



Rickmansworth School

School Complaints

(For Parents/Carers of a student on roll at the School)

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INTRODUCTION

The Governors of Rickmansworth School have based the Complaints Procedure on a model suggested by the Hertfordshire Local Authority, and in accordance with guidance from the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for Academies

This document sets out for parents and carers of students on roll at Rickmansworth School, the procedure for making and dealing with complaints about matters at the school.

We hope and believe that most concerns can be resolved informally before they become a formal complaint. Furthermore, Governors believe that all stakeholders in the school – students, staff, parents and carers, and the wider community – must treat each other at all times with a high degree of mutual respect.

Unacceptable behaviour of any kind by a complainant at any time will mean that the school and Governors will investigate the complaint without the attendance of the complainant.



Tony Walker
CHAIR OF GOVERNORS



Matt Fletcher
HEADTEACHER

Summary of Rickmansworth School Complaints Procedure

INFORMAL - STAGES 1

Parent/Carer has a concern of complaint about something at School

STAGE 1

Parent/Carer speaks to the member of staff concerned, or Head of Department/Faculty or Director of Learning. If your child has special educational needs you might find it helpful to speak to the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCo).

Issue resolved

Issue not resolved

STAGE 2

1. Parent/Carer speaks to or has a meeting with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) Lead who will conduct an investigation into the matter. The SLT Lead will meet the complainant as part of the investigation. (If the complaint is about the Head Teacher, then the complainant should make an appointment to see the Chair of Governors in the first instance.)

Issue resolved

Issue not resolved

STAGE 3

1. Parent/carers makes an appointment to see the Head Teacher. (The head Teacher will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days* and try to see you within 10 working days).
2. Parent/Carer outlines concern/complaint to Head Teacher.
3. After the appointment, Head Teacher looks at how the complaint has been investigated and, if necessary, conducts additional investigations.
4. The Chair of Governors may also be involved informally at this stage.
5. Head Teacher reports to parent in writing on result of findings.
6. Most issues are resolved at this stage by the Head Teacher, or by the Head Teacher and the Chair of Governors,

Issue resolved

Issue not resolved

A complaint remains informal until the complaint is put on the School's Complaints Form, at which point it becomes formal.

FORMAL – STAGE 4

STAGE 4

1. Parent/carers fills in the school's official Complaints Form (available from the Clerk to the Governors or the Head Teacher's PA) and sends it to the Chair of Governors at the school. (If there is more than one complaint, separate forms should be completed for each complaint).
2. Chair of Governors responds to form within 5 working days* and tells parent/carers what will happen next.
3. The Chair of Governors sets up a Governors' Complaints Panel, at least one member of which will be independent of the management of the School.
4. The parent/carers and the Headteacher are invited to a meeting of the complaints panel.
5. Parents/Carers may be accompanied by a friend or a supporter at the hearing. If the parent/carers wishes to bring legal or professional representation, the Clerk to the Governors must be informed at least 10 working days prior to the meeting.
6. At this meeting the complaint is formally considered.
7. After this meeting, the panel chair write to the parent/carers telling them what the conclusions were, and what, if any, their recommendation to the Governing Body will be.

* The term "working days" means days that the school is normally open and does not include weekends, bank holidays or other days that the school is not open to students

HOW TO COMMENT OR COMPLAIN AT RICKMANSWORTH SCHOOL

We care about what you think.

At Rickmansworth School, we make many decisions every day and try very hard to do the best for all the children. As a parent or carer your comments - either positive or negative - are helpful for future planning. You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of our provision, although not actually make a complaint - you may just want to get something 'off your chest'. Please let us know your views.

If you are dissatisfied about the way your child is being treated, or any actions or lack of action by us, please feel able to complain. This procedure is not exhaustive and has more than 3 stages.

Our promise to you:

- Your complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence
- Your complaint will be looked into thoroughly and fairly
- Your complaint will be dealt with as quickly as possible
- If your complaint is urgent, we will do our best to respond urgently
- We will keep you up to date with progress at each stage
- You will get an apology if we have made a mistake
- You will be told what we are going to do to put things right
- You will get a full and clear written reply to **formal** complaints within 28 working days*.

First stage of the complaints procedure.

At this stage, the complaint is regarded as an **INFORMAL** complaint.

If you have a concern about anything we do, or if you wish to make a complaint, you can do this by telephone, in person or in writing. We know that it can feel uncomfortable to question or challenge, but if you do not tell us what is worrying you, we cannot explain what we are doing or try to put it right. We hope that most complaints can be resolved quickly and informally, either by putting matters right or by giving you an explanation.

If there is something you are not happy about, or you do not understand why we are doing something in a particular way, please come in and discuss it with the appropriate member of staff. You may prefer to speak to a Teacher, Head of Department, Head of Faculty, Director of Learning or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. If your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) you might find it helpful to talk to our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCo) or your child's named Special Needs Officer at the Local Authority. The SEND Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS – formerly Parent Partnership) may also be able to help you.. There may be occasions when it is appropriate for the complainant and the member of staff involved to have a further meeting at this stage.

Second stage of the complaints procedure.

At this stage, the complaint is regarded as an **INFORMAL** complaint.

If the first person you talk to cannot help you then you should speak to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) lead, or if you prefer arrange to meet them. **At this stage your concerns must be in writing.** This is a requirement of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (Part 7), which the school must comply with. The SLT lead will acknowledge your written complaint within 5 working days and aim to conduct an investigation into your complaint within 10 working days. If your complaint is complex, the SLT lead may need an extended period to conduct thorough investigations and you will be informed of the reason for the extension in timescales by the SLT lead. The SLT lead will present their findings / decision to you in writing, usually following a meeting between you and the SLT lead.

Third stage of the complaints procedure.

