

QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM			
Policy/Procedure:	HGS G02	Page:	1 of 14
Last Update:	September 2024	Next Update Due:	September 2025

Policies will be reviewed annually or when there are changes to practices and legislation.

Policy/Procedure Name:	Complaints Policy
------------------------	--------------------------

Author:	Karen Noon		
Signature of Authorised Individual			K Noon
Signature of the Principal			G Spicer

Contents:

1. What is a complaint?
2. The difference between a concern and a complaint
3. How to raise a concern or make a complaint
4. Anonymous complaints
5. Time scales
6. Complaints received outside of termtime.
7. Scope of this complaints procedure
8. Resolving complaints
9. Withdrawal of a complaint
10. Next steps
11. Roles and responsibilities
12. Complaints from pupils
13. Training
14. Disciplinary procedures
15. Simplified version of the complaints policy for parents/carers or children
16. Outcomes
17. Evaluation

Policy written in response to:

- The Education Act 2002
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Education and Skills Act 2008
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- The Immigration Act 2016
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Protection of Children Act 1999: A Practical Guide to the Act for all Organisations.
- NSPCC. Cm 5730 (2003)

- Safeguarding Children in Education. Department for Education and Skills (2004a). London:
- Working with Children, DfES September 2005
- SEND Code of Practice 2015
- Working together to safeguard children 2023
- Keeping children safe in education 2024
- Promote the welfare of children, HM Government 2010
- The Education (Independent school standards) regulations 2014
- Independent schools Regulation and enforcement Action Policy statement 2019 (April)
- Independent School Standards 2019 (April)
- DfE 'Best Practice Guidelines for School Complaints Procedures 2020 (updated 15th January 2021)

This policy will be implemented in accordance with the following school policies:

- Records Management Policy
- Grievance Policy

1. What is a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to High Grange School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure. At High Grange School we take complaints seriously. We view them as an important way of improving what we do. Our complaints policy and procedures are clear, user friendly and readily accessible to all stakeholders, including those with disabilities. It is important to the organisation that young people, staff, parents, carers, referring authorities and other agencies are genuinely able to raise concerns and make suggestions for changes and improvements. We are committed to listening when young people and stakeholders have something to say about the services we offer.

2. The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought.'*

A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.'*

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. High Grange School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these case's there are two initial essential senior points of contact, Gavin Spicer (Principal) or Philip McBride (Head-Teacher). If the person who has concerns would prefer to talk to a member of the school's board of governors / director's, then this can be arranged by contacting the school directly 01332 412777 and speaking to Administrator Pavandeep Samra. Zoe Thomson Family Liaison officer is also a point of contact should you wish to raise a concern. Please e mail zoe.thomson@highgrangeschool.co.uk or phone her work mobile on 07860 271189. The school has a parent governor who is also contactable to raise a concern. Please e mail tracey.wild@highgrangeschool.co.uk. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is important and therefore the school provides various options.

We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, High Grange School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

A written record will be kept of all concerns and the date on which they were received. A concern provided in writing will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within **two days** of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays.

If the concern is not resolved within **five days** or, in the event that the complainant is not satisfied with the response to their concern, the complainant will be advised to proceed in accordance with the 'Formal complaint' stage of this procedure.

3. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the Head-teacher Philip McBride or the School Principal Gavin Spicer. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual governors / directors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure. Complaints against school staff (except the Principal) should be made in the first instance, to Gavin Spicer (the Principal) via the school office (01332 412777) Email: gavin.spicer@highgrangeschool.co.uk Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Principal should be addressed to **Mr Surjit Rai, the CEO. He can be contacted at Mr Rai (Chief Executive Officer) directly please call Head Office on 01509 219605 or email reception@rushcliffecare.co.uk** Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the CEO, any individual governor / director or the whole governing body should be addressed to Pavandeep Samra *SLT administrator and PA to the Principal* via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

4. Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Principal or The school governors / directors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

5. Time scales

Complaints are expected to be made as soon as possible after an issue arises to ensure the issue is addressed in an appropriate timescale.

