

Complaints Procedure

Roehampton Church Forest School

'Nurturing Individuality, Growing Together,
Embracing Community'

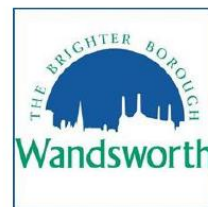


'Do all things without grumbling or disputing'

Philippians 2:14



Southwark Diocesan Board of Education
Supporting Christian Education



Status & Review Cycle: Statutory Annual

Reviewed: Autumn 2026

Next Review Date: Autumn 2027

1. Purpose and principles

Roehampton Church Forest School (RCFS) values its partnership with families and the wider community. We aim to resolve concerns fairly, consistently and as close to their source as possible. This procedure provides a clear route for complaints that cannot be resolved informally.

This procedure is established under section 29 of the Education Act 2002 and has regard to the Department for Education’s best-practice guidance for maintained schools.

In applying this procedure, the school will:

- be impartial, non-adversarial and fair to all parties;
- facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- address all points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response;
- respect confidentiality and handle information in accordance with data protection law;
- keep complainants informed where published timescales cannot be met and provide revised timescales;
- make reasonable adjustments where required so that the procedure is accessible;
- seek to identify learning and improvements, where appropriate.

2. Who can complain?

This procedure is not limited to parents or carers of pupils registered at the school. Any person may make a complaint about the provision of facilities or services by the school, unless a separate statutory or school procedure applies.

A complainant may be supported or represented by another person. Where a representative communicates on a complainant’s behalf, the school may require the complainant’s written consent before sharing personal information.

3. Matters outside this procedure

Some matters have their own statutory or separate procedures. These include:

- admissions to schools;
- statutory assessments of special educational needs and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs);
- school suspensions and permanent exclusions;
- matters likely to require a child protection investigation;
- whistleblowing by employees;
- staff grievances, disciplinary, capability or other employment matters;
- complaints about services provided by another organisation using the school premises, where that provider has its own complaints procedure;
- certain complaints about the National Curriculum or collective worship where a separate statutory route applies.

Where a complaint includes both matters covered by this procedure and matters subject to another process, the school will explain which route applies to each element and, where appropriate, may pause consideration of one element while another statutory process is completed.

4. Safeguarding and allegations about adults

The safety and welfare of children take priority over the complaints process. A concern that indicates a child may be at risk of harm, or an allegation that an adult working with children has harmed or may have harmed a child, will be dealt with under the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and relevant statutory safeguarding procedures. The complaints process may be suspended where continuing it could prejudice a safeguarding, police, local authority or employment investigation.

A complaint about the conduct of a member of staff may be raised under this procedure, but any resulting staff disciplinary or employment action is confidential. The complainant will be told that the matter has been addressed and given an appropriate response to the complaint, but will not normally be given confidential employment information.

5. Time limit for making a complaint

Complaints should be raised as soon as possible and normally within 3 months of the incident or, where there is a series of related incidents, within 3 months of the last incident. The school may consider a complaint made outside this period where there are exceptional circumstances or where it is reasonable to do so.

6. Informal concerns

Most concerns can be resolved informally. In the first instance, concerns should normally be raised with the class teacher or the member of staff best placed to help. Concerns about a member of staff should normally be raised with the Headteacher. Concerns about the Headteacher should be sent to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk.

The school will listen to the concern, clarify what outcome is being sought and try to agree a proportionate way forward. Informal resolution does not remove a complainant's right to make a formal complaint.

7. Formal complaints: overview

Stage	Who considers it?	Target response	Escalation
Stage 1	Headteacher or other impartial investigator	Normally within 15 school days	Request Stage 2 within 10 school days
Stage 2	Governing Body complaints panel	Panel normally convened within 20 school days	Final school stage

If a complaint is received during a school holiday, the school will treat the first school day after the holiday as the date of receipt. Where a deadline cannot reasonably be met, the school will explain the reason and provide a revised date.

8. Stage 1 – formal complaint

A formal complaint should be made in writing to the Headteacher, preferably by email or letter. The complaint should set out what happened, the concerns to be addressed and the outcome sought. The school will provide reasonable support to a person who has difficulty making a written complaint.

The Headteacher will acknowledge the complaint, normally within 5 school days, and will investigate or appoint an appropriate impartial person to investigate. The investigator may meet or speak with relevant people and review relevant records.

The Stage 1 response will normally be issued within 15 school days of receipt and will:

- summarise the complaint and the investigation undertaken;
- address the substantive points raised;
- state whether each element is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld, where appropriate;

- explain any actions or learning that can properly be shared; and
- explain how to request Stage 2 if the complainant remains dissatisfied.

Complaints about the Headteacher or governors

A complaint about the Headteacher should be sent to the Clerk to the Governing Body and will normally be considered at Stage 1 by the Chair of Governors or another suitably skilled and impartial governor. A complaint about the Chair should be considered by the Vice-Chair or another suitably skilled and impartial governor.

Complaints about the Chair and Vice-Chair together, a majority of the Governing Body, or the entire Governing Body should be sent to the Clerk. The Clerk will arrange an appropriately independent process, which may include an independent investigator and/or governors from another school who have had no prior involvement.

