

Reigate Grammar School Group

Parents Complaints Procedure

Including Early Years Foundation Stage

Policy Author:	Helena Briggs, Group Bursar
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1. Purpose and Scope

This Complaints Procedure applies to parents of pupils at any of the schools in the RGS Group in the UK (together and individually “the School”).

The School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with the process set out in this Complaints Procedure.

This Complaints Procedure is made available to all parents of pupils and prospective pupils on the School’s websites and the School will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and contains the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the School will also make available, on request to the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Although this Complaints Procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils for their reference, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils and in relation to matters concerning a child who is a registered pupil at the school at the time the complaint was raised.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School.

The School will be mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in the application of this policy.

“Parent(s)” means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil about whom the complaint relates.

2. What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is not simply a concern, worry or difficulty with some part of educational arrangements or provision of a manner that can usually be resolved with some reasonable discussion and response from the school. That would be the normal process of the school and parents working in partnership to find a good route through school for a child. A complaint is a significant expression of dissatisfaction with a significant real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School, where such matter is more significant than can reasonably be addressed with the normal process of the school and family working together to resolve misunderstanding. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly and the level of that concern exceeds the normal level of feedback and dialogue between parents and the School, which can usually be resolved with some reasonable discussion and response from the school.

Please state your problem or complaint courteously: it does not help staff to resolve issues if intemperate, inappropriate or aggressive language is used (either in writing or in person) or if manner, content or tone of the complaint is otherwise unreasonable or inappropriate. Parents are reminded of the behavioural expectations that the School has in respect of everyone in the School community including parents and the Parent Code of Conduct, with which all parents are expected to comply, provides some further guidance on this.

The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

3. Safeguarding concerns

If you have a concern that relates to the safety or welfare of a child/ren then please see the applicable school's Safeguarding Policy, which can be found on the School's websites.

We hope that your son's or daughter's career at the School will proceed without any problems. However, if you have a complaint, please follow this Procedure.

4. The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- 1.1 It is hoped that most complaints or concerns can be resolved quickly and informally. Often there is a misunderstanding which can be easily resolved. If not, we will give you a chance to explain your complaint or concern and will try to resolve it. Of course, this does not mean that in every case we will come round to your point of view, but it will help both you and the School to understand both sides of the question. It may also help to prevent a similar problem arising again.
- 1.2 The person best placed to deal with any concern or complaint will usually be your child's Form Tutor however, you may wish to contact the relevant senior member of staff. Parental concerns or complaints regarding special educational needs should be directed to the SENCO in the first instance. If you are not sure who to contact, please contact the School Office. Complaints relating to Early Years Foundation Stage should be directed to the Head of Lower School/Head of Early Years via the School Office. The staff member the School considers best placed to respond to your complaint (the relevant staff member) may need to consult with other members of staff and/or make some enquiries in respect of your complaint.
- 1.3 If you wish to discuss the problem face to face, if appropriate, the relevant member of staff may be able to see you before or after school to discuss your concern. Please contact them by email or via the School Office in advance to make an appointment. Please do not turn up at School and expect to see someone, as they may not be available. A meeting to discuss your complaint will usually be arranged within one working week, during term time.
- 1.4 The relevant member of staff will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received and take notes of any meetings to discuss your complaint. These records will be kept for future reference.
- 1.5 If the concern, worry or difficulty with some part of the educational arrangements or provision of a matter is resolved with some reasonable discussion and response from the school, that would be the normal process of the school and parents working in partnership to find a good route through school for a child. That would not be recorded as a formal complaint. If the concern is not easily and reasonably resolved or if you have a complaint which you feel cannot be dealt with informally under Stage 1, you will be advised to proceed to Stage 2 of this Procedure.
- 1.6 If your complaint concerns one of the Headteachers of any of the schools in the RGS Group in the UK parents should make their complaint direct to the Headteacher of Reigate Grammar School, whose contact details are available from the School Office.
- 1.7 If the complaint is against the Headteacher of Reigate Grammar School, parents should make their complaint direct to the Chair of Governors of Reigate Grammar School. The Chair of Governors can be contacted by writing to them c/o the Bursar at Reigate Grammar School or by email to the Bursar's Personal Assistant (hrrs@reigategrammar.org), stating clearly that you are making a complaint.

