



# Ridgeway Primary School and Nursery

## Complaints Policy

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## 1 Introduction

At Ridgeway Primary School and Nursery we pride ourselves on ensuring that the needs of all our children and parents/carers are met and that our school is a safe and happy place for all.

However, we recognise that, despite our best efforts, there may be occasions when parents/carers remain unhappy about something that relates to school and wish to make a complaint. This policy outlines the procedures in place for handling complaints.

We hope that these procedures will enable us to resolve all complaints swiftly and effectively.

## 2 Aims

Ridgeway is a school where children are at the centre of the decisions made. Relationships are based on respect for all our stakeholders. The aims of this policy ensure our school values are upheld throughout the process.

It is in everyone's interests that complaints about the school are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Therefore, we encourage parents/carers to raise any concerns about their child as soon as possible with the class teacher.

We will always try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. However, where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to use the Complaints Policy when raising a complaint. To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Be impartial and non-adversarial
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response



	<p>Tel: 0208 726 6000 (Ext. 84343)    Mob: 07985 590505</p> <p>who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (SPOC):  For urgent child protection matters requiring immediate attention: Tel: 0208 255 2888  SPOC Professionals Consultation Line Tel: 0208 726 6464</p> <p>Email SPOC referrals to: <a href="mailto:childreferrals@croydon.gov.uk">childreferrals@croydon.gov.uk</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exclusion of children from school*</li> </ul>	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the Behaviour Policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i>  <a href="https://www.ridgewayprimaryschool.org.uk/">https://www.ridgewayprimaryschool.org.uk/</a></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whistleblowing</li> </ul>	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at: <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a>.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the DfE (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff grievances</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff conduct</li> </ul>	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complaints regarding services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities</li> </ul>	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them directly.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Curriculum - content</li> </ul>	<p>Please contact the DfE at:  <a href="http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus">www.education.gov.uk/contactus</a></p>

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaints.

## 5 Complaints

### 5.1 Summary of the complaints procedure

<b>INFORMAL PROCEDURE STAGE A Concern</b>	<b>SCHOOL ACTION</b>
Informal discussion with the relevant class teacher or other relevant member of staff usually resulting in resolution to the issue.	The person is informed of the action to be taken to resolve the issue. If the concern is not resolved, please discuss further with member of staff to find out what action has been taken.
<b>INFORMAL PROCEDURE STAGE B</b>	
If you feel concerns have not been resolved, discussion with the relevant class teacher or other relevant member of staff to find out what has happened following initial conversation.	The person is informed of the action that was taken to solve the concern raised. If they are not satisfied they should be advised to contact a member of the HST.
<b>INFORMAL PROCEDURE STAGE C Complaint</b>	<b>SCHOOL ACTION</b>
Informal discussion with a member of the HST about the complaint. If the complaint is about the Deputy Head/Assistant Head you should contact the Co-Heads.	The person is informed of the action to be taken to resolve the issue. If they are not satisfied they should be provided with a copy of the school's Complaints Policy/procedure and information on how to proceed to stage 1.
<b>FORMAL PROCEDURE STAGE 1</b>	<b>SCHOOL ACTION</b>
The complaint is submitted to a member of the HST who has not previously been involved using form in Appendix A.	The HST acknowledges receipt within 5 school days and provides a full written response within 20 school days. Information is provided to the complainant on how to progress the complaint to stage 2.
<b>FORMAL PROCEDURE STAGE 2</b>	<b>SCHOOL ACTION</b>
The complaint is submitted to the Chair of Governors by completing the form in Appendix B.	The Chair or nominated governor acknowledges receipt within 5 school days and provides a full written response within 30 school days. If the complaint is of a particularly complex nature, the Chair of Governors or Nominated Representative may convene a Governors Complaints Panel, which may include an independent governor, to review the complaint.
<b>FURTHER RECOURSE</b>	
Complaint regarding maintained schools forwarded to the DfE addressed to the Secretary of State. The department's executive agency, the Education Funding Agency (EFA), will handle complaints about academies and free schools.	The Secretary of State may intervene if a governing body has acted unreasonably.

