



Re-founded 1555

# Ripon Grammar School

*Engineering Specialism within a Grammar School*



## CONCERNS & COMPLAINTS POLICY

### Scope of the Policy

This policy and procedure is for use in dealing with concerns and complaints about aspects of the school. It complies with DfE and Local Authority (LA) guidelines. It is intended for use by parents, carers and legal guardians of pupils at the school, and adult members of the general public. It is recognised that, from time to time, pupils at the school may also have legitimate concerns; they are encouraged to make their concerns known through the normal school procedures.

The policy **does not cover** the following for which there are separate procedures:

- Delivery of the national curriculum and the provision of collective worship and religious education in accordance with the Education Act 1996;
- School admissions;
- School exclusions;
- Special educational needs (statutory assessments and statements);
- Sex education;
- Child protection

Nor does the policy cover complaints about North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) policies, legal procedures or matters which are the direct responsibility of the LA.

In order to be easily understood, this policy and its associated procedures are set out in 5 stages. A flow chart of the different stages is shown at **appendix 1**.

### Preamble

The distinction between a **concern** and a **complaint** is not always clear. Both arise from situations where a parent feels that **something is not right**, and that it needs to be drawn to the school's attention **so that it can be put right**. Raising a concern is usually the first informal attempt at resolving the problem. Lodging a complaint is part of a more formal process. If not addressed satisfactorily, a concern can become the legitimate basis for a complaint though where a parent<sup>1</sup> considers an issue or incident to be sufficiently serious it may warrant a formal complaint to the school as the first stage.

### Stage 1: Raising Concerns – the informal procedure

Ripon Grammar School staff and governors are fully committed to trying to resolve parents' concerns and anxieties about any aspect of school life. If parents are concerned about anything to do with their child's education or the running of the school, we want to know about it at the earliest opportunity and we will aim to address it as quickly as possible. Parents are strongly encouraged to discuss such concerns with the most appropriate member of staff; this is usually the form teacher, the subject teacher, or the houseparent, but occasionally parents may then wish to raise their concerns with more senior members of staff: the Head of Lower School, Head of Upper School, the Head of Sixth Form or one of the Assistant or Deputy Headteachers. If a concern persists beyond this level of referral it should be raised with the Headmaster. If in doubt, parents should telephone or e-mail the school office and they will direct you to the most appropriate member of staff.

<sup>1</sup> The term **parent** will be used from this point forward to refer to all categories of people referred to in the opening paragraph.

## **The Complaints' Procedure (Stages 2 – 5)**

Our aim throughout is that the school will have resolved concerns swiftly and to everyone's satisfaction. However, where parents remain dissatisfied, or if an issue is particularly serious, they are free to pursue the matter further and formally as a complaint by contacting the Headmaster by e-mail, or by mail, or by telephone (in which case they will also be asked to provide written details). A complaints form is available (**appendix 3**) to facilitate this though complainants should feel free to present details in their own style. If the complaint relates to the Headmaster, the Chair of Governors should be contacted. All complaints will be dealt with promptly and, as far as possible, in confidence.

### **Stage 2 : Formal Consideration by the Headmaster**

The Headmaster (or designate) will investigate all written complaints and will report the outcome of the investigation to the complainant. The Headmaster (or designate) will hold such discussions as are appropriate with parents, staff and/or pupils, keeping records as necessary, and will write formally to the complainant to indicate any action that the school will take.

### **Stage 3 : Consideration by Governors**

If Stage 2 does not resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant, s/he may raise the matter with the Chair of Governors who will appoint a governor to consider the complaint. The governor will have spoken to the Headmaster to understand the background to the complaint and will meet with the complainant to try to resolve the complaint. No formal minutes of the meeting will be taken but a file note will be kept. The governor will respond to the complainant in writing.

### **Stage 4 : Appeal to a Panel of Governors**

If the complainant still remains dissatisfied with the decision or action taken at Stage 3, s/he may appeal to a Governors' Appeal Panel. This is a formal procedure and complainants must put their request to appeal in writing to the Clerk to the Governors. The Clerk to the Governors will convene an Appeal Panel at which the complainant would normally present their complaint and the Headmaster the School's response. The procedure for such an Appeal is at **appendix 2**. The Appeal Panel will comprise at least 3 governors none of whom have had any dealings with the case, and may also include an independent member. The Appeal will be minuted by the Clerk to the Governors, or other school officer, and both the complainant and the School advised promptly of the Panel's decision.

The full governing body will be notified that there has been an appeal but no details of the appeal will be disclosed.

