

# Thrive Independent School

## Complaints Policy

**Date of Issue:** September 2025

**Review Date:** September 2026



### Why do we exist?

Provide students the opportunity to re-engage in learning. Champion individual pathways to success, fostering confidence, building resilience and developing the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in their next steps of life.

### How do we behave?

Work hard. Respect. Grow.

### What do we do?

We establish high-performing alternative provisions, which maximise attainment in core areas, value diversity, develop character and build cultural capital.

### How Will Students Thrive?

Attendance: Students guided and supported to attend Thrive for full time education.

Curriculum: Access a curriculum which matches abilities of our learners.

Pathways: Aim to provide students with a successful pathway back to mainstream education and further careers.

### Policy Statement

Thrive Independent School is committed to maintaining strong, open and respectful relationships with pupils, parents, carers, staff and the wider community. We recognise that concerns and complaints may arise from time to time and believe these should be addressed promptly, fairly and without prejudice. This policy ensures that all concerns and complaints are handled in a consistent, transparent and timely manner, with a focus on resolution and continuous improvement.

We aim to resolve concerns informally whenever possible. Where a formal complaint is needed, this policy provides a clear procedure that complies fully with the Independent School Standards (*Part 7: Manner in which complaints are handled*). Thrive Independent School commits to treating all complainants with dignity and respect, to protecting individuals involved, and to ensuring pupils are never disadvantaged as a result of a complaint being made.

This policy is publicly available on the school website and can be provided in alternative formats on request.

### Aims

This policy aims to enable the informal resolution of concerns wherever possible through clear and open communication, while ensuring that formal complaints are handled promptly, fairly

and confidentially. It is designed to be accessible and easy to understand, supporting equal rights and respectful treatment for all parties involved. The policy seeks to maintain strong and positive partnerships between the school and parents, carers and the wider community, ensure that pupils are never disadvantaged as a result of a complaint, and discourage anonymous complaints where appropriate. Through reflective practice and learning from concerns raised, the policy supports continuous improvement and the prevention of recurrence. Thrive Independent School is committed to keeping this policy under regular review to ensure its effectiveness and compliance.

### **Who Can Make 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 or volunteers within the school, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless the subject of a complaint should instead be dealt with under separate statutory procedures (detailed at the end of this document), we will use this complaints procedure.

### **What Might a Complaint Be About?**

- Treatment of a pupil
- Actions or behaviour of pupils
- Conduct of school staff
- Changes to school provision or policies

### **Concern Vs Complaint**

A concern is a worry or query seeking reassurance. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction requiring a formal response. 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 this complaints procedure. The 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 cases, the Headteacher (Mr Hussain) will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, the Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

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

### **Safeguarding and Child Protection Concerns**

Where a complaint indicates a safeguarding or child protection concern, it will be handled in line with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)*. Statutory safeguarding procedures take precedence over this policy and may pause or supersede elements of the complaints process.

### **How Do I Raise a Concern? (Informal)**

Concerns should be raised directly with the school office or Business manager. It may be possible for you to see the member of staff straight away but normally it is better to make an

appointment so that you can sit and talk things through. It may be possible to give a response immediately, but where any investigation or information is required, a response will be given as soon as possible.

We would like you to tell us about your concern so that we can discuss with you how best to resolve it. The majority of concerns can be resolved informally by speaking to a member of staff. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in the school. Whatever your concern, please know that we shall treat it as strictly confidential.

Be assured that our support and respect for you and your child in our schools will not be affected in any way; please do not delay telling us of your concern. It is difficult for us to properly investigate an incident which is more than a day or two old. After hearing your concern, we will act as quickly as we can; we will let you know the timescale within which you may expect a response. Please allow time for any action we may take to be effective.

### **How Do I Raise a Formal Complaint?**

If you have not been able to resolve your concern informally, or the circumstances justify it, you may raise a formal complaint. Complaints against school staff should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher via [russain@thriveindependentschool.com](mailto:russain@thriveindependentschool.com) using the school complaints form. A senior member of staff will then be assigned to deal with your complaint. If you require help in completing the school complaints form, please contact the school admin office, and assistance will be provided to you. You can also ask third party organisations like 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.

### **Anonymous Complaints**

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. The Headteacher (depending on who is the subject of the complaint) will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

### **Timescales For Complaints**

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. The school will only consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

### **Complaints Received Outside Of Term Time**

The school will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period (when the schools are open for educational sessions).

### **Resolving Complaints**

At each stage in the procedure, the 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, or a misunderstanding had taken place;
- 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 or individual school policies in light of the complaint;
- An apology.

*Please note that in certain circumstances, for example, if the outcome of an investigation is related to safeguarding or employment law, full details of the outcome of an investigation may not be shared with the complainant.*

### **Withdrawal Of a Complaint**

If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing to the appropriate school admin office.

### **Stage One Formal Complaint**

Please write to the school making it clear you wish to make a formal complaint and complete our Stage 1 Complaints Form attached to this policy. A senior member of staff will be in contact with you within three school days of receiving the complaint. The senior staff member will speak to you initially and then a formal response will be given within ten further school days, after any investigation or information required is gathered.

### **Stage Two Formal Complaint**

If you are still unhappy, ask for an appointment with the Headteacher within 10 school days of receiving a response under Stage 1.