We will always try to resolve any informal complaints at Stage 1 as soon as possible and usually within 10 working days (*) of them being raised, except where they are raised in or very close to the start of school holidays, in which case we will try to resolve them within 10 working days of the start of the new school term.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- 2.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint **in writing** to the Headteacher of the school to which the complaint relates, stating that you are making a formal complaint. The Headteacher will acknowledge receipt of your complaint, as soon as possible and usually within 48 hours during term time weekdays. The Headteacher may require some further information from you to help clarify the scope and nature of your concerns.
- 2.2 The Headteacher may in some circumstances deem it appropriate to nominate someone to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Headteacher (or their nominee) will decide after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- 2.3 In most cases, the Headteacher (or nominee) will meet the parents concerned within 10 working days of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out. The Headteacher (or their nominee) will determine who should carry out any investigation and this may be someone external to the School.
- 2.4 **Written records** will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- 2.5 Once the Headteacher (or their nominee) is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headteacher (or their nominee) will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Headteacher (or their nominee) will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 20 working days of the complaint being put in writing (or following the provision of any further clarificatory information about the complaint to the Headteacher, if so requested).
- 2.6 If your complaint concerns one of the Headteachers of any school in the RGS Group of Schools in the UK, parents should make their complaint direct to the Headteacher of Reigate Grammar School, whose contact details are available from the School Office. The Stage 2 process described above will be followed as if the reference to the Headteacher (or their nominee) is to the Headteacher of Reigate Grammar School or whoever they nominate to determine the complaint against the Headteacher in question.
- 2.7 If the complaint is against the Headteacher of Reigate Grammar School, parents should make their complaint direct to the Chair of Governors whose contact details are available from the School Office on request. The Chair of Governors will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the references to the Headteacher (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to determine the complaint against the Headteacher of Reigate Grammar School.
- 2.8 The Chair of Governors can be contacted by writing to them c/o the Bursar at Reigate Grammar School or by email to the Bursar's Personal Assistant (hrs@reigategrammar.org), stating clearly that you are making a complaint.
- 2.9 If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- 3.1 If the matter is still not resolved, parents may seek to invoke Stage 3 and ask for their complaint to be referred to a Complaints Panel. The appeal must be made in writing, stating that you are making a request for a Panel Hearing and this appeal must be lodged within 10 working days of the decision at Stage 2. Parents should provide a list of the complaint(s) made against the School at Stage 2 and which they believe not to have been resolved satisfactorily, along with the remedies sought in respect of each. Parents should also state whether they wish to attend the hearing, or whether the panel may deal with the matter based only on written submissions. Any supporting evidence which you wish to rely on should also be provided with the appeal.
- 3.2 The appeal should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, and sent c/o Reigate Grammar School, Reigate Road, Reigate, RH2 0QS or by email via the Bursar's Personal Assistant hrs@reigategrammar.org. Your request for an appeal will usually be acknowledged within three working days from the Chair receiving it, or as soon as practicable during the school holidays and usually no later than three working days from the start of the next term.

- 3.3 The Chair of Governors will then convene a panel consisting of three individuals, two governors and one independent member who is independent of the management and running of the school (the Panel). The Panel will convene as soon as possible, and where possible within 20 working days of the receipt of your appeal (described at 3.1).
- 3.4 If you have requested to attend the hearing, you will be invited to attend and speak to the panel; you may bring a friend or relative with you. Legal representation will not be permitted, and any companion should not be a lawyer. The Stage 2 decision maker will normally also attend the hearing and may bring a colleague (normally the member of the senior leadership team who has investigated the matter under Stage 2 above). Details of anyone accompanying either party should be provided in advance to Bursars' Personal Assistant. If parents decide not to attend the hearing, the panel will still hear the appeal.
- 3.5 A note-taker will attend the hearing to take minutes. This will not be a verbatim note but an accurate reflection of what was discussed. Notes of the meeting will be shared with attendees as soon as practicable after the hearing. To the extent there is any disagreement about the content of those notes or further comments from the parties, these will be considered by and, where possible, resolved by the Chair of the Panel. A copy of any comments on the notes will be appended to the notes.
- 3.6 The remit of the panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- 3.7 If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- 3.8 After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:
- dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
 - uphold the complaint(s) on whole or in part; and
 - make recommendations.
- 3.9 The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it usually within 10 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent via email or otherwise given to the parents, and where relevant the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Stage 2 decision taker. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher.

5. Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

The School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 20 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 working days.

() Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, **working days** refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during particularly busy periods of School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence. However, deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur after full consideration by senior staff. The School expects parents to engage in the process in a reasonable, constructive and responsive manner to help ensure matters can be dealt with in a timely way and in line with the targets set out in this Procedure.*

6. Persistent correspondence

Where senior staff determine that repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same or similar complaint which they consider having been previously resolved, this will be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

7. Confidentiality

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. There may also be other circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal, regulatory or safeguarding obligations. The School will internally share information on a need-to-know basis, bearing in mind that complaints are confidential between the School and the parents. We ask that parents are mindful of this also.

The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

8. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Parents of EYFS pupils should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted.

The School will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Data Retention Policy.

If parents feel that the EYFS requirements have not been met in full, parents are also free to make a complaint to ISI or OFSTED if they so wish. Relevant contact details are set out below:

- **Independent Schools Inspectorate**

020 7600 0100 or by email: info@isi.net

ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

- **OFSTED**

0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

OFSTED, Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M21 2WD

9. Reporting

For the academic year 2024-2025 the Reigate Grammar Group of Schools received the following formal complaints:

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| • Chinthurst School – 0 | • Reigate St Mary's Preparatory & Choir School – 1 |
| • Micklefield School – 0 | • RGS Surrey Hills – 0 |
| • Reigate Grammar School – 2 | • St Christopher's School – 1 |