The school upholds a three – month time limit in which a complaint can be lodged following an incident. Complaints made outside this time limit will not be automatically refused and exceptions will be considered.

Timescales for managing complaints at specific stages are outlined in the relevant sections of this policy. In the case of any timescales changing, all parties involved will be informed of the changes in a timely manner.

6. Complaints received outside of term time.

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

7. Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by High Grange School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Admissions to schools• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs• School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with Gavin Spicer Principal

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Issues 	<p>Any complaints in relation to a pupils education should be raised with Principal Gavin Spicer or Head-teacher Philip McBride</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>Contact Principal / DSL Gavin Spicer</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding Miles Dent LADO Derbyshire or Derbyshire safeguarding children's partnership starting point 01629 533190 (for non-professionals)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suspension and 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> <p>Suspensions and exclusions DFE September 2022</p> <p>*Please refer to HGS Suspension and exclusions policy.</p> <p>Contact Principal / DSL Gavin Spicer</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p> <p>(A "grievance" is an issue raised by a member of staff where they feel the school has not implemented a policy or process fairly or properly.)</p> <p>Contact Principal / DSL Gavin Spicer</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p> <p>Contact Principal / DSL Gavin Spicer</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoral care issues 	Contact Principal / DSL Gavin Spicer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial matters 	Contact Principal / DSL Gavin Spicer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns / complaint against Principal Gavin Spicer 	<p>If the complaint is about the Principal, or a member of board of Governors / Directors (including Mr Rai CEO or Karen Noon), a suitably skilled Governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.</p> <p>Complaints about the Principal will go to reception@rushcliffecare.co.uk</p> <p>Complaints against a member of the Board of Governors / Directors must be made to office@highgrangeschool.co.uk.</p>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against High Grange School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

8. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, High Grange School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur.
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made.
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.
- an apology.

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone or in writing. A written record will be kept of all concerns and the date on which they were received. A concern provided in writing will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within two-days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays.

If the concern is not resolved within five days or, in the event that the complainant is not satisfied with the response to their concern, the complainant will be advised to proceed in accordance with the **formal complaint** stage of this procedure.

Formal Complaints

The complainant should submit their complaint in writing using the complaints form that is within this policy. The complainant will follow the scope for complaints table above and address the formal complaint to the correct contact after deciding the appropriate category. The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within **two-days** of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays, indicating that action is being taken and the likely timescales.

The Principal will meet with the complainant within **five-days** of acknowledging receipt of the complaint to discuss the matter, this can be in person. If the complaint is about the school's Principal, the discussion will take place with the CEO or Karen Noon who are both directors / part of the board of governors.

During the meeting, the Principal will attempt to reach a resolution; however, it may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out by the Principal or another designated member of staff. If the complaint is about the Principal, the CEO or Karen Noon who are both directors / part of the board of governors will arrange any necessary investigations.

Written records will be kept of all meetings and other communications held in relation to the complaint.

Once all facts are established, the Principal will inform the complainant of their decision and their reasoning in writing.

If the complaint is about the Principal, the CEO or Karen Noon will inform the complainant of their decision and their reasoning in writing.

The complainant will be informed of the decision within **10-days** from the receipt of the complaint. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay, the complainant will be notified of this and informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome suggested, they will be advised to proceed to the **panel hearing** stage of this procedure.

Panel hearing

Where a complaint cannot be resolved, a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the school's proprietor will be arranged.

The panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One panel member will be independent of the management and running of the school – this means they are not a member of the

school's workforce or proprietor body and are not otherwise involved in the management of the school, e.g. a solicitor who regularly acts for the school.

A hearing will be scheduled to take place as soon as practicable and normally within **10-days**. Reasonable arrangements will be made to ensure the complainant can attend the panel hearing. If the complainant does not exercise the right to attend the panel hearing, the hearing will still be held.

