Reedness Primary School Complaints Procedure

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, may make a complaint to Reedness Primary 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.

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. Reedness Primary 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 will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, they 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, Reedness Primary School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

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 of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the class teacher or headteacher. If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. Governors have no power to act on an individual basis, and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure. Any governor contacted directly about a concern or complaint will not respond to its substance and will pass it to the Clerk.

Formal complaints should be sent as follows:

- **Complaints about school staff (except the headteacher) or about the school generally** should be made to the headteacher, via the school office.
- **Complaints about the headteacher** should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body, via the school office.
- **Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the governing body as a whole** should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body, via the school office.

Please mark all formal complaints 'Private and Confidential'. Complaints addressed to the Clerk will be passed to the Clerk unopened.

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.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the headteacher or, if appropriate, the Chair of Governors will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation. If an anonymous complaint concerns the headteacher or the Chair of Governors, the decision will be referred to the Vice-Chair.

Timescales

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. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply, this is at the discretion of the school.

All timescales in this procedure are given in school days, which do not include weekends, bank holidays or school holidays.

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 a holiday period.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

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

Exceptions	Who to contact
● 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 East Riding of Yorkshire Council
● Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding on 01482 396999 or the East Riding Safeguarding and Partnership Hub (SaPH) on 01482 395500.
● Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.*
● Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.gov.uk/contact-dfe. Volunteers who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain directly to the local authority or the Department for Education, depending on the substance of your complaint.

● Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
● Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. 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.
● Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.
● Behaviour of parents, carers, or visitors	Concerns about the conduct of parents, carers or visitors are managed by the headteacher under the school's arrangements for managing conduct, not under this procedure.
● National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.gov.uk/contact-dfe

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may affect 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 Reedness Primary 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.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, Reedness Primary 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

Any action agreed to resolve a complaint will name the role responsible for it and a timescale.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

Conflicts of interest

Everyone involved in handling a complaint, including the headteacher, any investigator, governors and the Clerk, must act impartially and be seen to do so.

A conflict of interest includes any personal, family, professional or financial relationship with the complainant, the person complained about or the subject of the complaint, and any prior involvement in the matter. A perceived conflict, where a reasonable person might question someone's impartiality, should be treated in the same way as an actual conflict.

Anyone who has an actual or perceived conflict of interest must declare it to the Clerk as soon as they become aware of it and take no further part in handling the complaint. Governors should not discuss the complaint with others involved in it. Declarations, and the action taken, will be recorded.

Details of a complaint will not be shared with the whole governing body while it is being considered, so that enough governors remain available to hear it at Stage 2.

If a complainant believes that someone handling their complaint has a conflict of interest, they may raise this with the Clerk, who will consider it and confirm in writing what action, if any, will be taken.

Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing, or by telephone.

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 5 school days.

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The headteacher can consider whether a face to face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

If the headteacher has a conflict of interest in the complaint, it will be passed to the Clerk and handled in the same way as a complaint about the headteacher.

During the investigation, the headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the headteacher will provide a formal written response within 20 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the headteacher is 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 Reedness Primary 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 1.

Complaints about the headteacher or a governor

Complaints about the headteacher, or about a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

The Clerk will acknowledge receipt within 5 school days. The Clerk, in consultation with the Vice-Chair, will then appoint a suitably skilled governor, with no prior involvement in the matter and no actual or perceived conflict of interest, to complete all the actions at Stage 1. Where the complaint concerns the Vice-Chair, the Clerk will consult another governor with no conflict of interest instead. The Chair of Governors will take no part in the appointment if the complaint concerns the Chair. The appointment, and any conflict declarations, will be recorded.

If no suitable governor is available, the Clerk will ask East Riding of Yorkshire Council's Governor Support service to source an independent investigator.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority (50% or above) of the governing body

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator sourced by the Clerk through East Riding of Yorkshire Council's Governor Support service. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2: a meeting with members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be **formed of three, impartial, governors**. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 school days.
Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to offer up to three dates for the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects all the 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 complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement, knowledge of the complaint or perceived conflict of interest. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from Reedness Primary School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The committee 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 committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

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 committee at least 8 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 committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee 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. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee 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 committee 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 Committee will provide the complainant and Reedness Primary School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 20 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 Reedness Primary School

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or

- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors. This will be organised by the clerk to the governing board.

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 2.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Reedness Primary School. They will consider whether Reedness Primary 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.gov.uk/contact-dfe, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Duplicate, campaign and repeated complaints

If we receive a complaint that duplicates one we have already dealt with, from the same complainant or from someone else, we will tell them that the matter has already been considered and the procedure completed. We will consider new complaints only if they raise new issues or new evidence.

If we receive a large number of complaints about the same subject, for example as part of a campaign, we may send a single response to all complainants or publish a single response on the school website.

If a complainant tries to reopen the same issue after the procedure has been completed, the Chair of Governors (or, if the complaint concerns the Chair, the Vice-Chair) will write to them to explain that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter is closed.

Records and governor oversight

The school will keep a written record of all formal complaints, including the stage at which each was resolved, the outcome and any actions taken. Correspondence, statements and

records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection requests access to them. Records will be kept and disposed of in line with data protection law and the school's records retention arrangements.

The headteacher will provide an anonymised summary of formal complaints to each full governing body meeting, covering the number of complaints, their nature, the stage reached, outcomes and any lessons learned. This allows governors to monitor how well the procedure is working without being drawn into individual cases they may later need to hear.

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 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 headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

  The headteacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Clerk to the Governing Body

In this procedure, 'the Clerk' means the Clerk to the Governing Body or, where the Clerk is unavailable, another suitable person appointed by the governing body to carry out the Clerk's duties in relation to a particular complaint. This person must have no involvement in the complaint and no actual or perceived conflict of interest.

The Clerk 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.

Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.

  If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so

  No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant

We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting

  Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.

- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting

  Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

  The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

  If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

  However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

Review and Monitoring:

This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body and Headteacher on an annual basis.

Date: Autumn 2026

Date to be reviewed: Autumn 2027

Approved by: Governing Body

Signed: M.Herbert

Appendix:

Complaint Form

Please complete this form and return it to the school office, marked 'Private and Confidential'. Complaints about school staff or the school will be passed to the headteacher. Complaints about the headteacher or a governor should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governing Body and will be passed to the Clerk unopened. You will receive an acknowledgement explaining what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address:
Postcode:
Daytime telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Email address:
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 only Date received: Date acknowledgement sent: Acknowledgement sent by: Complaint referred to: Date referred: