

Complaints Policy

Audience:	Parents REAch2 Staff Local Governing Bodies Trustees
Ratified:	REAch2 Trust Board February 2026
Other related policies:	Grievance Policy Exclusion Policy Whistleblowing Policy Safeguarding Policy
Policy owner:	Gill Ellyard, Director of Transformation
Review:	Every 3 years (February 2029)



Leadership

Finding the leader in all of us.



Inclusion

Realising the greatness in our difference.



Learning

Creating exceptional opportunities for learning.



Enjoyment

Loving what we do.



Inspiration

Feeling the power of the possible.



Integrity

Being courageously true to our purpose.



Responsibility

Unwavering commitment to seeing things through.

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We know that sometimes there are issues which parents feel are not resolved simply by a short conversation with a class teacher. We also acknowledge that complaints need to be resolved so that the relationship between parents and school is repaired and so that future steps can be identified in the best interests of the child. Our policy is designed to reach resolution or agreement.

Philosophy

Our philosophy is that complaints are ideally resolved through conversation, discussion and negotiation where possible and as recommended by the DfE. If parents feel that they are not satisfied with an initial response from the school, they can ask for their complaint to be investigated by a senior member of staff and, finally, to be reviewed by a panel of governors who are independent of the day-to-day management of the school. We also recognise that, at any stage, mediation can help to resolve the situation.

Our policy follows the Department for Education model policy in having 3 stages: informal, investigation, review. This document provides a brief overview of how the policy works and guides parents, school and central team staff towards effective resolution. It should be used in conjunction with the procedural checklists for each stage and read in context with policies such as data protection, safeguarding and school-based policies such as behaviour.

We ask that all parties involved in a complaint ensure they understand the stages of the process, communicate respectfully and abide by decisions made. We also ask that the complaint is kept as confidential as possible and that details are not shared on social media.

How we will work

We have outlined below the stages that are part of the Department for Education guidance. We have included timeframes but do recognise that sometimes these timeframes are not practical. This may be in situations where staff involved are absent from work or where the situation is complex and involves us having to work across several teams in the Trust. We will be transparent about when this is happening, as much as we can.

We ask that parents engage with the process respectfully, ensuring that they provide information to help reach a resolution. We believe that completing a complaints form, which can be found on the school website or in appendix 4 to this policy, helps everyone understand the nature of the complaint and also what might help form a resolution. We can provide support in completing the form, with accessible versions or a note taker if this will ensure that information is clear at an early stage.

We ask that complainants bring their complaint within two months of an incident so that we can attempt to provide a resolution that will benefit everyone, including any children. The exception to this is where there is a safeguarding complaint, where we will seek expert advice from the Trust safeguarding lead and investigate if necessary.

There are certain areas or issues which this policy cannot be used to manage. This includes, for example, issues with admissions to one of our schools. Please see appendix 4 for a current list of these issues and how to go about resolving them.

This policy manages how complaints about school issues are managed. To complain about an issue with the wider Trust, please email complaints@reach2.org with an outline of your complaint and this will be considered by the Complaints Manager. The stages used to process a complaint about wider Trust provision or staff will follow the stages outlined below.

Informal (stage 1) – takes a maximum of 10 school days to complete

This stage is designed to resolve a situation as swiftly as possible, through discussion with staff involved, parents and possibly expert advisors drawn from the rest of the staff in school or from the shared services teams within the Trust (e.g. the SENDCo in school, a member of the Trust safeguarding team).

Who can be involved?

The complainant (e.g. parent), a member of staff from the school (e.g. class teacher, senior leader, SENDCo, DSL). At this stage, the complaint does not have to involve the head teacher and generally should not involve governors.

How is the complaint resolved?

Through conversation. Parties should sit down together and talk through both sides of the complaint/concern. Both sides should outline what their ideal solution is and thought should be given to whether these solutions are appropriate, practical and timely. Solutions should be within the scope of school policies. Written confirmation should be given to the person with the complaint about the resolution.

What are the next steps?

If a resolution has been identified, actions/next steps can be agreed and monitored to ensure the complaint doesn't arise again.

If the complaint has not been resolved, the person complaining can choose to move on to the next stage and ask for an investigation.

For information on the processes involved in informal complaints, please go to Appendix 1: stage 1

Investigation (stage 2) – takes a maximum of 15 school days to complete

This stage is designed to allow an investigator to dig into the circumstances around the complaint, consider the situation from both sides and weigh up whether the complaint is valid or not. It can involve talking to different people, reading documents or even watching CCTV.

Who can be involved?

If a complaint is about a member of staff in a school, or about something that should or shouldn't have happened, then the complaint will be investigated by a member of the senior leadership team. If the complaint is about the head teacher, the complaint can be investigated by their line manager (Deputy Director of Education) or a member of the central team of the Trust.

