



LANCASTER UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MATHEMATICS

Lancaster University

School of Mathematics

Complaints Procedure



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1.0 Purpose and Aims of This Procedure

Trust policy is to work in partnership with parents, students and the wider community. “Parent” includes any person who has parental responsibility for the student or who has care of the student. Trust policies are based on the belief that co-operation and a sense of joint purpose between staff, parents, students and the Trust will assist in ensuring open and positive relationships. From time to time, however, parents, students or members of the public may express concern or make a complaint, either orally or in writing, about some aspect of the conduct/operation of the Trust or a member of staff.

The purpose of this procedure is:

- To provide a framework and process within which the Trust handles complaints
- To set out a common appeals process when a complaint cannot be resolved to the complainant’s satisfaction in the first instance
- To promote good practice in the handling of complaints

The aims of the procedure are to ensure that:

- It is as simple and straightforward as possible to make a complaint
- Complaints are treated confidentially, as far as possible
- Complaints are treated seriously and in a courteous and efficient manner
- The complainant is kept informed of the progress of the complaint investigation
- The complainant is advised how to take a complaint further if they remain dissatisfied
- Trust staff recognise that complaints are an important and positive means of learning how to improve the quality of services provided

Use of the procedure does not affect a person’s right to refer a complaint externally. This may be appropriate when the complaints procedure has been exhausted.



2.0 Definition of a Complaint

A complaint can be an expression of dissatisfaction about matters such as:

- An unsatisfactory level or quality of service
- The delivery, or non-delivery, of curriculum
- A failure to provide information or give correct information
- A failure to follow the Trust's agreed policies and procedures
- The absence of proper procedures
- The behaviour of members of staff or contractors employed by the Trust
- A failure to consider all relevant information in coming to a decision

Concerns or complaints relating to any of the following are not covered by these procedures, as separate procedures apply.

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Freedom of Information
- Student Exclusions
- School Admissions
- Sex and Relationship Education
- Staff Discipline, Conduct and Grievance
- Whistleblowing by an employee

Complaints can be made by anyone receiving or seeking a service from the Trust. A person may make a complaint on behalf of someone else but only with that person's written consent.

We will not usually respond to complaints made about incidents that have happened six months previously or earlier.



3.0 Complaints Procedure

In dealing with complaints the Rigby Education Trust will take account of its public sector equality duty and have due regard for the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

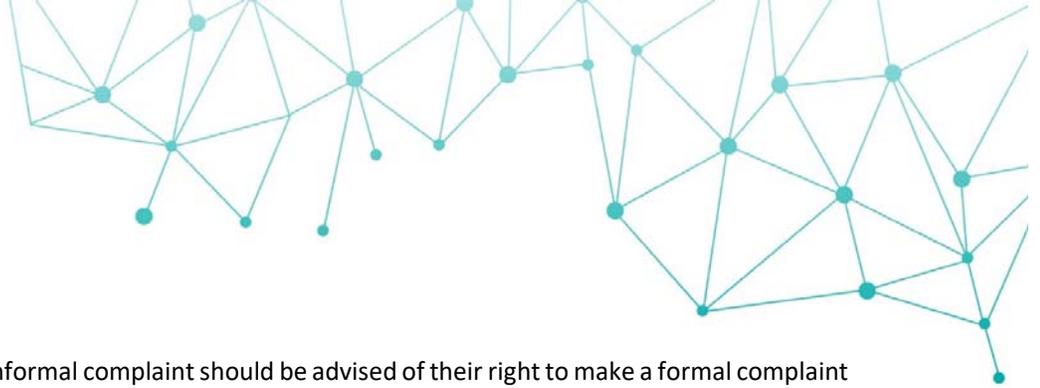
There are two stages to the procedure:

- Informal complaints should be resolved quickly and informally. All complaints should be logged by a member of staff and passed to the Head of School.
- Where complaints cannot be resolved straight away, or where a person is still dissatisfied following an informal complaint, these will be formally investigated through the Trust's complaints procedure and a response made in writing.
- If they continue to be dissatisfied following the formal procedure, an appeal for further investigation will be considered and, when appropriate, will be carried out by an impartial panel convened by the Board of Trustees.

Informal Complaints

The complainant is encouraged to speak to the member of staff concerned at the first opportunity to try and resolve the issue as quickly as possible. It may be necessary to make an appointment at a time that is convenient for both parties. It is recommended that the staff member is informed by the complainant of what the meeting is about beforehand so that they can make further enquiries before the meeting.

The complainant should be advised that further enquiries will be carried out and a response made as soon as possible. Any member of staff receiving an informal complaint should log it and pass it to the Head of School. Any complaint about the Head of School should be passed to the Executive Principal. In any case where the complaint involves both the Head of School and the Executive Principal, details of the complaint shall be passed to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.



Anyone making an informal complaint should be advised of their right to make a formal complaint if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the Trust's initial investigations.

