complaints Panel. The Panel will meet within 21 days of receiving the request to review the complaint.



The outcome of the review will either:

- Uphold the complaint, the Panel will give reasons and actions to be taken.
- Partially uphold the complaint and explain action to be taken.
- Dismiss the complaint, with the Panel giving reasons.
- Be unable to uphold the complaint due to lack of evidence.

THIS ENDS THE LOCAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE.



No



Is the complainant satisfied with the resolution?



Yes



The complainant may write to the Secretary of State if they are not satisfied with the outcome. (Maintained schools)