### 5.2 Making a complaint (for complaints against the Co-Heads/Governors see section

#### 5.2.1 Informal Procedure Stage A

If you have a concern about anything we do, you should raise this as soon as possible with the class teacher or member of staff most directly involved, either in person or via the school office. We will make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue or it may involve a meeting or discussion between you and the teacher or member of staff, as appropriate.

#### 5.2.2 Informal Procedure Stage B

If you feel your concerns have not been addressed, please talk again with the member of staff to find out what actions have been put in place.

At all stages, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What you feel would put things right

If you have difficulty discussing a concern or complaint with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, one of the Headship Team (HST) will refer you to another staff member.

Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern or complaint, one of the HST will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

If you are unclear who to contact or how to contact them, please email the school office at [office@ridgeway.croydon.sch.uk](mailto:office@ridgeway.croydon.sch.uk)

If following a discussion with the teacher or relevant member of staff, you are not satisfied with the resolution, you should contact a member of the HST outlining within 20 school days, briefly, what your complaint is about.

If your concern/complaint is about either the Deputy Head or the Assistant Head, you should contact the Co-Heads who will decide which member of the HST will deal with the complaint at this stage.

### **5.2.3 Informal Procedure Stage C**

The HST will make every effort to settle the matter directly with you within 5 school days. On some occasions the concern raised may require further investigation, or discussion with others, in which case you will receive a written or verbal response within 10 school days.

The vast majority of concerns/complaints will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if you still remain dissatisfied you can raise your complaint formally with the Co-Heads within 10 school days.

### **5.2.4 Formal Procedure Stage 1**

Where informal attempts have been unsuccessful in resolving a complaint, you can raise a formal complaint by:

- Completing the form in **Appendix A** and sending it to the Co-Heads at [office@ridgeway.croydon.sch.uk](mailto:office@ridgeway.croydon.sch.uk) or handing it into the office. The email or envelope should be marked FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION.
- Asking a third party to complete the form on your behalf, or by contacting the school at [office@ridgeway.croydon.sch.uk](mailto:office@ridgeway.croydon.sch.uk) or phoning 0208 6576957 to assist, or you can also ask third party organisations such as Citizens Advice to help you.

When completing the form, you should provide as much detail as possible, alongside copies of any relevant documents. You should explain why you feel the informal stage has not resolved your complaint and, most importantly, you should clearly state what outcome you are seeking to resolve the complaint. See Section 6: Resolving Complaints.

We will arrange for the complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school days of receiving it.

Upon receiving the complaint, the Co-Heads may delegate the task of investigating the complaint to another staff member but not the decision on the action to be taken.

The Co-Heads (or a representative appointed by the Co-Heads for this purpose) will clarify the nature of the complaint, what remains unresolved and what you feel would put things right. They may call a meeting if they are unsure about some points or require further information.

Following the investigation the Co-Heads will aim to provide a written response within 20 school days of sending the acknowledgement or from the date of the meeting.

However, if a complaint is more complex to review this can be extended to a maximum of 30 school days. If this is the case, we will advise you of the delay in responding.

If all avenues to resolve the complaint (see Section 6) have been tried and found unsatisfactory, you will need to refer your complaint to the Governing Body.

### **5.2.5 Formal Procedure Stage 2**

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 1, you can submit a Stage 2 formal complaint to the Chair of Governors by:

- Completing the form in **Appendix B** and emailing it to the Clerk of Governors or handing it into the office addressed to the Clerk of Governors. The email or envelope should be marked FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION.
- Asking a third party to complete the form on your behalf, or by contacting the school at [office@ridgeway.croydon.sch.uk](mailto:office@ridgeway.croydon.sch.uk) or phoning 0208 6576957 to assist, or you can also ask third party organisations such as Citizens Advice to help you.

When completing the form, you should clearly indicate why you feel the previous stage of the process has not resolved your complaint sufficiently and explain what you want to happen as a result of your complaint. See Section 6: Resolving Complaints.

The Clerk of Governors will arrange for the complaint to be acknowledged within 5 school days of receiving it.

Upon receiving the complaint, the Chair of Governors or their Nominated Representative will investigate the complaint and, if appropriate, may call a meeting to further discuss your concerns and seek a resolution. If the complaint is of a particularly complex nature, the Chair of Governors or Nominated Representative may convene a Governors Complaints Panel, which may include an independent governor, to review the complaint.