The informal stage will not be used if the allegations made refer to:

- Criminal activity which may require the involvement of the police
- Financial or accounting irregularities
- Safeguarding issues

Formal Complaints

Stage 1

All formal complaints must be made in writing, ideally using the format set out in Section 12, or in any other written format, and will be formally investigated:

- When an informal complaint cannot be resolved
- As a result of the complainant's continued dissatisfaction after informal procedure investigations
- All written complaints

A formal complaint must be made in writing and addressed to the Head of School. The Head of School may delegate the investigation to a senior staff member, and this will be the decision of the Head of School. In the case of a complaint involving the Head of School the written complaint should be addressed to the Executive Principal. The staff member dealing with the investigation of the complaint will:

- Acknowledge the complaint by letter or in person
- Record details of the complaint and ensure that it is progressed within set timescales

Formal complaints should be acknowledged in writing within five working days of their receipt.

Any responses to requests for information should be returned to the appropriate member of staff within five working days.



A written reply will be sent to the complainant by the Head of School within ten working days of the receipt of the complaint, giving a full response to the issues raised.

If the complaint is a complex one and a full response is not possible within the ten day deadline, the complainant will be sent a letter within this timescale informing them of the delay, the reasons for this and an anticipated response date.

The Head of School will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the Head of School, Executive Principal or a member of the Trust Board (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled Trustee will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the Head of School, Executive Principal or member of the Trust Board must be addressed to Governance Professional for the Board of Trustees who will then forward the complaint on to the Chair of the Trust Board. Once received by the Chair of the Board of Trustees, a response to the complaint will be sent within fifteen working days.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2, where it will be investigated by the Executive Principal. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made directly to the Executive Principal, via the school office, within seven school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response. Only in the event that the complaint is about the Executive Principal, should the request to escalate be directed to the Governance Professional. In this rare circumstance, the Governance Professional will convene a panel of Trustees and follow the same stage 2 structure set out below".

The Executive Principal will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within five school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.



The Executive Principal will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If it is decided that a meeting will be held, the Executive Principal will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within fifteen school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Executive Principal will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Executive Principal will decide when to hold a meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence based on written submissions from both parties.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, the Trust does not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

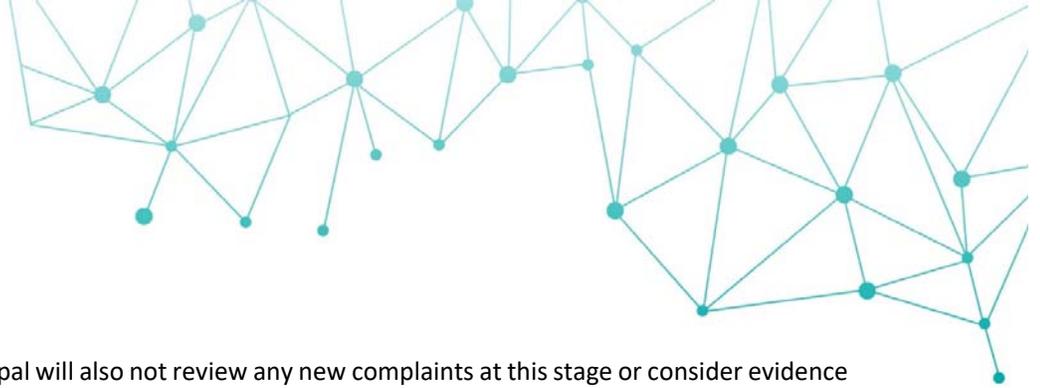
Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least five school days before the meeting, the Executive Principal will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted at least ten school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least five school days before the date of the meeting. The Executive Principal will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.



The Executive Principal will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The Executive Principal will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. They can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the Executive Principal will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Executive Principal will provide the complainant, the school senior leadership team and the Board of Trustees with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within five school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the Trust.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire Board of Trustees or
- the majority of the Board of Trustees

Stage 2 will be heard by an Appeals Panel of independent governors/Trustees, and this will be arranged by the Governance Professional.



The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school and/or Board of Trustees will take to resolve the complaint.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the Board of Trustees did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can raise a new complaint about the Executive Principal or contact the Department for Education (DfE) after they have completed Stage 2.

