



Policy for the management of concerns, complaints and appeals

Policy written for:
(R.E.A.L. Education Ltd.)
(R.E.A.L. Independent Schools, Ilkeston)
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(R.E.A.L. Independent Schools Mansfield (Previously RAPS))



Amended on: **02/12/2021**
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Revision history:

- 02.12.2021 - Amendment made to timelines for each stage to make them more specific
- 26.11.2020 - Amendment made to the stages section.
- 29/01/2020 - Amendment made to the section relating to complaints procedure
- 01/08/2019 - Amendments made with regards to adding detailed stages into the policy and a flow chart.
- 07/09/2018 - Amendments made to the section relating to the monitoring of the complaints log, and added references to take into account an appeals process. Also added section on difference between concern, complaint and appeal.
- 19/10/2016: - No amendments to policy.
- 01/03/2014: - No amendments to policy.
- 01/03/2012: - Policy written for R.E.A.L. Independent Schools.



Principles

It is the aim of R.E.A.L. Independent Schools to provide an outstanding education for all our children. The Headteacher and staff work hard to build positive relationships with all parents/carers and commissioners. We are nonetheless obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents/carers or other interested parties. The following policy sets out the procedures that we follow in such cases.

If any parents/carers are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's learning manager or a member of the school Senior Leadership team, immediately either face-to-face or over the phone.

Aims

R.E.A.L. Independent Schools aims to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding. In all cases we put the interests of the child above all else. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed and then resolved.

The difference between a concern, complaint and appeal

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 generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'. An appeal is defined as a 'application to a higher court for a decision to be reversed'.

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 invoke formal procedures. R.E.A.L Independent School will take all informal concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

There are occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns as a formal complaint, or make an appeal for a reversal of a decision e.g. where there is a disagreement regarding an internal or external grading for an individuals' work. In those cases, the following procedure should be invoked.



The complaints procedure

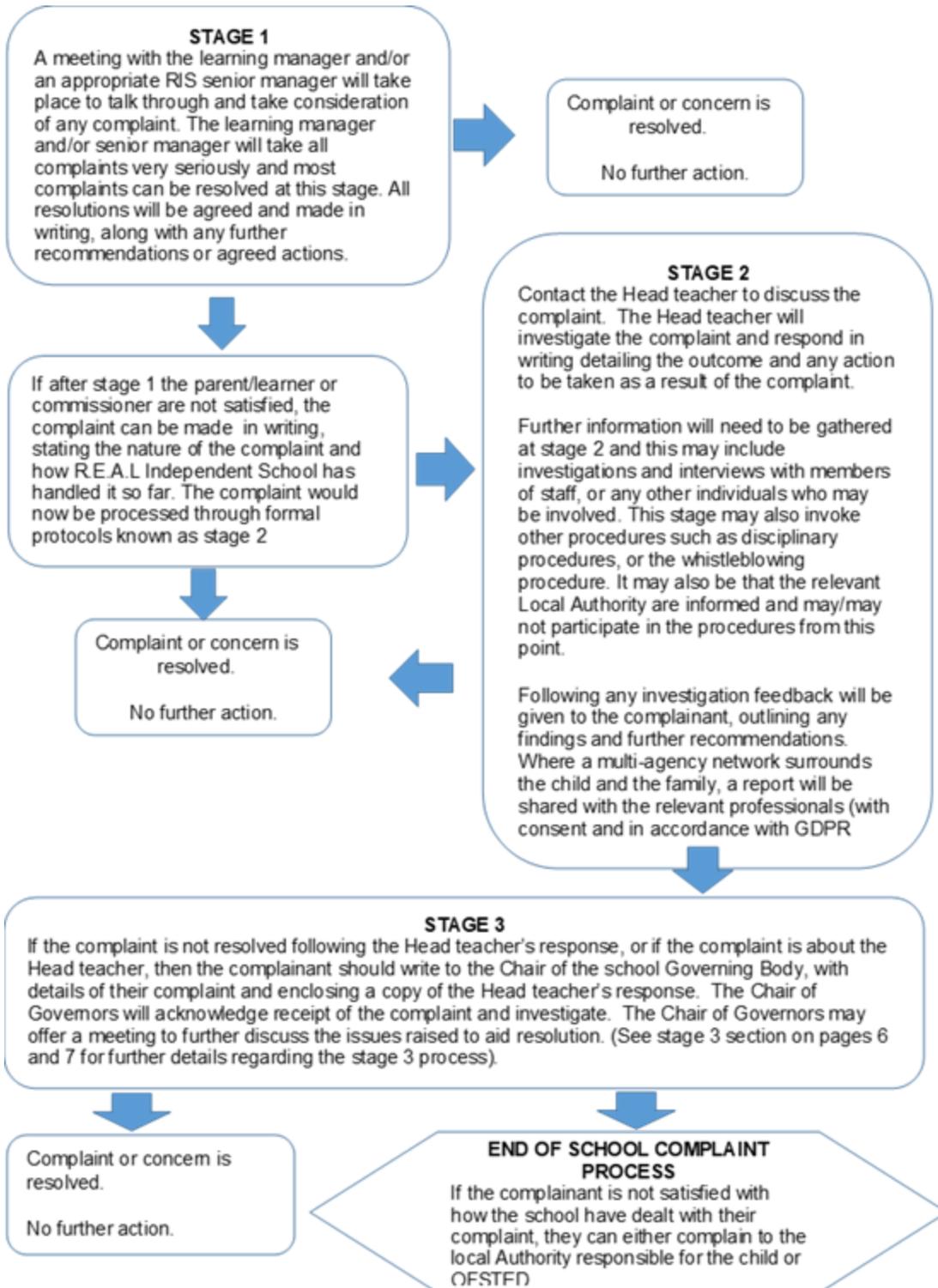
If a parent, learner or commissioner is concerned about anything to do with the education provided by R.E.A.L Independent School, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with the child's tutor or learning manager. In our experience most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. Our tutors and learning managers ensure that each child is happy and is making good progress. They naturally want to know if there is a problem so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress.

