

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.

A copy of 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.

This Complaints Procedure is made available to Parents of prospective pupils for their reference only. The Complaints Procedure 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 made.

Complaints by Parents of former pupils will be considered under this Complaints Procedure where the matter was raised as a formal complaint under this Procedure while the pupil to whom the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School.

For these purposes, a matter will normally be treated as having been raised as a formal complaint where the parent has made clear, in writing, that they wish to make a complaint under this Procedure, and has provided sufficient information for the School reasonably to understand the substance of the complaint, including the matter complained about, the pupil concerned, the relevant circumstances, and, so far as reasonably possible, the outcome or remedy sought.

If a complaint falls outside the scope of this Complaints Procedure, including because it was not raised as a formal complaint while the pupil was still registered at the School, the School may decide to consider the matter, but may reasonably amend the process and timelines where appropriate.

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.

If the School decides to use this Procedure to hear a complaint from someone who does not meet the above criteria to be considered a current parent at the time of formal registration of the complaint, then the School may make reasonable adjustments and amendments to the process that follows, at the discretion of the Head for Stages 1 and 2 or of the Chair of Governors for Stage 3 complaints, or Stage 2 complaints about the Head.

For financial remedies, Parents are advised to work directly with the Bursar as the most effective way to secure a resolution.

The School’s primary aim at all stages is to resolve concerns promptly and fairly, seeking proportionate and constructive outcomes wherever possible, without the need for formal escalation. At any stage, the School may offer an informal or facilitated meeting or mediation discussion to support resolution. This does not prevent a parent from accessing or continuing with the formal stages of this Procedure where they remain dissatisfied.

The School will ensure that a pupil will not be disadvantaged because of a complaint made in good faith.

2. What constitutes a complaint

A concern, query, request for assistance, disagreement or misunderstanding will not necessarily constitute a formal complaint. Many matters can usually be resolved appropriately and constructively through normal communication, clarification, explanation, support or practical steps between the School and Parents working together in partnership in the best interests of the child.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the School's actions, omissions, decisions, treatment or provision where a parent seeks formal consideration, investigation, response or resolution under this Procedure.

The School will always seek to enable fair and reasonable access to this Procedure. However, no complaints process can fairly or properly be applied unless the substance of the complaint is sufficiently understood to permit appropriate consideration, investigation and response. Accordingly, the School may reasonably:

- seek clarification of the issues raised;
- request identification of the material facts relied upon;
- seek clarification of the outcome or remedy sought;
- request supporting information reasonably necessary to understand the complaint;
- invite Parents to meetings for clarification or resolution;
- narrow or define the issues requiring determination;
- and seek to resolve concerns constructively before or alongside formal progression under this Procedure.

Parents are expected to engage reasonably and constructively with such requests so that concerns may be understood and addressed fairly, proportionately and efficiently.

Where a parent has clearly stated that they wish to make a formal complaint under Stage 2, the School will not refuse to register the complaint solely because further clarification would be helpful. However, where the substance or scope of the complaint is not sufficiently clear to permit fair consideration, the School may reasonably ask for clarification before determining the issues to be considered or progressing the matter further.

Any such delay will be proportionate and reasonable in the circumstances and the School will not use clarification or resolution processes improperly so as unfairly to prevent access to the formal Complaints Procedure. Parents are requested to state their 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. 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 website, and proceed as detailed in that policy.

4. The three-stage complaints procedure

We hope that your son's or daughter's career at the School will proceed without any problems. However, if, as a parent, you have a complaint, please follow this 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 a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) at the school concerned, parental concerns or complaints regarding special educational needs should be directed to

the SENCO in the first instance. Complaints relating to Early Years Foundation Stage should be directed to the Head of Lower School/Head of Early Years via the School Office. If you are not sure who to contact, please contact the School Office.