The complainant will be informed that they are able to be accompanied at the hearing if they wish; however, legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The right for a parent to be accompanied at a panel hearing does not confer a right on a parent to have a legal representative make representations on their behalf at a hearing, but the school will decide whether to allow this on a case-by-case basis.

If the panel deems it necessary, it may require that further details of the complaint or any related matters be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such information will be supplied to all parties no later than **five days** prior to the hearing. After considering all of the relevant facts, the panel will make findings and recommendations. The decision, findings and recommendations will be provided to the complainant in writing within **five days** of the hearing. A copy of the decision, findings and recommendations will be sent to, where relevant, the person complained about, the Principal and the CEO or Karen Noon will arrange any necessary investigations.

The decision of the panel will be final and represents the conclusion of the school's complaints procedure.

If it is found that the school has not met its requirements in relation to managing complaints because of the way a particular complaint has been handled, the Secretary of State has no power to compel the school to alter its decision on that complaint, only to take regulatory action designed to address the failure to meet the complaints standard, so that future complaints are dealt with properly.

9. Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Complaints Form

High Grange

Please complete and return to **Gavin Spicer Principal or** (Jenny Lester HR administrator) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken. If about the complaint is about the Principal email reception@rushcliffecare.co.uk (FAO Karen Noon)

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, 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:
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By whom:
Complaint referred to:
Date:

10. Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible.
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint.
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint.
- ask for assistance as needed.
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect.
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent, and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved.
 - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
 - consideration of records and other relevant information
 - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting.
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal.
- be mindful of the timescales to respond.
- prepare a comprehensive report for the Principal or complaints Panel that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The Principal or complaints Panel will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the

appropriate escalation details.

Complaints Co-ordinator (Principal Gavin Spicer or Board of Governors / directors Karen Noon)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure.
- liaise with staff members, Principal, Board of Governors / Directors/ Jenny Lester and LAs (if appropriate) to ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure.
- be aware of issues regarding:
 - sharing third party information
 - additional support. Complainants may need this when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person.
- keep records.

Administrator to the Governing Body (reception@rushcliffecare.co.uk)

The is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time, and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible.
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example, stage 1 paperwork, school, and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale.
- record the proceedings.
- circulate the minutes of the meeting.
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

11. Additional Information

Monitoring and Review

The School keeps the volume and nature of complaints received under regular review. Summary information is reported to the board of directors by the principal on a termly basis. High Grange School principal and board of director monitor the

level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of the procedure and make changes where necessary.

Record Keeping

We maintain a complaints folder and register that records all representations or complaints, the action taken to address them and the outcomes. All correspondence, statements and records of complaints are being kept confidential but will be shown to OFSTED on request when they inspect. Copies will also be made available to the Registration Authority on request. All complaints will be available to the proprietor and principal to access at all times.

Records of complaints are held confidentially in the school and are kept apart from young person records. These records and any correspondence or statements relating to a complaint will remain confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, The Education and Inspection Act 2006 and The Childcare Act 2006. All written records are kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with.

- Whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or a panel hearing action will be taken by the school as a result of those complaints regardless of whether the complaint is upheld or not.

12. Complaints from Pupils

Pupils can request a complaint form from the school Principal or any staff member.

The Principal will respond and acknowledge the complaint within 24 hours. Where the complaint is not about a member of staff's practise or if they do not have safeguarding / child protection considerations then a meeting with the Principal /head teacher will be formed within 48 hours.

The procedures below will be followed in the event of a pupil making a complaint against a member of staff, a fellow pupil or any other person or situation either in school or outside.

Pupils may wish to talk to an adult they trust about a situation relating to school or to a situation outside school. Pupils are reminded that, although they may speak to any member of staff, there may be occasions where information will have to be referred to other agencies such as Social Services / LADO. An internal or external investigation would then be completed.

