

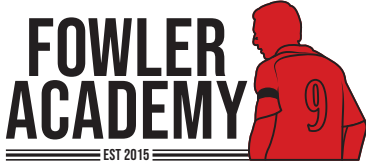
**RAINHILL**  
HIGH SCHOOL



**RainhillSixth**

# COMPLAINTS POLICY





# COMPLAINTS POLICY

STATUS	STATUTORY
RESPONSIBLE COMMITTEE	BOARD OF TRUSTEES
APPROVAL DATE	14/07/2023
RENEWAL DATE	14/07/2024



## School Complaints

### Where do I begin?

Whether you are a parent or a member of the public, the place to start is the school. This complaints procedure is not intended to replace the normal discussions regarding problems and concerns which take place on a day to day basis; it is much better if matters can be resolved within the school, even if this might feel rather awkward at the beginning.

### Aims

Stephenson Multi Academy Trust (and Rainhill High School, Rainhill 6th Form & FEFA as part thereof) aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents of pupils at the Trust. 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.
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process.
- Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes.

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

The Trust will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full. To support this, the Trust will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the school website.

### Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements of part 7 of the Education Regulations 2014, which governs academy complaints procedures.

### Scope of this complaints procedure

The Trust intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage.

This procedure covers all complaints about the Trust, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, which include those listed on page 6.

### Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- What the complainant feels would put things right.

We also intend to address complaints as quickly as possible. To achieve this, realistic and reasonable time limits will be set for each action within each stage.

Where further investigations are necessary, new time limits will be set, and the complainant will be sent details of the new deadline with an explanation for the delay.

The Trust expects that complaints will be made as soon as possible after an incident arises. The Trust will consider exceptions to this 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.

### Anonymous complaints

The Trust will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Chief Operating Officer, or Chair of Governors if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

### Recording Complaints

A written record will be kept of all complaints and outcomes.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under part 7 of the Education Regulations 2014, which governs academy complaints procedures.

### Social media

In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, Stephenson Multi Academy Trust requests the complainants do not discuss complaints publicly via social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved, and we expect complainants to also observe confidentiality. Defamatory, offensive or otherwise inappropriate comments on social media will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

### Complaint campaigns

A complaint campaign can be defined as:

The Trust receiving a number of complaints all based on the same subject.

The Trust receiving multiple complaints from complainants unconnected to the Trust.

In the event of a complaint campaign (as defined above), the Trust will not respond to each complaint individually but will either:

send a template response to all complainants or publish a single response on the school's website

Individual staff and pupils will be entitled to have their point of view heard if they are being complained against, and their rights will be respected at all times.

The outcome of the investigation into a general complaint will be put into writing, indicating the reasons for the decision and what further action (if any) will be taken by the school, e.g. a change of policy or procedures.

We will listen to your concerns, if we get it wrong, we will say sorry.

### Requests for Governor Meetings/Correspondence

Any requests to meet or write to the Governors outside of this procedure will be redirected to the Complaints Policy. This complaints procedure enables matters to be escalated to governors at Stage 4. The principle underlying the complaints procedure is that those reviewing a complaint should have had no knowledge of the matter or involvement at a prior stage and it is not appropriate to set up an informal meeting / correspond with a governor outside of this procedure.

## Stages Involved

1	Staff Concerned
2	Senior Leadership Team
3	Headteacher or Chief Operating Officer
4	Governors' Complaints Panel
5	Trustees Complaints Panel

## Guidance

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

At all stages, whether the complaint is regarding the High School, 6th Form or FEFA, there is a requirement to put your complaint in writing using the designated templates and/or formats prescribed in this procedure.

Please do not bypass any of the stages involved, it will only delay your complaint being heard. Any complaints that are submitted to the wrong stage will be redirected to the correct stage.

EXCEPTIONS	WHO TO CONTACT
<b>Admissions to schools</b>	Concerns about admissions should be handled through the appeals process or via the local authority.
<b>Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation</b>	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>In the first instance, any safeguarding issues should be raised with the schools designated safeguarding lead.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).</p>
<b>Exclusion of children from school*</b>	<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>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</p>
<b>Whistleblowing</b>	<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 whistle-blowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct 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.</p>
<b>Staff grievances</b>	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
<b>Staff conduct</b>	<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.</p> <p>However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>

Complaints about services provided by other providers who use school premises or facilities should be directed to the provider concerned.

## Stage 1

### Before You Proceed:

Have you attempted to resolve the issue informally by contacting the person/department concerned?

