



# Ralph Sadleir School

## COMPLAINTS POLICY

2020 – 2023

### 1. Rationale and Aim

Ralph Sadleir School takes all complaints seriously. The aim of this document is to set out how any complaint from any parent, carer, pupils and other is dealt with and to ensure that it is handled in the most appropriate and efficient manner by the Academy Trust.

The school aims to work closely with parents/carers, and we hope that parents/carers who have any concerns will, in the first instance, raise these with the form tutor or subject teacher. We find that nearly all concerns can be resolved through discussion with the form tutor or subject teacher.

The Governors of the school have adopted the complaints procedure for schools recommended by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and may be reviewed as we deem it appropriate or as required by Law or Regulation, or in line with advice received from HCC and the Department of Education (DFE).

This procedure complies with Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, meets the standards set out in the Education Independent School Standards (England) Regulations 2014, Schedule 1, Part 7 and is endorsed by the Academy Trust Board of Directors.

This policy should be used for:

- Complaints relating to the schooling of your child;
- Complaints about the education and care provided to pupils at the Academy Trust;
- Complaints about the Academy Trust's operational arrangements.

This policy should not be used for:

- Complaints by staff relating to grievances about their employment;
- Complaints about the actions of a Governor;
- Complaints about the actions of another parent;
- Allegations of abuse;;
- Issues between the school and community groups.

This policy is limited to matters which can reasonably be investigated and therefore complaints should be related to matters which have occurred within the last 12 months. The Complaints Policy can be downloaded from the Academy Trust's website [www.ralphsadleir.herts.sch.uk](http://www.ralphsadleir.herts.sch.uk) or a copy can be obtained from the school office by telephoning 01920 821042 or by email request to [admin@ralphsadleir.academy](mailto:admin@ralphsadleir.academy).

*Proud to Achieve*

Ralph Sadleir School, Station Road, Puckeridge, Hertfordshire, SG11 1TF

## HOW TO COMMENT OR COMPLAIN

### 2. We care about what you think

Each day this school makes many decisions and tries hard to do the best for all the children. Your comments – either positive or negative – are helpful for future planning.

You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of the school, though not actually make a complaint – you just want to get something ‘off your chest’.

If you are dissatisfied about the way your child is being treated, or are concerned by any actions or lack of action taken by the school, please feel free to contact us using the details listed above.

Your child must be on-roll at Ralph Sadleir in order for you to make a complaint. We will not process any complaints if your child is no longer a pupil at our school.

### 3. Our aims

- Your complaint will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.
- Your complaint will be looked into thoroughly and fairly.
- 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 school days (5 ½ weeks)**.

### 4. How to make a complaint

#### In the first instance – informal stage

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 (by letter or email). We hope that most complaints can be settled quickly and informally, either by putting matters right or by giving you an explanation. If there is something you are unhappy about, or you do not understand why we are doing something in a particular way, please come in and discuss the matter with the form tutor/subject teacher or the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENDCo), Mrs V Wilson, if the matter relates to special educational needs and/or disabilities.

If the member of staff you speak to in the first instance is unable to resolve the matter, you should make an appointment with the Pupil Progress Co-ordinator (PPC), Mr Morgan for KS3, Mrs Coppin as Head of Year 5 or Mr Taplin as Head of Year 6. If after meeting the PPC or Head of Year, you feel that the matter is still unresolved then please follow the steps below;

#### First formal stage

Write to Mr Monti, Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral), who will investigate your complaint.

#### Second formal stage

If the matter is still unresolved, please write to the Headteacher, Mr Fuller.

#### Third formal stage

If you remain dissatisfied following the second formal stage and wish to take your complaint further, you will be asked to write a letter addressed to Mrs S Forbes, Chair of the Local Governing Body.

In the letter you should:

- Make it clear why you are complaining.
- Say who you have spoken to already.
- Explain what you want to happen as a result of your complaint.

The Chair of the Local Governing Body will arrange for your complaint to be considered and investigated under the arrangements approved by the Local Governing Body. This is likely to involve a panel of governors. If the Chair of the Local Governing Body or another governor has been involved in discussions to help settle the disagreement at previous stages they should arrange for another governor to take charge of the investigation. The governor in charge of investigating the complaint may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns.

You should make sure that the Governors' Complaint Panel is provided with any written information or evidence you intend to use in a formal hearing. You may bring a friend, representative or interpreter to any meeting if you wish. The chair of the panel may invite any person who may help establish the facts of the complaint. The chair should tell you who this person is before the meeting. If any member of staff is required by the Local Governing Body to attend a meeting they will have the opportunity to be accompanied or represented as they wish. A member of staff named in a complaint may also choose to attend a meeting, even if not required to do so by the governors. They may be represented by a union representative. If this happens, we will inform you in advance.