9. Stage 2 – Governing Body complaints panel

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 1, they may request a Stage 2 panel review. The request should be sent to the Clerk within 10 school days of the Stage 1 response and should explain why the complainant remains dissatisfied and the outcome sought.

The Clerk will acknowledge the request, normally within 5 school days, and will seek to convene the panel within 20 school days. If this is not possible, the Clerk will explain why and provide a revised date.

The panel will normally comprise three governors who have had no prior involvement in the complaint and who can act impartially. Where appropriate, the Governing Body may use suitably skilled governors from another school to strengthen independence.

The panel will:

- consider the complaint, the Stage 1 investigation and response, and relevant evidence;
- consider whether the complaint was handled fairly and in accordance with this procedure;
- allow the complainant and the school a fair opportunity to present their positions and respond to relevant questions;
- avoid considering unrelated new complaints, which should normally begin at Stage 1;
- reach findings on the balance of probabilities.

Before and at the hearing

The Clerk will circulate relevant papers to all parties in advance. The complainant may be accompanied by a relative, friend or supporter. Legal representation is not normally necessary, but the school will consider requests fairly in the circumstances of the case. The panel will make reasonable adjustments where required.

Electronic recordings are not normally permitted unless all parties agree in advance or a reasonable adjustment makes recording appropriate. Covert recordings will not normally be accepted as evidence, although the panel may consider their relevance and fairness in exceptional circumstances.

Panel outcome

The panel may:

- dismiss all or part of the complaint;
- uphold all or part of the complaint;
- decide or recommend appropriate action to resolve the complaint; and
- recommend changes to systems or procedures to help prevent similar issues arising.

The Clerk or Chair of the panel will normally write to the complainant within 10 school days of the hearing, setting out the panel's decision, the reasons for it and any recommendations that can properly be shared. This concludes the school's complaints procedure.

10. After the school procedure is complete

If the complainant believes the school has not handled the complaint in accordance with its published procedure, has acted unlawfully or unreasonably in exercising duties under education law, they may refer the matter to the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE does not normally reinvestigate the substance of a complaint or substitute its decision for the school's; its role is principally to consider whether the school has followed the law and its procedure appropriately.

DfE complaints service: www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe

11. Complaints received outside term time

Complaints received outside term time will be treated as received on the first school day after the holiday period. The school will nevertheless act immediately where safeguarding or another urgent matter requires it.

12. Anonymous complaints

The school will not normally investigate anonymous complaints under this procedure. The Headteacher and/or Chair of Governors will determine whether the seriousness of the information warrants investigation or referral under another procedure, particularly where safeguarding is concerned.

13. Withdrawal and duplicate complaints

If a complainant wishes to withdraw a complaint, the school will ask them to confirm this. Where substantially the same complaint has already completed the procedure and no material new evidence is provided, the school may explain that the matter is closed rather than repeat the process. A genuinely new complaint will be considered on its own merits.

14. Managing serial, persistent or unreasonable behaviour

RCFS is committed to dealing with complaints fairly and will not treat a person as unreasonable simply because they are persistent or because they disagree with the school. In a small minority of cases, however, the frequency, nature or manner of contact may become unreasonable and may hinder the school's ability to provide education or to consider the complaint fairly.

Examples may include:

- refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint despite reasonable assistance;
- refusing to cooperate with the complaints process while still seeking an outcome;
- repeatedly changing the basis of a complaint as it progresses;
- making excessive demands on staff time through frequent, lengthy or repetitive contact;
- using abusive, threatening, discriminatory or otherwise unacceptable language or behaviour;
- seeking repeatedly to reopen a matter that has completed the procedure without material new evidence.

Any restrictions on contact will be proportionate, time-limited where appropriate, confirmed in writing and kept under review. They will not prevent a new and materially different complaint from being considered, nor prevent urgent safeguarding concerns from being raised.

15. Records, confidentiality and data protection

The school will keep a written record of formal complaints, how they were resolved and any action taken, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld. Records will be stored securely and retained in accordance with the school's records retention arrangements and data protection law.

Complaint correspondence and panel material will be shared only with those who need it for the proper handling of the complaint, subject to legal requirements. The school may need to disclose records to the Secretary of State, an inspectorate, safeguarding agencies or other bodies where legally required.

16. Equality and accessibility

The school will make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled complainants and others who need support to access the procedure. This may include help to put a complaint in writing, accessible formats, interpretation or translation support, adjustments to meetings, or allowing an appropriate supporter to attend.

17. Monitoring and learning

The Governing Body will monitor the operation of the complaints procedure and may review themes and learning from complaints while maintaining appropriate confidentiality. The purpose is to identify improvements to school systems, communication and practice.

18. Contact details

Contact	Details
Headteacher	Larisa Alikhan Roehampton Church Forest School info@roehampton.wandsworth.sch.uk 020 8788 8650
Chair of Governors	Paul Nicholls Correspondence via the Clerk to the Governing Body
Clerk to the Governing Body	Jo Saich Joanne.saich@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk

19. Legislative and guidance basis

- Education Act 2002, section 29
- Department for Education: School complaints procedures – guidance for maintained schools
- Department for Education: Maintained schools governance guide
- School Information (England) Regulations – requirement to publish the complaints procedure online
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010
- Current statutory safeguarding guidance and the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Approved by: The Governing Body Date: 01/09/2026