You should give a brief outline of your concern on the Stage 2 Complaints Form stating why you were not happy with the outcome of stage 1. The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 school days. Within this response, they will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. A face to face meeting may be considered as the most appropriate way of doing this. During the investigation, the Headteacher will:

- If necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish;
- Collate any relevant documents;
- Keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within 15 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If they are unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date. The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school will take to resolve the complaint.

The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

### **Stage Three – Formal Complaint (Independent Review Panel Appointed by the Proprietor)**

The large majority of concerns will normally be resolved before this stage. However, if you remain dissatisfied after receiving the Stage 2 response, you may request that your complaint is considered by an Independent Review Panel appointed by the Proprietor.

To do this, you must submit your request in writing to the School Business Manager within 10 school days of receiving the Stage 2 outcome. Requests received after this deadline will only be considered where exceptional circumstances apply. An acknowledgement of receipt will be issued within 5 school days.

#### **Panel Composition**

As Thrive Independent School does not have a Governing Body, the Proprietor will convene a panel of three individuals, which will include:

- At least one member who is independent of the management and running of the school (statutory requirement).
- Members with appropriate experience and the ability to review the complaint impartially.
- No panel member will have been directly involved in matters relating to the complaint.

The Independent Review Panel will consider whether the school has acted fairly, reasonably, and in line with its policies and statutory duties.

#### **Scheduling the Panel Meeting**

A Clerk (appointed by the Proprietor) will contact the complainant to confirm the date of the meeting. The panel will normally be convened within 20 school days of the Stage 3 request.

If this is not possible, the Clerk will propose the earliest reasonable date and keep the complainant updated.

If the complainant rejects three proposed dates without good reason, the Clerk may proceed to schedule the meeting, and the panel may consider the complaint in the complainant's absence based on written submissions.

The panel may decide to:

- Hold a meeting with all parties present, or
- Consider the complaint on the basis of written representations only

This decision will take the complainant's needs and circumstances into account.

#### **Attendance and Representation**

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring a relative, friend or supporter.

Legal representation is not normally encouraged, but may be permitted with the agreement of the Panel Chair in exceptional circumstances.

If a school employee is asked to attend as a witness, they may be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague.

Representatives from the media are not permitted.

### **Submission and Circulation of Evidence**

At least 10 school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- Confirm the date, time and venue (ensuring accessibility for all parties).
- Request any further written evidence from the complainant or the school.

All written materials will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the meeting.

The panel will not normally accept covertly recorded material as evidence unless there is a compelling reason.

The panel will not consider new complaints or issues unrelated to the initial complaint; such matters must begin at Stage 1.

Electronic recordings of meetings are not permitted unless required as a reasonable adjustment, and consent must be obtained from all parties.

### **Meeting Procedures**

The Independent Review Panel meeting will be held in private.

All parties will have the opportunity to:

- Present their views
- Ask questions (through the Chair)
- Respond to information presented

The panel will consider:

- The complaint
- The evidence provided
- Whether the school followed its policies
- Whether statutory requirements were met
- Whether the Stage 2 investigation was conducted fairly and adequately

### **Panel Decision**

The panel may:

- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part, or
- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld (in full or partly), the panel will:

- Identify actions the school should take to resolve the complaint

- Recommend changes to policies, procedures or practices to prevent recurrence

The Chair of the Panel will provide the complainant and the school with a full written decision, including reasons, within 3 school days of the meeting.

The decision of the Independent Review Panel is the final stage of the school's complaints process.

The outcome letter will also include information on how the complainant may contact the Department for Education if they believe the school has acted unlawfully or failed to follow its procedure correctly.

### **Next Steps – Department for Education (DfE)**

**If the complainant is dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled after completing Stage 3, they may contact the Department for Education.**

The DfE will not normally:

- Reinvestigate the substance of the complaint
- Overturn decisions made by the school

The DfE will consider whether the school:

- Failed to follow its complaints procedure
- Acted unlawfully or unreasonably under education law
- Failed to meet Independent School Standards

Complainants may contact the DfE:

#### **Online:**

[www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus)

#### **Telephone:**

0370 000 2288

#### **Post:**

Department for Education  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

### **Serial And Unreasonable Complaints**

The school is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our School. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

We define unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- Raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- Repeatedly makes the same or a similar complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed) or makes serial complaints
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the department for education
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- Uses threats to intimidate
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- Knowingly provides falsified information
- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before making a formal determination that a complaint is 'serial and unreasonable'.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the school buildings.

Complaints forms:

# COMPLAINTS FORM

## STAGE 1



THRIVE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

**Name of complainant** :

**Name of pupil (if relevant)** :

**Relationship to pupil** :

**Home address** :

**Telephone number** :

**Email** :

**What is your concern and how has it affected you?**

*Please attach any paperwork with form*

**Have you discussed this matter with a member of staff before filling in this form?**

**If so, who did you speak to and what was the response?**

**What actions do you feel might resolve your concerns at this stage?**

**Signed**

**Date**



THRIVE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

# COMPLAINTS FORM

## STAGE 2



THRIVE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

**Name of complainant** :

**Name of pupil (if relevant)** :

**Relationship to pupil** :

**Home address** :

**Telephone number** :

**Email** :

**Please state why you are unhappy with the outcome of stage 1 ?**

*Please attach any paperwork with form*

**What actions do you feel might resolve your concerns at this stage?**

**Signed**

**Date**

***Please request a receipt- if you have not heard back from the school office within 48 hours please check that your complaint has been received.***



THRIVE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL