ROCKMOUNT PRIMARY SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY – July 2025

Review: July 2027

1.Introduction

At Rockmount School we strive to provide a good education for all our children. Staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents and carers. However, the school has procedures in place in case there are any complaints made. The following policy sets out the procedures followed by the school in such cases.

If any parents/carers are unhappy with the education their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's class teacher immediately. We stress that there is a clear difference between a **concern** and a **complaint.** We take informal concerns seriously and, as a result, very few develop into formal complaints.

Parents and carers should be assured that making a complaint will not adversely affect your child.

Complaints are not restricted to parents or carers of pupils attending the school. Anyone can make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that a school provides, (unless separate statutory procedures apply) including parents or carers of children no longer at the school or members of the public.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-complaints-procedures/best-practice-advice-for-school-complaints-procedures-2019#who-can-make-a-complaint

This policy is available from the school office and is published on our school website.

2. Aims

Our school 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. Our Complaints Procedure is accessible and simple to use and understand. It aims to be non-adversarial. 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 within established time limits.

3. Arrangements for handling complaints from parents/carers of children with SEND

If a parent or carer has any concerns or complaints regarding the care, welfare or provision for their child, an appointment should be made, in the first instance, with the class teacher. If the issue cannot be immediately resolved, the SENCO will meet with the parent/carer (**Stage 1**)

The Complaints Process in Section 4 should then be followed.

4. The Complaints Process

Stage1. Informal Expression of concern made to the school.	If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education we are providing at our school they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. In our experience most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. All staff work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school 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. Most issues can be resolved quickly. Members of the school's Senior Leadership Team may be involved at this stage without the need for a formal complaint.
Stage 2. Complaint Concern raised formally in writing to the Headteacher	A formal complaint should be made in writing to the Headteacher and will be acknowledged **within five school days**. An appointment will be made to see the Headteacher within seven working days. All complaints are taken seriously. The Head teacher reserves the right to allocate the investigation to another member of staff where deemed appropriate. However, all investigations will be conducted by a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Most complaints are normally resolved at this stage. The outcome of the Headteacher's investigation will be communicated to you **within 15 school days.** This will be in the form of a written response, with full explanation of the decision and the reason for it, as well as any action taken. If the complaint is about the Head teacher the matter should be referred to the Chair of Governors.
Stage 3. Governing Body Complaints very rarely reach this formal level but should you need to, you may make a formal complaint to the Governing Body Complaints Panel.	Complaints at this stage should be written and received by the Chair of Governors **within 10 school days** of the outcome at Stage 2. Your letter should be addressed to the Chair of Governors via the school office and should set out why you remain unhappy and what you wish to see happen. (Appendix 2) You will receive an acknowledgement of your complaint **within 5 school days.** The Governing Body Complaints Committee will

	be convened and will meet **within 20 school days** of receiving the complaint. If a meeting with you and others involved is considered necessary, you will be given adequate notice to prepare. After the meeting, the committee will make their decision and write to inform you of the outcome **within 7 school days.**
Stage 4. Final Complaints Stage If all attempts to resolve the complaint have failed, you may refer your complaint to the DfE.	If attempts to resolve the complaint have been unsuccessful, you may then refer your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education at the Department for Education (DfE) visit: **www.gov.uk/complain-about-school** The Secretary of State is unlikely to investigate individual issues but can inspect the school's policies and procedures and make sure these have been followed.

Please note that parents or carers of children no longer at the school or members of the public should address their complaint directly to the Headteacher (Complaints Process – Stage 2).

5. Investigating the Complaint

It is suggested that at each stage, the person investigating the complaint should:

- ensure that there are no telephone conversations between the school and the parent/carer. All communication should be made in writing. We accept that meetings can be booked by telephone via the school office
- establish what has happened so far and who has been involved
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- meet with the complainant or contact them if further information is required
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- conduct any interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- complete all necessary notes and have a minute taker in all meetings

6. Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the complaint, school and the complainant should keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It may be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology
- an explanation

- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or in a better way
- an assurance that the event forming the basis of the complaint will not recur
- an explanation of the steps which have been taken to ensure it does not happen again. Details of any disciplinary procedures that have taken place as a result of the complaint are not released
- an undertaking to review school policy or procedure in light of the complaint
- an explanation that there is insufficient evidence and thus the complaint cannot be upheld
- an explanation that, following investigation, the concern is not substantiated by the evidence

An admission that the school could have handled things in a better way is not the same as an admission of negligence.

7. Monitoring and Review

Governors monitor the complaints procedure in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher logs all Stage 2 complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis.

Governors consider any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents/carers so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

All Senior Leadership Team members will be fully aware of procedures and trained accordingly and are involved in reviewing the policy. All staff are aware that a member of the Senior Leadership Team will handle all formal complaints. This policy is reviewed every two years, or before if necessary.

8. Serial/Unreasonable Complaints

Rockmount School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with the school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or intimidating.

Rockmount School defines unreasonable complainants as '*those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder the consideration of their or other people's complaints*'.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved

- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to the Department for Education
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone, in writing or electronically:

- maliciously
- aggressively
- using threats, intimidation or violence
- using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- knowing it to be false
- using falsified information
- publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media, such as in social media, websites and newspapers

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking. If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Rockmount School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. The individual may also be banned from Rockmount School premises.

Appendix 1

Summary of School Procedure for Dealing with Complaints

We encourage full involvement of the whole school community and we are open and informative about the school curriculum, behaviour polices and all aspects of school life.

Stage 1 (Informal)
Should a parent or carer wish to make a complaint they should express their concern to a member of staff.

Stage 2 (Formal)
Complainant makes a written complaint to the Headteacher.
Timescale for response: 5 school days to acknowledge letter, 7 to arrange appointment with Head Teacher and 15 for the Headteacher to reply to the Complainant.

Stage 3 (Formal)
Complainant makes formal complaint to the Governing Body.
In this case, a letter setting out the nature of the complaint, including Appendix 2, should be addressed to the Chair of Governors and sent to the School Office. A panel of governors will be convened to hear the complaint.
Timescale for response: 5 school days to acknowledge letter. A panel of three governors will meet within 20 school days of receiving the complaint.

Stage 4 (Formal)
Complainant refers to Secretary of State or to Ombudsman.

Appendix 2 – Complaints Form

Please complete and return this form to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. The Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of your complaint and explain what action will be taken.	
Date:	Pupil's name:
Name and relationship to the child:	
Contact address: Email:	Telephone:

Please give details of your complaint:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? (Who did you speak to and what was their response?)

What actions do you feel may resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.	
Signature:	Date:

Official Use Date acknowledgement sent/ who sent it: