



## **Complaints Policy**

### **September 2025 (to be reviewed annually)**

#### **1. Introduction**

Reach for Inclusion Learning Centre is committed to providing high-quality education and care. We recognise that, despite our best efforts, concerns or complaints may occasionally arise. This policy sets out how parents, carers, pupils, and members of the public can raise concerns or complaints and how these will be handled.

This policy meets the requirements of:

- Education Act 2002
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Part 7
- DfE Best Practice Guidance for School Complaints Procedures (2023)

A copy of this policy is published on our website and is available on request from the Learning Centre office.

#### **2. Scope of the Policy**

You may make a complaint under this policy if you are:

- A parent/carer of a pupil
- A parent/carer of a former pupil (if the complaint is raised within six months of the pupil leaving)
- Any person who has been provided with a service or facility by Reach for Inclusion

This procedure does not cover:

- Admissions decisions
- Exclusion decisions
- Child protection or safeguarding concerns

These matters follow separate statutory procedures.

Anonymous complaints will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

#### **3. Definitions**

- Concern: An expression of worry or issue raised informally with a member of staff.
- Complaint: A formal assertion that the Learning Centre has acted incorrectly or failed to act.
- Concerns should normally be raised informally in the first instance.

#### **4. Safeguarding and Serious Allegations**

If a complaint suggests that a child may be at risk of harm—including physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect—Reach for Inclusion will refer the matter immediately to Children's / Adult's Social Care, the police, or other relevant agencies.

This may delay or supersede aspects of this complaints procedure.

Where allegations are made about staff conduct, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be informed and procedures for managing allegations will apply.

#### **5. Aims of the Policy**

This policy ensures:

- A clear, transparent and timely process
- That complaints are investigated thoroughly, fairly and without prejudice
- That complainants feel able to raise issues without fear of disadvantage



- That lessons are learned from complaints and policies/practices improved
- Confidentiality is maintained in line with data protection legislation

Complainants are expected to engage with the process respectfully and should not use social media to raise or escalate concerns.

## **6. Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

### **6.1 Raising a concern**

Most concerns can be resolved quickly by speaking to the relevant member of staff:

- Usually the learner's Learning Mentor
- Or the relevant staff member involved
- Staff concerns should be raised with their line manager unless the complaint involves that person

Concerns can be raised in person, by telephone or in writing.

### **6.2 Timescales**

We aim to resolve informal concerns within 15 working days.

### **6.3 Outcome**

The staff member will:

- Listen and clarify the nature of the concern
- Explain actions taken or planned
- Confirm the outcome in writing where appropriate

If the issue cannot be resolved informally, the complainant will be advised to proceed to Stage 2: Formal Resolution.

## **7. Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

### **7.1 Submitting a formal complaint**

Formal complaints must be submitted in writing to the Directors using the Complaint Form (Appendix 1) or by letter/email addressing the questions on the form.

Complaints about a Director must be addressed to the other Director.

Acknowledgement of receipt will be sent within 1 working day.

### **7.2 Investigation**

A senior leader, or the Directors, will investigate the complaint. This may involve:

- Meeting with the complainant (within 5 working days where possible)
- Interviewing staff or pupils involved
- Reviewing relevant documentation
- Seeking advice from external professionals if required

Investigations should normally be completed within 10 working days of receipt of the written complaint.

### **7.3 Safeguarding or criminal concerns**

If, during investigation, safeguarding or criminal concerns arise, the matter will be referred to appropriate agencies. Staff may be suspended if required.

### **7.4 Outcome**

Once the investigation is complete, the Directors will:

- Make a decision based on the balance of probabilities
- Notify the complainant in writing within 20 working days
- Outline reasons for the decision



- Confirm any actions to be taken
- Explain the right to proceed to Stage 3 if dissatisfied

All written complaints will be entered into the Complaints Log in compliance with statutory requirements.

## **8. Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 2, they may request a Panel Hearing.

### **8.1 Constitution of the Panel**

The Complaints Panel will consist of three members, none of whom were directly involved in previous stages:

- One independent member (not involved in the management or running of the Learning Centre)
- One Director
- One additional panel member of standing within the local community

### **8.2 Scheduling the Hearing**

The Chair of the Panel will:

- Acknowledge the request
- Arrange a hearing within 15 working days where practicable
- Circulate relevant papers at least 5 working days before the hearing

### **8.3 Attendance**

The complainant may be accompanied by:

- A relative, supporter, or friend
- Legal representation is not normally permitted; if requested, notice must be given 7 working days prior

The panel may proceed in the complainant's absence if they fail to attend without reasonable notice.

### **8.4 Conduct of the Hearing**

The hearing will:

- Be private and confidential
- Consider only issues previously raised
- Allow each party to present evidence and ask questions respectfully
- Continue under the direction of the Panel Chair

Children involved in the complaint will not attend unless specifically invited by the Chair.

### **8.5 Decision**

Following the hearing, the panel will:

- Reach a decision based on the balance of probabilities
- May uphold or dismiss all or part of the complaint
- May make recommendations to the Directors
- Issue a written decision within 10 working days
- Ensure copies are provided to the complainant, Directors, panel members, and any individual complained about

The Panel's decision is final.

A confidential written record of the complaint, findings and outcomes will be retained as required by law.

## 9. Record-Keeping and Confidentiality

- A written record will be kept of all complaints, including those resolved informally
- Records will detail whether the complaint progressed to a panel hearing
- All records will be kept confidential except where disclosure is required:
  - To the Secretary of State
  - At inspection by Ofsted
  - Where legal obligations require it

The Centre must provide, on request, the number of formal complaints registered during the previous academic year.

## 10. Escalation to the Department for Education

If the complainant believes the Learning Centre has:

- Acted unreasonably, or
- Failed to discharge a statutory duty

They may contact the Secretary of State for Education.

Details on how to do this are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

## 11. Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

A complaint may be considered unreasonable if:

- It is persistent, despite all stages being followed
- It is obsessive, harassing or abusive
- It uses inappropriate channels (e.g., social media campaigns)
- It includes knowingly false information

Where behaviour becomes unreasonable, the Directors may:

- Restrict contact
- Refuse to consider repeated complaints on the same issue
- Inform the complainant that the matter is closed

This aligns with the Learning Centre's Unreasonable Complaints Policy.

## 12. Review and Monitoring

Directors will review complaints to identify recurring themes or risks relating to:

- Safeguarding
- Health and Safety
- Staff conduct or training needs
- Policies and risk assessments

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Policy	Complaints Policy
Date created	September 2023
Date Reviewed	September 2025
Date of Next Review	September 2026
Signed:	
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