- 1.3 If the complaint is against the Head 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 (hrgs@reigategrammar.org), stating clearly that you are making a complaint.
- 1.4 The School, relevant Head or Chair will nominate and notify the Parents of the person they consider best placed to respond to the complaint. That person may need to consult with members of staff and/or make enquiries in respect of your complaint.
- 1.5 If you wish to discuss the problem face to face, if appropriate, the relevant person 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.
- 1.6 The relevant person 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.
- 1.7 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.
- 1.8 Where concerns are not immediately capable of informal resolution, the relevant person may invite Parents to one or more clarification or resolution meetings in order:
 - better to understand the concerns raised;
 - clarify the factual issues relied upon;
 - identify any misunderstandings;
 - understand the outcomes or remedies sought;
 - explore possible practical solutions;
 - and seek fair, constructive and proportionate resolution where reasonably possible.

At any such meetings we will consider the concerns raised, consider the relevant information you have shared and requested, discuss the matter carefully and seek, where possible, to reach a fair and constructive resolution. Parents are expected to engage reasonably and constructively with such meetings and discussions.

- 1.9 The School will ordinarily aim to resolve Stage 1 matters within 20 working days of it being formally registered by the School. However, additional time may reasonably be required where:
 - clarification is needed;
 - resolution meetings are being arranged;
 - further information is awaited;
 - safeguarding or welfare considerations arise;
 - the complaint is complex;
 - relevant staff or Parents are unavailable;
 - further time is reasonably considered likely to assist fair and constructive resolution;
 - or constructive attempts are being made to achieve fair and proportionate resolution.

If you have a complaint which you feel cannot be resolved satisfactorily under Stage 1, you will be advised to proceed to Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- 2.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved at Stage 1 on an informal basis, then the Parents should put their complaint **in writing** to the Head of the School to which the complaint relates, unless paragraphs 1.3

or 1.4 above apply, in which case the complaint **in writing** should be put to the Head of Reigate Grammar School or Chair as appropriate. The complaint must state that you are making a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this Procedure. The relevant Head or Chair (as appropriate) will acknowledge receipt of your complaint, as soon as possible and usually within three full working days during term time weekdays. The complaint should identify, so far as reasonably possible:

- the substance and scope of the complaint;
- the material facts relied upon;
- the issues said to have arisen;
- any relevant supporting information;
- and the outcome or remedy sought.

The Head or Chair may reasonably request further clarification, information or particularisation where necessary properly to understand the complaint and determine how it may fairly and proportionately be considered under this Procedure.

The School recognises that complaints cannot fairly or properly be investigated, considered or determined unless they are sufficiently understood to permit an appropriate process to be applied.

Accordingly, further clarification or engagement may be reasonably requested in order properly to understand the matters raised, and to support progression within the Procedure. However, this will not prevent a complaint from being formally registered where the substance of the complaint is sufficiently clear to proceed.

The School recognises that concerns may not always initially be capable of precise articulation and the School may seek to assist Parents in clarifying how concerns may appropriately be considered under this Procedure.

The School may also invite Parents to clarification or resolution meetings at Stage 2 in order:

- to narrow or clarify the issues requiring determination;
- better to understand the facts relied upon;
- identify any misunderstandings;
- explore reasonable remedies or practical solutions;
- and seek fair and constructive resolution where reasonably possible.

The School will seek to ensure that any such delay or deferral is reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances and will not use clarification or resolution processes improperly so as unfairly to prevent access to the formal complaints process.

The timings below begin from the date that formal receipt of your complaint is confirmed and registered.

- 2.2 In most cases, within 10 days of formally registering receipt of the complaint, the Head or Chair (or their nominee) will contact the Parents concerned to offer a meeting. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- 2.3 The Head or Chair may in some circumstances deem it appropriate to nominate someone to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Head or Chair (or their nominee) will decide after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

It may also be necessary for further investigations to be carried out. The Head or Chair (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 at Stage 2 and of whether they are upheld, partially upheld or not upheld, and any action recommended as a result.
- 2.5 Once the Head or Chair (or their nominee) has asked for additional information or explanations and once they are 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 Head or Chair (or their nominee) will also give reasons for their decision and any recommendations, actions or further

steps considered appropriate. In most cases, the Head or Chair (or their nominee) will make their decision and provide the Parents with reasons within 25 term-time working days of the Stage 2 complaint being registered. Where further clarification is required, this will normally be sought within this timescale.