How is the complaint resolved?

The investigation process should cover as much evidence as possible, whether this is verbal (interviews, staff voice, pupil voice) or written. The investigator will decide, on the balance of probability, whether the complaint is valid but could also decide that some elements are valid and other parts not.

What are the next steps?

The investigator will put their findings in writing, with a summary of the steps taken, a decision and a brief outline of their reasons. Investigators can also make recommendations which either or both sides should act on to make positive steps forward. Both the person complaining and the school will receive a copy of the outcome letter. If the complaint has still not been resolved, the person complaining can choose to move on to the next stage, which is to ask a panel of governors to review whether the complaint has been handled according to this policy and usual procedures. A panel will also consider whether each side has had a fair hearing.

For information on the processes involved in investigations, please go to Appendix 2: stage 2

Review (stage 3) – takes a maximum of 25 school days to complete

This stage is designed to ensure that the school and/or Trust has done as much as possible to deal with the complaint fairly and according to policy. It should ensure that equalities issues have been considered and whether actions recommended were manageable and appropriate in attempting to resolve the complaint.

The review stage does not offer the chance to re-investigate the complaint and will generally only use evidence already discovered at stage 2. However, if something substantial comes to light during the preparation of the panel, this can be added to the evidence.

We recognise that both sides should be given the opportunity to talk through their complaint and response, but we also recognise that sometimes, the desired outcome cannot be delivered. In this circumstance the panel will work towards finding recommendations that can be agreed by both sides and monitored to ensure that the circumstances that caused the complaint do not arise again.

Who can be involved?

The panel that hears the evidence will consist of 3 governors – usually two from the school concerned and 1 from another school. The governors will call a meeting with the person who has complained and will also ask a representative of the school to attend. A clerk will take minutes of the meeting.

The panel meeting will usually be held on Zoom or Teams but a complainant can ask for the panel to be held in person. The school will help with access to technology if support is needed.

How is the complaint resolved?

The panel provide an outcome based on the evidence presented in a “pack” which contains information from the school and complainant about activities completed up to this point to resolve the situation. The panel also listen to a summary from each side, in the meeting and can ask questions to clarify points. They then spend time discussing all points and come to a conclusion.

What are the next steps?

The panel put together a letter which outlines a summary of their discussion, an outcome or decision and a short summary of their reasons for reaching the decision. The panel can also make recommendations about steps to ensure that the situation is resolved.

For information on the processes involved in panels, please go to Appendix 3: stage

What to do if you feel the complaint has not been resolved

The stages outlined above should provide opportunity for most complaints to be resolved within the space of a term. However, you may feel that the school has not resolved the situation in a satisfactory way and you wish to take further action. In this case, you must go to:

[Complain about a school to the Department for Education - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-a-school)

What happens when complaints become challenging?

Sometimes, situations can become challenging, and it becomes difficult to complete our usual complaints process. In this case, we will be transparent about how we will proceed but we will continue to work towards an effective resolution which is manageable for the school and the complainant.

Where communication becomes challenging, for example, with emails being sent to multiple agencies, repeated emails being sent or expectations that complaints are resolved within too short a timeframe, we will put a plan in place that ensures that the complaint can still be heard but communication is steered through one channel.

Panel challenges

We reserve the right to conduct the panel hearing as an evidence-based meeting without input from school or the complainant, in order to provide a resolution, if:

- The complainant’s children have left the school
- The complainant’s behaviour means that they are not welcomed on to the school premises.

Vexatious complaints

Occasionally, we may need to label a complaint vexatious. This might be where the complainant:

- Brings a complaint back to the school, once the process has been completed (i.e. up to stage 3) and a resolution offered and where it is substantially the same as the one just addressed
- Generates abusive or threatening materials or engages in behaviour which is threatening, abusive or aggressive towards staff or other pupils.

In these cases, we reserve the right to either manage the complaint with no further input from the complainant or not to progress the complaint any further.

Complaints campaigns

For the purposes of this policy, “**complaints campaigns**” are where the school/Trust receives large volumes of complaints that are all based on the same subject.

Where the school/Trust becomes the subject of a complaints campaign from complainants who are not connected with the school/Trust, a standard, single response will be published on the school’s/Trust’s website. If the school/Trust receives a large number of complaints about the same subject from complainants who are connected to the school/Trust, e.g. parents, each complainant will receive an individual response.

If complainants remain dissatisfied with the school’s/Trust’s response, they will be directed to the DfE.

APPENDIX 1

Process for stage 1 complaints

Timeframe: no fixed timescale but resolution to be notified within 15 school days where possible

Who is involved: the complainant; staff who receive complaint e.g. class teacher, office co-ordinator; possibly the head teacher

It is key to remember that the vast majority of complaints can and should be solved at an early stage through discussion between the person who feels they have a complaint and the school. Often the first person who can help is the class teacher.