At this stage, the complaint is regarded as an **INFORMAL** complaint.

If your concerns are still unresolved, you should speak to the Headteacher by making an appointment through the Headteacher's PA, to make sure the Headteacher is available. The Headteacher will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days and try to see you, whenever possible, **within 10 working days.** The Headteacher will listen to your complaint. After the meeting with you the Headteacher will look at how your complaint has been investigated and, if necessary, conduct additional investigations. The Headteacher will report back to you in writing **within a further 10 working days.** If your complaint is complex, the Headteacher may need an extended period to conduct thorough investigations and you will be informed of the reason for the extension in timescales by the Headteacher. The Headteacher will present their findings / decision to you in writing.

The Chair of the School Governors may also want to speak with you at this informal stage and there may be occasions when the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors work together at this stage to investigate and resolve the complaint. It should be possible to sort out your concerns by this stage. If this is not the case then the complainant can choose to progress to the next (Formal) stage.

Fourth stage of the complaints procedure.

At this stage the complaint is regarded as a **FORMAL** complaint.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome you can complain **formally** by filling in the school's **Complaint Form** available from the Clerk to the Governors (or Headteacher's PA) and in Appendix 1. If you have more than one complaint you will have to fill in a separate form for each complaint. Send the completed form/s to the Chair of the Governing Body at the school. The Chair will acknowledge your complaint within **5 working days of receipt** and tell you what will happen next. The Chair will arrange for your complaint to be considered by a panel of at least three governors who have not had any previous knowledge of the complaint. At least one member of this panel will be independent of the running and management of Rickmansworth School and may be a governor at another school. An investigation prior to a Complaints Panel does not have to take place if the Chair of Governors is satisfied that all the facts of a complaint have been established and therefore, no further clarity is needed.

As part of this stage, you and the Headteacher will be invited to attend a meeting with this panel to discuss your complaint. You will be given at least 15 working days' notice of the date and time of the hearing. You should submit any additional evidence you wish to bring to the attention of the panel 10 working days before the hearing, and you will receive details of any evidence submitted by the school 5 working days prior to the hearing.

You will also be invited to bring a friend or representative with you if you wish. If you wish to have legal or professional representation at the hearing the Clerk to Governors must be advised of this at least 10 working days in advance of the hearing. At this meeting all parties to the complaint will have the opportunity to ask questions via the Panel Chair. The aim of the meeting will be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant.

When your complaint has been fully investigated you will be told of the outcome in writing, including any recommendations that might be made by the panel as a result of the investigation. A copy may also be sent to the person complained about where appropriate or relevant. In addition, the findings and recommendations of the panel will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher.

The timing of this fourth, formal, stage should be **28 working days** from receipt of the complaints form by the school to the receipt of the outcome letter by you. Sometimes, however, further investigations are necessary and new time limits have to be set. In this case you will be sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay.

The school is required to keep a written record of all formal complaints. They must show what action was taken by the academy as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether the complaints were upheld).

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State (or someone acting on his or her behalf) requests access to them.

Final Stage of the Complaints procedure.

Most complaints are the responsibility of the Governing Body of the School and will be resolved by them using the above process. A small number of complaints may not be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant. In the event you are not satisfied that your complaint has been handled appropriately you should contact the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

The ESFA's role is to consider whether the School followed the correct process. The ESFA will not investigate the School's decision.

The ESFA will not normally consider complaints received more than 12 months after a decision or the School's last action.

The ESFA may only be able to help if you are unable to complain, or are not satisfied with how the School handles your complaint because the School:

- does not have a complaints procedure

- did not provide a copy of its complaints procedure when requested
- does not have a procedure that complies with statutory regulations
- has not followed its published complaints procedure
- has not allowed its complaints procedure to be completed

The ESFA cannot change a School's decision about a complaint. Their role is to make sure the School handles your complaint properly by following a published procedure.

The ESFA reserve the right not to consider complaints that:

- are, or have been, subject to legal action
- are malicious (that is, they are without sufficient grounds and serve only to cause annoyance)
- use obscene, racist or homophobic language
- contain personally offensive remarks about members of our staff

are repeatedly submitted with only minor differences after we have fully addressed the complaint

The ESFA cannot overturn the school's decision, but if they find the school did not deal with a complaint appropriately they can request that the school look at it again. If we did not meet with regulations they will ask the school to put that right and they may, on behalf of the Secretary of State, if appropriate, seek to enforce the decision under the terms of the school's funding agreement.

Further details are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy/complain-about-an-academy#contacting-esfa>

The contact details for the ESFA are:
 Academies Central Unit (Academy Complaints)
 Education & Skills Funding Agency
 Earlsdon Park
 53-55 Butts Road
 Coventry
 CV1 3BH
 Email: academyquestions@education.gov.uk

Complaints about the Headteacher

If your complaint is about the Headteacher then the first thing to do is to write to the Chair of Governors. The school office can tell you who this is. The Chair of Governors will acknowledge your letter within 5 working days and inform you of the next step.

Appendix 1: Formal Complaint Form
(Stage 4 of Complaints Procedure)



Complainant details			
Name:	Title (Mr/Mrs etc))		
Address:			
Postcode:			
Telephone Day:			
Telephone Evening:			
WHAT IS IT YOU WANT TO COMPLAIN ABOUT?			
HAVE YOU COMPLAINED TO THE HEADTEACHER?	YES		NO
WHEN DID YOU DO THIS?	Date:		
WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU COMPLAINED TO THE HEADTEACHER?			

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WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE US TO DO TO PUT THINGS RIGHT?

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Signed	
Date	

**Please return this form to the:
Chair of the Governing Body
Rickmansworth School
Scots Hill
Croxley Green
Rickmansworth
Hertfordshire
WD3 3AQ**