Where the complainant feels that a situation has not been resolved through contact with the tutor, or Learning Manager, or that their concern is of a sufficiently serious nature, they should make an appointment to discuss it with the learning manager, or an appropriate senior manager. This is known as a stage 1 complaint. These complaints can be made either face to face, over the telephone, or in writing (e.g. via an email). It is important to ask the complainant at this stage what solutions they think might resolve the issue.

An appeal can also be made using the staged processes outlined in the flowchart shown on the next page. (For more information regarding each stage, please see pages 6 and 7)

Where a complaint is made by parents of SEN pupils they are advised to follow our Policy for the Management of Concerns, Complaints and Appeals policy.

NB - It should be noted that most schools have a two staged complaints policy, starting with the Head Teacher at stage 1. At REAL Independent Schools, we have developed a 3 stage process try to resolve issues before escalating them to the Head Teacher. This is to acknowledge that some parents may be reluctant to make the complaint formal as they have had previous negative issues with Head Teachers.





Stage 1

A meeting with the learning manager and/or an appropriate R.E.A.L. Independent School senior manager will take place to talk through and take consideration of any complaint. The learning manager and/or senior manager will take all complaints very seriously and most complaints can be resolved at this stage. All resolutions will be agreed and made in writing, along with any further recommendations or agreed actions.

If after stage 1 the parent/carer, learner or commissioner are not satisfied, the complaint can be formalised in writing, stating the nature of the complaint and how R.E.A.L Independent School has handled it so far. The complaint would now be processed through formal protocols known as stage 2.

Stage 2

Contact the Head teacher to discuss the complaint. The Head of Schools will acknowledge a stage 2 complaint within 3 days of receipt and endeavour to resolve it within 10 working days. Any delays will be communicated fully with the complainant and timelines for resolution agreed

Further information will need to be gathered at stage 2 and this may include investigations and interviews with members of staff, or any other individuals who may be involved. This stage may also invoke other procedures such as disciplinary procedures, or the whistleblowing procedure. It may also be that the relevant Local Authority are informed and may/may not participate in the procedures from this point.

Following any investigation, feedback will be given to the complainant, outlining any findings and further recommendations. Where a multi-agency network surrounds the learner and their family, a report will be shared with the professionals, with permission and in accordance with GDPR guidelines.

If the complainant remains unsatisfied with the way the complaint has been handled at this point, a stage 3 process will be invoked. If a stage 2 complaint has not been raised to stage 3 by the complainant within 25 working days, it will be concluded that the complaint has been resolved.



Stage 3

If the complaint is not resolved following the Head teacher's response, or if the complaint is about the Head Teacher, then the complainant should write to the Chair of the school Governing body, with details of the complaint and enclosing the Head Teacher's response to the complaint. The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and investigate. A complaint being escalated to stage 3 will expect to be before a panel within 20 working days unless there are extenuating circumstances. The Chair of Governors may offer a meeting to further discuss the issues raised to aid a resolution prior to investigation. If this is not the case then a panel will be gathered to resolve the issues. The panel will consist of three individuals from R.E.A.L Independent School board of Governors and an independent participant, who has no connection with the management and running of the school. None of the panel members will have any connection to the complaint in any way. If necessary, panel members may also be drawn from the governance and leadership teams of R.E.A.L Alternative Provision School or R.E.A.L Education. This panel will call a hearing to consider the complaint.

All information, and particulars in relation to the actions thus far, including any paperwork or notes recorded, will be made available to the panel no later than 5 working days prior to the panel meeting.

The complainant may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If possible, the panel will resolve the complaint immediately without the need for any further investigation.

Where further investigation is required, the panel will decide how this will be carried out. After due consideration of all facts, the panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 5 working days of the panel meeting. The panel will write to the complainant informing them of the decision and the reasons for it. The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be made in writing.

The decision of the panel will be final but if the complainant is still not satisfied, they can complain to OFSTED.

In the case of serious misconduct complaints will be referred immediately to the police.

Written records of complaints are kept and a log indicates whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing.



All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them.

Timeliness

Complaints need to be considered and resolved as quickly, and efficiently as possible:

- Reasonable time limits for each action within each stage will be set (where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be agreed, the complainant will be sent the details of any new deadlines and will be given an explanation any delay)
- R.E.A.L Education does not consider excessive time limits to be reasonable or acceptable, except in extenuating circumstances
- Complaints tend to be made as soon as possible after an incident arises (although three months is generally considered to be an acceptable time frame in which to lodge a complaint)

Monitoring and review

The board of governors monitors the complaints procedure in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher logs all complaints received by the school, and records how they were resolved. The board of directors examine this log on an annual basis.

The board of governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process and makes any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.