### **Intended deadlines for Stages 2, 3 & 4**

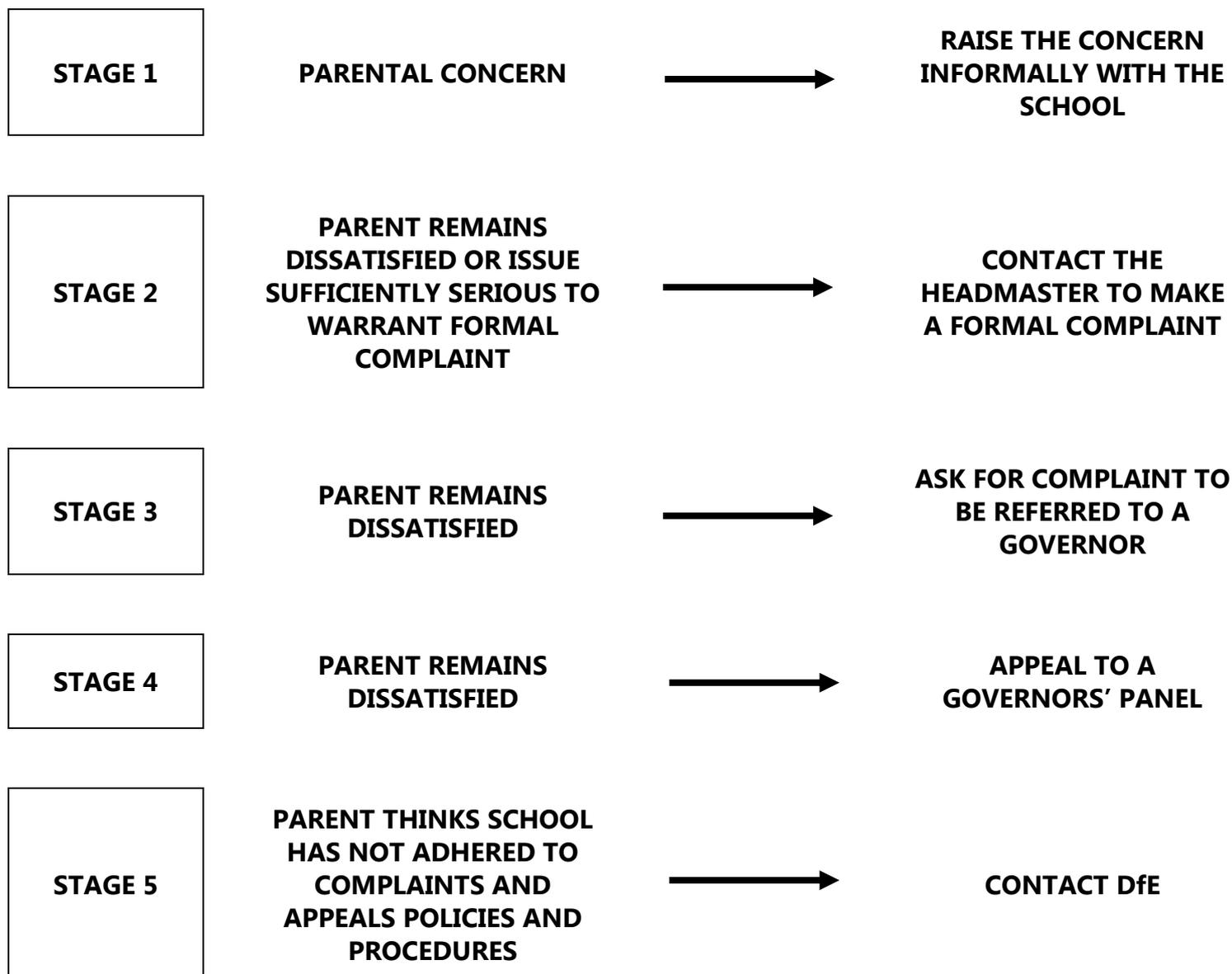
The School is committed to investigating complaints and resolving them as quickly and efficiently as possible. **For Stages 2 & 3** the target deadline is 10 working (school) days from the notification of the complaint. Where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set but the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline and an explanation for the delay. **For Stage 4** the intention is to hold the appeal hearing within 20 working (school) days of the request for an appeal being received by the Clerk to the Governors. However, the overriding principle is that it should be at a convenient time for the complainant.

### **Stage 5 : Pursuing the complaint with the DfE**

The appeal to governors (Stage 4) is the final stage of the school's procedures. The complainant may pursue their complaint further with the Department for Education, if, in their view, the school's policies and procedures have not been followed.

**CONCERNS & COMPLAINTS**

**Flow chart of action**



**RIPON GRAMMAR SCHOOL**  
**PROCEDURE FOR GOVERNORS' APPEAL HEARINGS**

**Introduction**

This procedure applies to all appeals against decisions for which the governing body is directly responsible. This includes

- appeals arising from complaints to the school
- compassionate appeals requesting special consideration from the governing body

**No appeal will be accepted until all other school procedures have been exhausted.**

**All appeal requests must be made in writing** to the Clerk to the Governors, c/o Ripon Grammar School.

**Before the hearing**

The Clerk to the Governors, or other school officer, will handle all the administrative arrangements.