There is not one set process for dealing with stage 1 complaints, however there are some general rules that help ensure complaints can be resolved:

- Parent brings a complaint/concern to the school
- If it can be resolved by a conversation with a member of staff, as soon as possible, this should be done
- Any conversation should be recorded briefly on school records (e.g. Arbor/CPOMS/myConcern)
- Any resolution should be recorded and copied to anyone involved in the resolution and particularly the parent.
- Ensure that all agreed actions are followed up. Ideally this should be by the person who dealt with the complaint but can be someone else, as long as this is recorded.

APPENDIX 2

Stage 2 process for complaints

Timeframe: acknowledgement of request within 3 school days, investigation completed and written outcome distributed within 15 school days

Who is involved: the complainant; staff who receive complaint e.g. class teacher, office co-ordinator; usually the head teacher or a governor to investigate; REAch2 complaints manager, Deputy Director of Education; possibly staff from within Trust teams

A complaint addressed at stage 2 either

- follows on from stage 1 and is a result of a complainant not satisfied with the resolution at stage 1 or the issue is repeating

OR

- the complaint is serious in nature or is about the head teacher.

Stage 2 involves an investigation, which must be recorded and which results in a formal written outcome.

The stages are:

- complaint formally acknowledged to the complainant within 3 school days
- next steps outlined and sent to complainant
- investigation begins; this can include:
 - speaking to the complainant, taking notes of conversation
 - examining records/documents, such as class records, emails and letters, action plans
 - examining witness statements, if appropriate
 - talking to staff involved
- investigator to weigh up evidence and come to conclusion, can also include recommendations for follow up actions
- written outcome letter generated
- letter sent to complainant and head teacher within 15 school days of receipt of complaint

APPENDIX 3

Stage 3 process for complaints

Timeframe: acknowledgement of request within 3 school days, panel within 25 school days, written outcome within 15 school days

Who is involved: the complainant; complaint investigator; head teacher; 3 governors (generally 2 from school one from other LGB); panel clerk; Trust complaints manager; Governance Team members

The stage 3 process is designed to review whether the process up til this point has been carried out fairly and whether the outcome at stage 2 was appropriate and proportionate to the complaint. *It is not designed to reinvestigate the complaint.*

A stage 3 complaint follows on from a stage 2 resolution and is conducted at the request of the complainant. A complaint cannot proceed directly to a stage 3 panel as there must be evidence of an investigation to consider whether the complaint has been dealt with.

The stages of the complaint panel are:

- Complainant's request acknowledged
- School is responsible for forming a panel of 3 governors, supported by a clerk
- The head teacher and investigator of the complaint would be required to attend the panel
- The complainant would be required to attend the panel
- Panels should be held remotely to ensure that everyone can access the meeting
- Panel notification is sent out with the evidence pack for everyone who will be attending]
- Panel held, with notes generated and outcome decided
- A written outcome is generated by the chair of the panel and sent within 15 school days of the panel hearing.

REAch2 Complaints Policy: Complaints not in the scope of the policy

Our policy is intended to enable the effective resolution of complaints by parents. However, there are a number of areas where specific processes or procedures are required to be followed because the complaint falls into specific areas of legislation. These are listed in the table below:

Admissions to schools	Covered by the REAch2 Admissions Policy and appeals process
Statutory assessments of special educational needs	Should be raised directly with your local authority
Matters likely to require a child protection investigation	These should be handled under the school safeguarding policy and in accordance with all relevant statutory guidance. Approach the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or your local authority designated officer (LADO)
Exclusions or suspensions	You can get guidance about raising concerns around exclusions or suspensions in the School Discipline and Exclusions guidance .
Whistleblowing	The Trust has an internal Whistleblowing Policy for all our employees and volunteers (including any temporary staff or contractors). You can also go directly to the Department for Education and use their contact form
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff concerning issues about their employment or circumstances at the school/Trust should be dealt with using the REAch2 Staff Grievance policy, available on the Trust intranet.
Complaints about services provided by other supplier who may use school premises or facilities	You should direct complainants to follow the external provider's own complaints procedure for those hiring the academy facilities.
Withdrawal from the curriculum	Parents and carers can withdraw their child from any aspect of Religious Education (RE), including the Daily Act of Collective Worship (DACW). They do not have to explain why. If parents or carers are not satisfied with the handling of a request to withdraw their child from RE or the DACW, you should advise them to follow your complaints procedure. The right of withdrawal does not apply to other areas of the curriculum where religious matters may be spontaneously raised by pupils or arise in other subjects such as history or citizenship.