### You express your complaint, in writing, using the 'Stage 1 Complaints Form' (found at the end of this Policy or on the RHS/FEFA website)

You will receive an acknowledgement of your complaint, in writing, within five school days.

The complaint will be assigned to an appropriate member of staff at Rainhill. FEFA Stage 1 complaints will be assigned to the Assistant Principal at FEFA or the RH6 Director.

The Complaints Officer or the member of staff who has been assigned the complaint, will respond to your complaint in writing within ten school days of the complaint having been acknowledged.

Has the matter been resolved?

Yes No further action

No Move to Stage 2

### Please note:

- *If in the first instance you address your complaint to a Senior Leader, Governor or Trustee, they will refer the complaint to the appropriate person. Governors and Trustees cannot act outside of this policy as they may be needed to sit on a panel at a later stage.*
- *Only complaints made on the official form will be considered.*

## Stage 2

Complainant puts their concerns in writing, using the 'Stage 2 Complaints Form' (found at the end of this Policy or on the RHS/FEFA website) within five school days of being notified of the outcome of Stage 1. It is important that you don't simply reiterate the complaint you made at stage 1 but address the following points:

- Were any of the issues addressed in your stage 1 complaint not covered in the response?
- Were any of the factual findings provided at the stage 1 response incorrect?
- Other reasons; please elaborate on the specific matters that you require to be investigated at stage 2.

The Stage 1 response will first be re-examined and a judgement will be made to either uphold the original decision or offer a new solution. You will receive a response within 5 school days. If the complaint progresses to Stage 2;

- An investigation will then be undertaken by a relevant member of SLT at Rainhill or the Principal at FEFA.
- You will be notified of the outcome in writing within ten school days of the written acknowledgment of receipt of your Stage 2 Complaint.

Any complaint relating to the Headteacher or Chief Operating Officer will be raised in the first instance with the Chair of Governors (or Vice-chair in the absence of the Chair) who will, if an informal resolution cannot be reached, designate a suitable person, to investigate in the same way as outlined above. Where a complaint is against the Chair of Governors or any member of the Governing Board, it should be made in writing to the Clerk to Trustees in the first instance.

Has the matter been resolved?

Yes No further action

No Move to Stage 3

## Stage 3

If the matter cannot be resolved after Stage 2 then you (the complainant) should send the following, in writing, by post or by e-mail to [complaint@rainhillhigh.org.uk](mailto:complaint@rainhillhigh.org.uk) (with the subject 'Stage 3 complaint') within 5 x school days of receiving the outcome of your stage 2 complaint:

- A copy of your stage 1 and 2 complaint forms.
- An outline of why you feel the school has not met reasonable expectations in relation to your complaint and what resolution you would like.

### The following process will then apply:

The Stage 2 response will first be re-examined and a judgement will be made to either uphold the original decision or offer a new solution. You will receive a response within 5 school days. If the complaint progresses to Stage 3;

- An investigation will be carried out by the Headteacher or Chief Operating Officer provided that they have not been involved up to this point, in which case another suitable individual will undertake the investigation.
- The scope of the investigation will be documented to ensure that all aspects are covered.
- The investigator will offer the complainant a meeting to review the reason for the stage 3 complaint in addition to speaking to others involved. Wherever reasonably possible, the meeting with the complainant will take place within 10 school days of the written acknowledgement of your Stage 3 complaint.
- Following the meeting, the investigator will put their findings, including any resulting actions, in writing and communicate them to the complainant. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 15 school days of the meeting with the complainant; should more time than this be required, the complainant will be notified of the likely timeframe for receiving a response.
- Any complaint relating to the Headteacher or Chief Operating Officer, that was investigated by the Governing Body at Stage 2, will be investigated by the Chair (or Vice Chair) of Trustees; Likewise, any complaint regarding the Chair of Governors or a member of the Governing Body will be investigated by the Chair (or Vice Chair) of Trustees.

