



Regroup Education
Grow Succeed Achieve

Complaints Policy

Regroup Education

Approved by:	Directors
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Statement of intent

Regroup Education aims to resolve all complaints at the earliest possible stage and is dedicated to ensuring all complaints are managed sympathetically and efficiently.

Any complaint or concern will be taken seriously, whether formally or informally, and the appropriate procedures will be implemented. This policy has been created to deal with any complaint against a member of staff, or the provision as a whole, relating to any aspects of the provision or the provision of facilities or services.

The provision will ensure the complaints procedure is:

- Easily accessible and publicised on the provision's website.
- Simple to understand and put into practice.
- Impartial and fair to all parties involved.
- Respectful of confidentiality duties.
- Continuously under improvement, using information gathered during the procedure.
- Fairly investigated, by an independent person when necessary.
- Used to address all issues to provide appropriate and effective responses where necessary.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education and Skills Act 2008
- Equality Act 2010
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

2. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:

- A “**complaint**” can be defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction’ towards the actions taken or a perceived lack of action taken.
- A “**concern**” can be defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt’ where reassurance is required.
- “**Complainants**” are those who have raised a concern or a complaint.
- A “**grievance**” is an issue raised by a member of staff where they feel the provision has not implemented a policy or process fairly or properly. Grievances will be dealt with in line with the provision's **Grievance Policy**.
- For the purpose of this policy, concerns will be classed and addressed as complaints.
- For the purpose of this policy, “**days**” relate to provision days.

3. Eligibility to make a complaint

Parents (including individuals with parental responsibility) of students currently being educated at the provision are able to make a complaint in line with this policy.

All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Parents will be assured that their children will not be penalised if they raise a complaint.

This policy does not cover complaints made by the following:

- Parents of pupils who have left voluntarily or as a result of being excluded (except where the complaints process was started when the pupil was still being educated at the school)
- Pupils
- Prospective pupils and their parents, and the failure to admit such pupils

4. Timescales

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 provision 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.

5. Stage 1 – informal raising of a concern

The provision expects that most concerns can be resolved informally.

Concerns should be raised initially as follows:

[The list below should be used as an example only]

- Educational issues – raise the concern with the relevant teacher. The concern will be passed to a more senior member of staff if appropriate.
- Pastoral care – raise the concern with the headteacher.
- Behaviour – raise the concern with the staff member who imposed the behaviour sanction.
- Financial matters – raise the concern with the headteacher.
- Other concerns – raise the concern with the headteacher.
- Concerns regarding the headteacher – raise the concern with the Director of Regroup Education

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 **4 days** of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays.

If the concern is not resolved within **10 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 stage 2 of this procedure.

6. Stage 2 – formal complaint

The complainant should submit their complaint in writing to the headteacher. The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within **4 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 headteacher will meet with the complainant within **10 days** of acknowledging receipt of the complaint to discuss the matter. If the complaint is about the headteacher, the discussion will take place with the Director of Regroup Education.

During the meeting, the headteacher will attempt to reach a resolution; however, it may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out by the headteacher or another designated member of staff. If the complaint is about the headteacher, the Director 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 headteacher will inform the complainant of their decision and their reasoning in writing.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, the Director will inform the complainant of their decision and their reasoning in writing.

The complainant will be informed of the decision within **20 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 stage 3 of this procedure.

7. Stage 3 – panel hearing

Where a complaint cannot be resolved during stage 2, a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the school's Director 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 provision – this means they are not a member of the school's workforce or proprietorial 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 **20 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 provision 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 **10 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 **10 days** of the hearing. A copy of the decision, findings and recommendations will be sent to, where relevant, the person complained about, the headteacher and the chair of the proprietorial body.

The decision of the panel will be final, and the completion of stage 3 represents the conclusion of the school's complaints procedure.

If it is found that the provision 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 provision 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.

8. Persistent Complaints

Unreasonable persistent complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, which has already been resolved by following the provision's complaints procedure
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory, or repetitive
- Knowingly provides false information
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of the scope of the complaints procedure
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner, e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are inconsistent with this procedure and the

time frames it sets out

- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance, or excessive demands on work time
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

Steps we will take

We will take every opportunity to address the complainant's concerns and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the provision in a disruptive way, we may put communication strategies in place. We may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

Stopping responding

We may cease to respond to a complaint when all these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

In these circumstances, we will inform the individual that we intend to cease to respond. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

In the event of aggressive, threatening, or violent behaviour directed towards any member of Regroup Education or our wider community, we will inform the police and communicate the action we will take in writing. This may include barring an individual from our provision site.

Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there is any new information or any aspects that have not been previously considered.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete

Complaint campaigns

Where the provision receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, Regroup Education may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the provision website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If the complainants are not satisfied with the response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

9. Recording complaints

A written record will be kept of any complaint made, detailing:

- Whether the complaint was resolved following an informal route, formal route, or panel hearing.
- Actions taken by the provision as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld).

Additional records may be kept containing the following information:

- The date the issue was raised
- The name of the complainant and, where relevant, their child
- A description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations
- Witness statements
- The name of the staff member responsible for handling the issue at each stage •
Copies of correspondence on the issue

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills 2008 Act requests to access them.

- Pursues a valid complaint

10. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed **annually**.

All changes made to this policy will be communicated with all relevant stakeholders.