When the Chair of Governors or Nominated Representative has fully investigated your complaint they will write to you confirming the outcome of your complaint and any agreed actions to be taken. They will aim to deal with your complaint within 30 school days of sending the acknowledgement or from the date of the meeting.

At this stage, our intention will be to have fully resolved the complaint. Should this not be the case see Section 9.

## **5.3 Complaints against the Co-Heads, a governor or the governing board**

### **5.3.1 Stage 1: informal**

Complaints made against the Co-Heads or any member of the governing board should be directed to the Clerk of Governors in the first instance by completing the form in Appendix B

If the complaint is about the Co-Heads or one member of the governing board (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably-skilled and impartial governor will carry out the steps at stage 1 (set out in Section 5 above).

### **5.3.2 Stage 2: formal**

If the complaint is jointly about the Chair and Vice-Chair, the entire governing board or a majority of the governing board, an independent investigator will carry out the steps in stage 2 (set out in Section 5 above). They will be appointed by the governing board, and will write a formal response at the end of their investigation. Complaints should be made by completing the form in Appendix B.

## **6 Resolving complaints**

At each stage of the procedure described above, we will endeavour to work with you to resolve the complaint. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, if appropriate, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an apology
- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint

You will be encouraged throughout the process to state what actions you feel might resolve the problem at any stage. However, an admission that the school could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence. We will always aim to reach a satisfactory resolution that meets the needs of yourselves and the school.

## **7 Withdrawal of a complaint**

If you wish to withdraw your complaint, you must confirm this as soon as possible in writing, via the school office, addressed to the person you made the complaint to.

## **8 Timescales**

Complaints must be raised within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, you must raise the complaint within 3 months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved. When complaints are made out of term time or on the last day of term, we will consider them to have been received on the next school day.

With every best endeavour we will seek to meet the timescales described in this policy. However, should we be unable to do so, we will keep you informed of the new deadlines and explain the delays.

Timescales refer to school working days.

## **9 Further recourse**

Having completed the school procedure, should you still be unsatisfied with the outcome you can refer your complaint to the School Complaints Unit (SCU), which investigates complaints relating to maintained schools on behalf of the secretary of state.

The SCU will not re-investigate the matter of the complaint. It will look at whether the school's Complaints Policy and any other relevant statutory policies that the school holds were adhered to. The SCU also looks at whether the school's statutory policies adhere to education legislation. It may direct the school to re-investigate the complaint where it is clear the school has acted unlawfully or unreasonably.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

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

## **10 Unreasonably persistent complaints, duplicate complaints or complaint campaigns**

See separate policy covering this area.

## **11 Record-keeping**

In line with GDPR the school will retain records relating to complaints for a period of 6 years.

## **12 Learning lessons**

The steering committee will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the HST where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

## **13 Monitoring arrangements**

The governing board will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly. The governing board will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in Section 12.

The complaints records are logged and managed by one of the Co-Heads.

## **14 Links with other policies**

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures
- Admissions Policy
- Exclusions Policy
- Staff grievance procedures
- Staff disciplinary procedures
- SEN Policy and information report
- Privacy notices
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Behaviour Policy

## Ridgeway Primary School and Nursery Formal Complaint Form

Completed forms should be sent to the Co-Heads marked FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</b>
<b>Address:</b>
<b>Postcode:</b>
<b>Day time telephone number:</b>
<b>Evening telephone number:</b>
<b>Please give details of your complaint, including who you raised it with informally and their response. It will be helpful to have relevant dates, times and the names of witnesses.</b>

**What actions do you feel might resolve the issue?**

**Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By whom:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**

**Appendix B**

**Ridgeway Primary School and Nursery Formal Complaint Form**

Completed forms should be sent to the Clerk of Governors marked FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

<b>Your name:</b>
<b>Pupil's name (if relevant):</b>
<b>Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):</b>
<b>Address:</b>
<b>Postcode:</b>
<b>Day time telephone number:</b>
<b>Evening telephone number:</b>
<b>Please clearly indicate why you feel the previous stage of the process has not resolved your complaint sufficiently.</b>

**What actions do you feel might resolve the issue?**

**Please provide all the paperwork from your Stage 1 complaint.**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Official use**

**Date acknowledgement sent:**

**By whom:**

**Complaint referred to:**

**Date:**