When the panel has fully investigated your complaint, the chair of the panel or the governor in charge of the investigation will write to you to tell you the findings. These findings will be reported to the Local Governing Body. The Chair of the Local Governing Body will then write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. The Local Governing Body will aim to deal with your complaint **within 28 school days (5 ½ weeks)**.

## 5. Complaints relating to the Headteacher

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should **write to Mrs J Tye, Chair of the Board of Directors**.

## 6. Further recourse

Most complaints are resolved by this process. Should your complaint not be resolved, your further options are as follows:

In the case of complaints about **Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities provision**, you may complain further to the Local Authority. This should be done by writing to the Children's Services Complaints Manager.

It should be noted, however, that if you wish to pursue this route, you must do so within 20 working days (4 weeks) of receiving the written outcome of the hearing into your complaint. After 20 working days (4 weeks), neither the school nor the Local Authority is under any obligation to investigate or progress your complaint any further.

The Education Funding Agency (EFA) support Academy Trusts and will consider complaints about academies that fall into the following three areas:

- Where there is undue delay or the academy did not comply with its own complaints procedure when considering a complaint.
- Where the academy is in breach of its funding agreement with the Secretary of State.
- Where an academy has failed to comply with any other legal obligation.

The EFA will not overturn an academy's decision about a complaint. However, if they find an academy did not deal with a complaint properly, they will require the complaint to be looked at again and procedures meet the requirements set out in the Regulations.

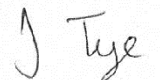
### 7. Serial and Persistent Complainants

Ralph Sadleir reserves the right to refuse to investigate a complaint if it is reasonable to regard the complaint as vexatious and/or repeated. Where the school decides that a complaint is vexatious and/or repeated, the complainant will receive written notification that the complaint is not being investigated within five school days. If the complainant is unhappy with a decision not to investigate or believes that the school is being unlawful in their actions, they may refer the complaint to the Local Authority or Secretary of State.

See Appendix 3 - *Policy for Unreasonable Complainants*

### 8. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years and/or in light of any changes in legislation by the Local Governing Body. Any recommended policy changes will be made to the Board of Directors for approval.

Governance	Chair Person/Headteacher	Signature	Date
Board of Directors	Mrs J Tye		21 <sup>st</sup> April 2020

The next review will take place prior to April 2023.

## APPENDIX 1

### Useful Contacts

Academies Central Unit (Academy Complaints), Education Funding Agency, Earlsdon Park, 53-55 Butts Road, Coventry, CV1 3BH

Email: [academyquestions@efa.education.gov.uk](mailto:academyquestions@efa.education.gov.uk)

#### **Advisory Centre for Education**

Education Advice & Training  
72 Durnsford Road  
London  
N11 2EJ  
Web: [www.ace-ed.org.uk](http://www.ace-ed.org.uk)  
Phone: **0300 0115 142**

Children's Legal Centre  
Riverside Office Centre  
Century House North  
North Station Road  
Colchester  
Essex  
CO1 1RE  
Web: [www.childrenslegalcentre.com](http://www.childrenslegalcentre.com)  
Phone: **0345 345 4345**

SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs & Disability Information Advice Support Service – formerly Parent Partnership Registry Office Block)  
CHR102  
County Hall  
Hertford  
SG13 8DF  
Web: [www.hertsdirect.org/parentpartnership](http://www.hertsdirect.org/parentpartnership)  
Email: [parent.partnership@hertfordshire](mailto:parent.partnership@hertfordshire)  
Phone: 01992 555847

Family Lives (formerly Parentline Plus)  
15-17 The Broadway  
Hatfield  
Hertfordshire  
AL9 5HZ  
Web: [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)  
Phone: 0808 800 2222

#### **POhWER**

Hertlands House  
Primett Road  
Stevenage  
SG1 3EE  
Web: [www.pohwer.net](http://www.pohwer.net)  
Phone: **0300 456 2370**

National Youth Advocacy Service  
(NYAS)  
Egerton House  
Tower Road  
Birkenhead  
Wirral  
CH41 1FN  
Web: [www.nyas.net](http://www.nyas.net)  
Phone: **0345 345 4345**

## Appendix 2

### Policy for Unreasonable Complainants

Ralph Sadleir 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 threatening.

Ralph Sadleir School defines unreasonable complainants as ‘those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our 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 expecting 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 complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to the DfE.
- 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/or 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 or, 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 the 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 the Local Governing Body will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an ‘unreasonable’ marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Ralph Sadleir 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. This may include banning an individual from entering Ralph Sadleir School or the school grounds.