

Thrive Independent School

Complaints Policy Statement

Date of Issue: June 2025

Aims

- Enable informal resolution where possible
- Be accessible and simple to understand
- Treat all complaints confidentially
- Ensure prompt handling of concerns
- Prevent recurrence through learning
- Maintain strong parent-school partnerships
- Ensure pupils are not disadvantaged by complaints
- Discourage anonymous complaints
- Support clear communication and understanding
- Offer equal rights to all involved
- Keep the policy under regular review

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.

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 rhussain@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

The large majority of concerns will normally be resolved by this stage. However, if you still have concerns and they have not been resolved you may ask for your complaint to be considered by the complaints panel of the Governing Body by writing to the school business manager. This must be done within 10 school days of receipt of response to your stage 2 complaint. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply. Acknowledgement of receipt of your complaint will be given within 5 school days.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed. If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

The panel will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the panel meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate, with the consent of the chair of the panel. If a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by a union representative or friend.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them. Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

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

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the panel at least 10 school days before the meeting.

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The panel will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it, in which case all parties must be told about it beforehand and consent of all parties attending must be sought before recordings of meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The panel can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the panel will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the panel will provide the complainant and the School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 3 school days. The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the School.

If the complaint is about the governing body; or other circumstances justify it, Stage 3 will be heard by a panel of independent governors. 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 take to resolve the complaint. The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

Next Steps

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 3.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions

made by the school. They will consider whether the school has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

**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 school buildings.

Links to Complaints forms

[THRIVE COMPLAINTS FORM STAGE 1](#)

[THRIVE COMPLAINTS FORM STAGE 2](#)