The DfE, and their agencies, will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by the Board of Trustees. They will consider whether the Trust has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at:

https://form.education.gov.uk/en/AchieveForms/?form_uri=sandbox-publish://AF-Process-f1453496-7d8a-463f-9f33-1da2ac47ed76/AF-Stage-1e64d4cc-25fb-499a-a8d7-74e98203ac00/definition.json&redirectlink=%2Fen&cancelRedirectLink=%2Fen

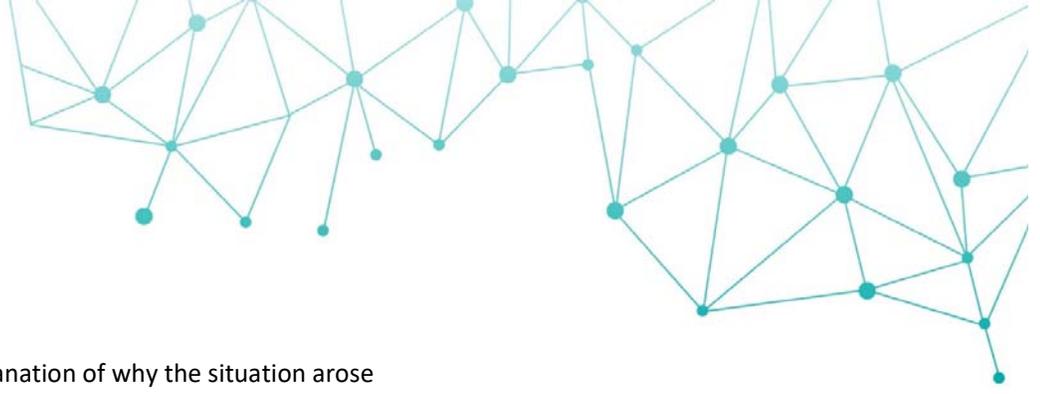
4.0 Anonymous Complaints

On receiving an anonymous complaint, the Head of School will determine whether or not any action needs to be taken. Clearly an acknowledgement cannot be sent but there may be a need to carry out an investigation or a need just to log the complaint. Staff should be sensitive to the possible reasons why a complainant has chosen to remain anonymous.

Student complainants may also go to Achievement Tutors who will act as an advocate if requested and help to bring the complaint to Head of School for action.

5.0 Complaints Upheld

When a complaint has been upheld, the response must be in writing and must contain the following standard information:



- A brief explanation of why the situation arose
- A full apology
- Brief details of the corrective action to be taken, and the time limits within which it will be completed.
- Details of who to contact if the complainant is dissatisfied with the response and wish to appeal against it (if appropriate)
- Where a complaint has revealed a fault in the internal systems/procedures of the Trust, then these will be examined to help ensure that similar complaints do not recur. Where appropriate the complainant will be informed of any changes made as a result of their complaint.

6.0 Unreasonable Complaints

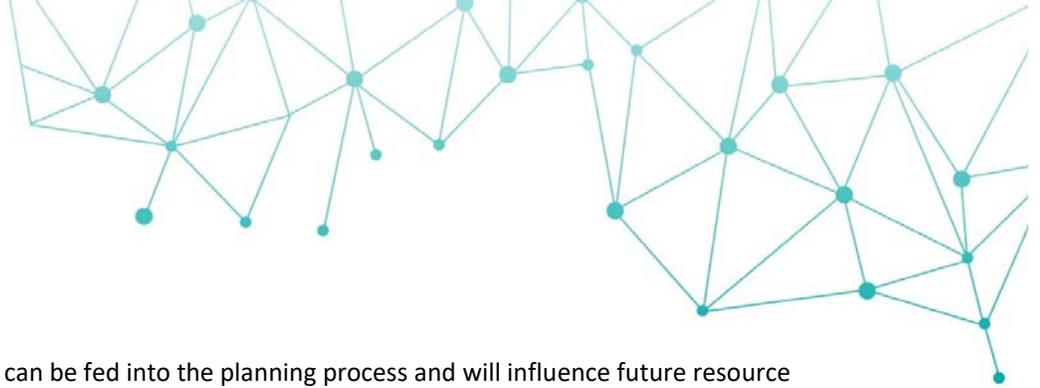
The Trust will deal with complaints fairly and impartially but will not allow the occurrence of unacceptable behaviour from any complainant that the Trust regards as:

- Abusive
- Offensive
- Threatening
- Behaviour deemed to be harassment
- Repeated complaints that previous investigations have found to be unsubstantiated or are felt to have been addressed

7.0 Monitoring, Review and Analysis of Complaints

To provide real benefits from the complaints procedure, it is essential that all complaints received are monitored, reviewed and analysed. This will help to ensure that:

- Action can be taken to prevent the recurrence of the problem, through changes to policies, procedures and practices



- Information can be fed into the planning process and will influence future resource allocation and service provision
- Performance can be reviewed by the Board of Trustees
- Provide a better service for students and parents/guardians

8.0 Trust Board Involvement

Reports will be produced by the Head of School and will be given to the Senior Leadership Team regularly for discussion and review. The Head of School will monitor trends and identify areas of concern. Reports will be given to Trustees on an annual basis.

The Trust is committed to equality in accordance with current legislation.

If you have any queries or need further information or guidance on how to deal with complaints, please contact the Head of School.

This policy will be reviewed every two years.



9.0 Complaint Form

Please complete and return to (insert name), Head of School who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your Name:
Student Name (if relevant):
Your relationship with the student (if relevant);
Address:
Postcode: Day time telephone number: Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.



What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.



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