However, additional time may be required where:

- clarification or further information is needed;
- meetings or resolution discussions are ongoing;
- further enquiries or investigations are required;
- the complaint is complex;
- safeguarding, welfare or regulatory considerations arise;
- relevant staff or Parents are unavailable;
- or further time is reasonably considered likely to assist fair and constructive resolution.

The School will inform the Parents of the reason(s) why additional time is required and the revised timescale and will seek to ensure that any extension of timescales is reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances.

- 2.6 If Parents are not satisfied with the Stage 2 decision, they can contact the Head of Reigate Grammar School or Chair (as appropriate) within 5 working days of the Stage 2 decision being sent to them, for a Review Meeting where the Head or Chair (as appropriate) can review the process and outcomes and can meet with the Parents to consider next steps, still seeking resolution. The School will aim to complete this process within 25 working days of the Review Meeting being formally registered by the School. This does not prevent Parents from requesting a Stage 3 panel.
- 2.7 If, after a Review Meeting, Parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.
- 2.8 The purpose of Stage 2 is not to subject every procedural step to technical scrutiny, but to ensure that the complaint is considered fairly and reasonably overall and that appropriate resolution is sought where reasonably possible.

Procedural variations, reasonable extensions of time or departures from indicative timescales will not of themselves invalidate the Stage 2 process provided that the decision is made in a reasonable way.

Stage 3 – Appeal Panel Hearing

- 3.1 If the matter is still not resolved after Stage 2, Parents may seek to invoke Stage 3 and ask for their complaint to be referred to a Complaints Appeal Panel. The request for an Appeal Panel Hearing must be made **in writing**, stating that you are making a request for an Appeal Panel Hearing and this request must be lodged within 10 working days of the decision at Stage 2.
- 3.2 The request for an Appeal Panel Hearing should be addressed to the Chair of Governors of Reigate Grammar School, and sent c/o Reigate Grammar School, Reigate Road, Reigate, RH2 0QS or by email via the Bursar's Personal Assistant hqs@reigategrammar.org. Your request 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 In the Appeal Panel Hearing request, 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, explaining fully their grounds and reasons for challenging the Stage 2 outcome, identifying any material facts, and laying out their case for review along with the remedies sought. Parents should also state in the request whether they wish to attend the hearing, or whether the Appeal Panel may deal with the matter based only on written submissions. Any supporting evidence which Parents wish to rely on should also be provided with the request for an Appeal Panel Hearing. The Chair may require some further information from you to help clarify the scope, grounds and nature of your concerns as well as remedy sought, before being able to register formal receipt of your complaint.
- 3.4 The Chair will then convene a Panel of at least three individuals who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, or in the earlier investigation, consideration or determination

of the complaint. The Panel will usually consist of two governors and one member who is independent of the management and running of the School.

For these purposes, a person will not be regarded as directly involved merely because they are a governor of the School, have general governance oversight of the School, have been aware that a complaint has been made, or have received a governance-level update that a complaint of this nature is being handled under this Procedure. However, a person will normally be regarded as directly involved if they were personally complained about, were materially involved in the events or decisions complained about, investigated or determined the complaint at an earlier stage, gave substantive advice on the merits or outcome of the complaint, or have otherwise expressed a concluded view on the substance of the complaint.