The appellant will be asked to set out, in writing, the reasons for the appeal.

Similarly the school will be asked to set out, in writing, the reasons for its decisions on the issue, and any actions taken which led to the appeal request.

Both submissions will be made available to the appellant, the school, and the panel before the appeal hearing.

The Clerk will arrange for the hearing to take place at the earliest mutually convenient date. All submissions will be sent to the parties at least 3 working (school) days before the hearing.

**At the hearing**

The appellant will be expected to attend and may be accompanied by a friend or relative. Legal representation is not allowed.

The school will be represented by the Headmaster and/or one of the Deputy Headteachers.

The hearing will be clerked by the Clerk to the Governors or an alternative school officer.

No members of the panel will have had any previous involvement with the case.

No Governor who is a member of the school's staff (whether an elected staff governor or otherwise) may be member of the panel.

**Procedure**

The appeal hearing will be as informal as possible commensurate with the fact that it is part of a formal procedure. The style will not be confrontational or adversarial but will be a genuine attempt to allow the appellant and the school to present their sides on the issue. It is recognised that for many appellants it might be the only appeal they have ever engaged in so the Chair will need to put them at ease throughout the hearing.

- The Chair of the Appeal Panel will welcome the appellant and the representative(s) of the school.
- The Chair will check that all parties have received and read all previously distributed submissions.
- The Chair will ask whether there is any late additional material. If there is the hearing should be suspended for an appropriate amount of time to give all parties time to read and understand the additional material.
- The Chair will then invite the appellant to present her/his case
- The school may ask questions
- The panel may ask questions
- The Chair will then invite the school to present its case

- The appellant may ask questions
- The panel may ask questions
- The school will then sum up its case without adding anything new
- The appellant will then sum up her/his case without adding anything new
- The appellant and the school will then leave the hearing.

The panel will then deliberate to reach a decision which, if a vote is needed, will be determined by a simple majority. Any independent member will have the same voting rights as the governor members of the panel. If the voting is tied the Chair will have the casting vote.

**In reaching their decision the panel** will decide whether to

- Uphold the appeal, in which case the panel will direct the school to undertake a course of action
- or**
- Not uphold the appeal, though the panel may still advise action to be taken to address the cause of the complaint.

The panel may, separately, make recommendations to the school on any aspects arising from the appeal which, in the opinion of the panel, will lead to better future practice.

### **Following the hearing**

The appellant and the school will be informed of the panel's decision within 48 hours of the hearing.

Draft notes of the meeting will be circulated first to the Panel for comment and then to the appellant and the school for comments on accuracy within 20 working (school) days of the date of the hearing. The Chair will consider any proposed amendments and sign off the notes as a complete and accurate record.

A copy of the approved notes will be sent to the appellant and to the school.

The Clerk to the Governors will keep a copy of all submissions, a copy of the approved notes of the meeting, including the judgement, and copies of all correspondence arising from the meeting.

The full governing body will be informed that an appeal has taken place but no details of the case will be reported.

If the appeal is not upheld the appellant has the right to pursue their request by contacting the Department for Education. There is no further right of appeal to the governing body.



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## Making a formal complaint

It will help us if you use this form to make your complaint but please present the details in your own style if you prefer, covering all the points on the form. Please continue your answers on a separate sheet if there is not enough space on this form. When you have filled in the form, send it to the Headmaster or Chair of Governors at the school. If you need any help completing this form please contact the school.

**The school's address is: Clothholme Road, Ripon HG4 2DG tel: 01765 602647**

We will only process your personal data in order to respond to your complaints.

Your name Mr  Ms  Mrs  Miss  Other .....

First name (BLOCK CAPITALS) .....

Surname (BLOCK CAPITALS) .....

Your address

Postcode

Daytime tel. no.  Mobile tel. no.

Email address

Do you have any special requirements, for example if English is not your first language, disabilities?

Have you contacted the school about this matter before? Yes  No

If yes, who did you contact, when and how?

Have you received a reply?

Yes  No

If so, when was this?

Please explain your complaint and how would you like to see the matter resolved? (use additional sheets if required)

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

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage? (use additional sheets if required)

If you have any documents to support your complaint, please send them with this form. Please tick the box if you would like them returned to you.

We will send an acknowledgement within 5 working (school) days of receiving your communication and will tell you what is happening. If a further response is required, this should reach you within 10 working (school) days.

**FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY**

Complaint reference

Date Received

Acknowledgement sent

Substantive reply sent