New Rush Hall School

Complaints Policy

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CONTENTS

RECORDING 3

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 3

DEALING WITH THE COMPLAINTS 3

TIME SCALES 4

INTERIM RESPONSES 4

FINAL DECISION 4

FOLLOW-UP 4

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE 4

STATUTORY COMPLAINTS 4

THE NEW RUSH HALL SCHOOL GENERAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES 5

APPENDIX 1 - NEW RUSH HALL SCHOOL: COMPLAINTS FORM 7

New Rush Hall School (NRHS) aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents/carers of pupils at the school, and others. The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures that will be adopted by the school in the event that it receives a complaint.

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.
- Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality.
- Treat complainants with respect and courtesy.

Ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law.

- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process.
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes.

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

The school will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full. 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.

There will be many occasions when concerns can be resolved through the class teacher or school secretary as a matter of routine. Where a complainant is dissatisfied after the initial contact and wishes to take the matter further, the first approach should be to advise the deputy headteacher who will initiate an investigation as appropriate. For serious matters the deputy headteacher may refer the matter directly to the headteacher.

RECORDING

NRHS will record all complaints and their progress, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls. The complaints records are logged and managed by the deputy headteacher. The headteacher will monitor complaints received once a term.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Upon receipt of a complaint, an immediate judgment needs to be taken as to whether a full response can be given within 10 working days. If so, an acknowledgement may not be necessary. If, however, time is needed to investigate the concern and it is unlikely that a full reply can be framed within 10 days, then an acknowledgement should be sent to the complainant within 3 days explaining who is dealing with the complaint and when they can expect a full reply.

DEALING WITH THE COMPLAINTS

Consideration needs to be given to sources of information and advice to enable the investigations to be completed. It may just be the class teacher, or it could be other agencies or support as appropriate e.g. the Educational Psychologist or Human Resources may need to be consulted.

A judgement about whether a meeting with the complainant could prove useful will need to be made on receipt of the complaint.

Meeting the complaint could be beneficial:

- Where more than one issue is involved.
- Where there appear to be problems over communication.
- To seek clarification/evidence.

TIME SCALES

It is intended that (subject to the initial review of the complaint as mentioned under 'Acknowledgement' above) a 10-day turn-round is appropriate for a full response to a complaint received.

The complainant must raise the complaint within 3 months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they 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 during a weekend or public holiday, we will consider them to have been received on the next school day.

If at any point we cannot meet the time scales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant.
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay.

INTERIM RESPONSES

In cases where it will not be possible to provide a full reply within 10 days (see 'Acknowledgement' heading above) an indication should be given as to when a reply will be sent That deadline should be realistic and achievable and should normally be within a 4-week period. If, for whatever reason, a response is not possible during the 4-week period, an interim response should be sent to the complainant explaining the reasons for the delay (perhaps the complexity of the case or the need to seek advice from other agencies), explaining progress to date and offering a revised deadline.

FINAL DECISION

If the final outcome is conveyed orally to the complainant, it may be confirmed in writing this in writing to ensure that a clear explanation of the final decision is provided. Lack of explanation is often a grievance in itself. The deputy headteacher or headteacher will decide the most appropriate way of communicating and explaining the decision.

FOLLOW-UP

The school will seek to follow-up the decision with the complainant, as appropriate.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

If the whole procedure is to be seen as constructive it is important to see whether any lessons can be learnt and improvements made, e.g. better communication links, change to work patterns, etc. An established pattern of complaints can also be invaluable in identifying areas for attention. By being prepared to change and make improvements in this way, the school will become more effective, more trusted and feel a closer part of the community.

STATUTORY COMPLAINTS

The following list identifies those matters which are outside the scope of the school's own complaints procedure. These are matters where there are separate statutory processes which must be followed:

1. Admissions.
2. School re-organisation proposals.
3. Statutory Assessments of Special Educational Needs
4. Child Protection and Safeguarding matters.
5. Exclusions.
6. Complaints about the content of the curriculum.
7. Home to School Transport.
8. Whistleblowing.
9. Staff grievances.
10. Staff discipline

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure, they can refer their 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

We will include this information in the outcome letter to complainants.

This document meets the requirements of section 29 of the Education Act 2002, which states that schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

THE NEW RUSH HALL SCHOOL GENERAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

FIRST (INFORMAL) STAGE

The complainant should raise the complaint as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff, head of department or deputy headteacher, as appropriate, either in person or by letter, telephone or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the school office by phone – 020 8501 3951 or email – admin@nrhs.redbridge.sch.uk

If it is difficult discussing the matter with the relevant teacher, the deputy headteacher will suggest another member of staff.

If the complaint concerns the deputy headteacher the matter will be referred to the headteacher, and if it concerns the headteacher it will be referred to the chair of the governing body. The school may adapt these procedures depending on whom the complaint is against, to ensure fairness to the complainant.

After investigating, a response will be given, where possible (and subject as above) within 10 school days.

If you are not satisfied with the response, you may send a written complaint to the school within 10 school days of receiving the response.

FORMAL Stage 1

Formal complaints can be raised by letter or email/ over the phone/ in person/ by a third party acting on behalf of the complainant

Written complaints should be made on the form provided (see attached). The school will write to you within 3 school days, where possible, to say they have received your written complaint. Staff will then investigate.

The deputy headteacher or headteacher will then write to you with her/his decision where possible (and subject as above), within 10 school days of receiving your complaint.

FORMAL Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the Stage 1 decision you may, within 10 days of receiving that decision, complain in writing to the chair of governors who will discuss it with the headteacher or deputy headteacher before taking any action.

The chair of governors will write to you within 3 school days, where possible, and investigate your complaint.

After this the chair of governors will write to you within 10 school days, where possible, (and subject as above) with his/her decision.

FORMAL Stage 3

If you are not happy with this decision, you should write to the clerk to the governors.

The Governing Body Complaints Committee will meet within 20 school days. The Complaints Committee will consist of the first 3 members of the governing body available, who have not had previous direct involvement in the complaint or complaint stages. These individuals will be given access to the existing record of the complaint's progress and will select a panel chair from amongst themselves.

If not enough impartial governors are available, we will seek panel members from other schools or services within The Rise Group or the local authority (LA). We will make sure the governors we source are suitably skilled and are independent and impartial.

You, the headteacher and the chair of governors will be invited to attend this meeting at least 10 school days before it happens. This meeting will discuss whether to agree or not with the headteacher or chairman's decisions.

Everyone at this meeting will receive in writing the decision and recommendations of the complaints committee within 5 school days. The committee's decision is final.

APPENDIX 1 - NEW RUSH HALL SCHOOL: Complaints Form

Please complete and return to the deputy headteacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name.....

Pupil's name.....

Your relationship to the pupil.....

Your address.....

.....

.....

Daytime telephone number. .....

Evening telephone number .....

Please give details of your complaint including dates, names of witnesses etc.

Please give brief details, if any, of what action you have already taken to try and resolve your complaint. You may continue on a separate sheet, or attach additional paperwork, if you wish.