- 3.5 If you have requested to attend the Appeal Panel 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 SLT who has investigated the matter under Stage 2 above), however the hearing will not usually include questions being asked of the parties, other than by panel members. Details of anyone accompanying either party should be provided at the time of registering your review to Bursars' Personal Assistant. If Parents decide not to attend the hearing, the Appeal Panel may still decide to conduct a formal hearing into the complaint and ask questions of the Stage 2 decision maker hear the review.
- 3.6 A note-taker will attend any hearing or formal review meeting 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.
- 3.7 The Appeal Panel will not normally consider new complaints or allegations that were not raised at Stage 2, unless there is good reason why they could not reasonably have been raised earlier.
- 3.8 The Appeal Panel will consider the complaint, the Stage 2 outcome, the Parents' grounds for continued dissatisfaction, and any relevant written or oral material provided by the Parents and the School. The Appeal Panel is not required to reinvestigate every matter afresh but will consider whether the complaint has been fairly and reasonably handled, whether the Stage 2 outcome was fair and reasonable in the circumstances, and whether any further action or recommendation is required.
- 3.9 If possible, the Appeal Panel will resolve the Parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. The Appeal Panel may however take such further steps as it considers it to be appropriate to ensure fair, efficient and proportionate consideration of the complaint including, where it considers it to be appropriate, inviting further clarification, encouraging constructive resolution, recommending practical steps or proposing other proportionate measures aimed at resolving the complaint fairly and constructively. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- 3.10 After due consideration, the Appeal Panel will decide whether to:
 - dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
 - uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
 - make findings and recommendations, where appropriate.
- 3.11 The Appeal Panel's role is not ordinarily to reconsider every procedural step, but to consider the complaint overall, including whether the outcome was fair and reasonable.

The Appeal Panel will be concerned primarily with whether the process at and decision made at Stage 2 was reasonable and fair rather than minor procedural variations, reasonable extensions of time or immaterial departures from the indicative processes set out in this Procedure.
- 3.12 The Appeal Panel will write to the Parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, usually within 15 working days of the hearing or formal review meeting (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations or deliberations following the hearing or

formal review meeting). The decision of the Appeal Panel will be final. A copy of the Appeal 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, the relevant Head and the Stage 2 decision taker.

5. Timeframe for dealing with complaints

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

The timescales in this Procedure are the School's normal expected timescales. The School may reasonably extend or adjust timescales where this is necessary in order to:

- properly to understand or clarify the complaint;
- obtain relevant information;
- conduct appropriate investigations;
- arrange clarification or resolution meetings;
- accommodate reasonable parental or staff engagement;
- address safeguarding, welfare or regulatory considerations;
- or seek fair and constructive resolution.

The School will seek to ensure that any extension of timescales is reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances.

Where it is necessary to extend or adjust any of the timescales set out in this Procedure, the School will inform Parents and may be able to provide a revised timescale for the next stage or response. Failure to meet indicative timescales will not invalidate the process, provided that the complaint is handled fairly, reasonably and without undue delay.

NB: For the purposes of this Procedure, **working days** refer 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. Unreasonable, persistent or disproportionate complaints or correspondence

The School is committed to dealing fairly, respectfully and proportionately with all concerns and complaints raised under this Procedure.

In a small number of cases, however, a Parent's behaviour, correspondence or complaint may become unreasonable, abusive, aggressive, discriminatory, threatening, excessive, repetitive or disproportionate in a manner which substantially impairs:

- the fair consideration of the complaint;
- the School's ability to investigate or respond appropriately;
- the wellbeing or safety of staff;
- or the proper operation of the School.

The School may also reasonably conclude that further consideration under this Procedure is not appropriate where:

- substantially the same complaint has already been fully considered;
- the Parent refuses reasonably to clarify the substance of the complaint;
- the issues requiring determination cannot reasonably be identified or understood;
- or the remedy sought falls wholly outside the scope of the School's authority or this Procedure.

Before taking such steps, the School will consider the circumstances carefully, act proportionately and normally explain its reasons in writing.

Any management measures implemented by the School will be reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances.

7. Confidentiality

Correspondence, statements, records, findings and recommendations 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, or where disclosure is otherwise required by law, regulation, safeguarding obligations or the proper operation of this Procedure. There may also be other circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint 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.

For complaints relating to the EYFS provision, the School will ensure that the complaint is investigated and Parents are notified of the outcome within 28 days, in accordance with EYFS requirements. This timescale applies regardless of school holidays or term dates.

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.

On request, the School will provide ISI/Ofsted with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken because 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 wish. Relevant contact details are set out below:

- **Independent Schools Inspectorate: CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA**
020 7600 0100 or by email: info@isi.net
- **OFSTED: Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M21 2WD**
0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

9. Reporting

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

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