Within school, pupils may talk to any member of Education Staff.

A pupil may merely need a trusted adult to talk a situation through with and may not be making a formal complaint. However, all actual complaints made by pupils will be recorded by the member of staff in the Complaints Log. *Where the complaint suggests a Child Protection issue a formal referral will be made to the local Safeguarding children's partnership in line with High Grange School's safeguarding and child protection policy.

The school's response to the complaint will also be recorded. If the complaint is serious the pupil's parents/carers will be informed of both the complaint and the outcome. Some complaints will be referred to other agencies or to the Local Authority. If necessary, a meeting will be called to discuss the issues further and an investigation will commence.

If a complaint is upheld the school undertakes to respond to all recommendations and with appropriate actions. The school will regularly review this policy and undertakes to evaluate and to respond to recommendations in an ongoing attempt to improve practice.

A pupil may ask to speak to an adult from an outside agency. The school will wherever possible put the pupil in contact with a representative of the appropriate agency. The referral will be noted in the pupil's file.

We will try to respond and resolve the complaint within a two-week period from the day the pupil made the complaint.

See School **Safeguarding Policy and child protection policy** for further guidance.

13. Training

All staff are trained, as part of the induction process, in:

- What constitutes a complaint.
- What the procedure is for dealing with an informal complaint in the school and how it should be recorded.
- To whom a complaint is made.
- The procedure to be followed should a complaint not be resolved promptly by informal means, including who should be notified and the keeping of records.
- How a child or young person can be assisted in making a complaint, including situations where a child has communication impairment, and how to access an advocate or interpreter.

14. Disciplinary Procedures

High Grange School operates a disciplinary procedure which provides for the suspension of an employee where necessary in the interests of the safety or welfare of children attending High Grange, or using the service and: -

Provides that the failure on the part of an employee to report an incident or complaint relating to the abuse, or suspected abuse of a child or using the service at school to an appropriate person is a ground on which disciplinary proceedings may be instituted.

15. Simplified version of the Complaints Policy for parents/carers or children

- Help is available for anyone wanting to make a complaint - advocates, interpreters, signers; these can be arranged through the Principal. Information is supplied to the children in a simple form, advising them of how and who they can contact should they need help from an independent person.

- We welcome complaints because your views and experiences of our school are important. We are always willing to listen and will try to resolve any concerns/complaints about High Grange School or our staff. We will not discriminate or treat anyone differently because they wish to complain.
- Children will NOT be treated any differently for making a complaint.
- All our staff are trained to handle complaints sensitively and confidentially and will carefully write down what you say.
- If the problem cannot be resolved within 24 hours or it is a serious matter, then it will be dealt with as a formal complaint.
- **If a complaint is about the safety of a child, the Principal or Head Teacher will be told straight away, and the complaint may be referred to the Safeguarding (Child Protection) procedures.**
- The Principal will monitor all complaints and identify patterns, the information will be used to improve High Grange policies and childcare practices.
- The Principal will keep a record of the outcomes of complaints and show it to OFSTED when asked.
- High Grange School could suspend a member of staff who failed to report any concerns relating to the safety of a child, suspicions, or evidence of abuse, to a manager.

At any time a complaint can be made to **OFSTED** or the **DFE**

16. Outcomes

A record is kept at the school of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the preliminary level, or whether they proceed to a panel hearing. These records are kept in a confidential file. The records are indexed in the School's Complaints folder, which is kept at the school site, also in a confidential file. The information kept in the Complaints folder and the confidential file is only made available to the inspectors of regulatory bodies, or to the Secretary of State, on request.

17. Evaluation

Evaluation of the policy will be based upon monitoring of

- Pupils views where appropriate.
- Parent / carers views.
- Professional judgements.
- Staff views – daily practitioners and seniors.
- Volume of comments and complaints

The effectiveness of the policy and procedures will be reviewed annually, and the outcomes of monitoring will be used to make recommendation for improvement if necessary.