### Is a satisfactory outcome reached?

Yes No further action

No Move to Stage 4

## Stage 4

### The complainant writes to the Chair of Governors in writing within 5 school days of the outcome of Stage 3.

- The letter should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governors (FAO the Chair of Governors) or e-mailed to [complaints@rainhillhigh.org.uk](mailto:complaints@rainhillhigh.org.uk) (FAO the Chair of Governors) and must set out briefly the reasons why the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 3 response in addition to containing a copy of:
  - Stage 1 Complaint Form
  - Stage 2 Complaint Form
  - Outcome letter from Stage 3
- A letter of acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 4 complaint.
- Within 15 school days of the letter of acknowledgement being sent to complainant, a review panel will be set up - the review panel will consist of a minimum of 3 members of the Governing Board (these individuals will have access to the existing record of the complains process but will have no prior knowledge or involvement pertaining to the complaint), the Complainant and relevant representatives of the school.
- At any meeting, the complainant will be entitled to be accompanied by another individual (by prior approval of the Governing Body Complaints Panel) but legal representation will not be allowed. In certain circumstances, the Governors may refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting, for example, if there is a conflict of interest.
- The meeting is not a court case and will be as informal as circumstances allow. The complainant will have the opportunity to put her/his reasons for dissatisfaction and to enlarge on them but may not introduce reasons that were not previously put in writing. The school will have the opportunity to present its side of things and each side, as well as the Panel members, will be able to ask questions.
- The Panel will make findings and recommendations and a copy of those findings and recommendations will be sent, as soon as is reasonably practicable, by to the complainant, via post or email, and, where relevant, the person complained about.
- If, subsequent to the level 4 complaint being resolved by panel, the complainant tries to reopen the same complaint, the Chair of Trustees (or Vice Chair) may write to the complainant to inform him/her that the procedure has been completed and the matter closed.

### Is a satisfactory outcome reached?

Yes No further action

No Move to Stage 5



## Stage 5

**The complainant writes to the Chair of Trustees in writing within 5 school days of the outcome of Stage 4.**

- The letter should be addressed to the Clerk to the Trustees (FAO the Chair of Trustees) or e-mailed to [complaints@rainhillhigh.org.uk](mailto:complaints@rainhillhigh.org.uk) (FAO the Chair of Trustees) and must set out briefly the reasons why the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 4 response in addition to containing a copy of:
  - Stage 1 Complaint Form
  - Stage 2 Complaint Form
  - Outcome letter from Stage 3
  - Outcome letter from Stage 4
- A letter of acknowledgement will be sent to the complainant within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 4 complaint.
- Within 15 school days of the letter of acknowledgement being sent to complainant, a review panel will be set up - the review panel will consist of a minimum of 2 members of the Trustee Board (these individuals will have access to the existing record of the complains process but will have no prior knowledge or involvement pertaining to the complaint), the Complainant and relevant representatives of the school.
- At any meeting, the complainant will be entitled to be accompanied by another individual (by prior approval of the Board of Trustees Complaints Panel) but legal representation will not be allowed. In certain circumstances, the Trustees may refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting, for example, if there is a conflict of interest.
- The meeting is not a court case and will be as informal as circumstances allow. The complainant will have the opportunity to put her/his reasons for dissatisfaction and to enlarge on them but may not introduce reasons that were not previously put in writing. The school will have the opportunity to present its side of things and each side, as well as the Panel members, will be able to ask questions.
- The Panel will make findings and recommendations and a copy of those findings and recommendations will be sent, as soon as is reasonably practicable, by to the complainant, via post or email, and, where relevant, the person complained about.
- If, subsequent to the level 5 complaint being resolved by panel, the complainant tries to reopen the same complaint, the Chair of Governors (or Vice Chair) may write to the complainant to inform him/her that the procedure has been completed and the matter closed.

**Is a satisfactory outcome reached?**

Yes No further action

No Please read ESFA  
Guidance (Page 11)

## Guidance

### The role of the ESFA

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the ESFA after they have completed Stage 5.

The ESFA's responsibility is to ensure academies comply with their funding agreements. If a complaint is submitted, the ESFA will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the academy. We will consider complaints about academies that fall into any of the following three areas:

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

### The ESFA will not overturn an academy's decision about a complaint.

If the ESFA feel an academy did not deal with a complaint appropriately, they will request the complaint is looked at again and procedures meet the requirements set out in the Regulations. If the academy's complaints procedure does not meet the regulations, the ESFA will ask the academy to put this right.

The ESFA may seek to enforce the decision under the terms of the funding agreement on behalf of the Secretary of State, if appropriate.

**The complainant can refer their complaint to the ESFA online at:  
[www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus), by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:**

**Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit  
 Education and Skills Funding Agency  
 Cheylesmore House  
 5 Quinton Road  
 Coventry  
 CV1 2WT**

## Serial and Unreasonable Complaints

**Stephenson Multi Academy Trust (and Rainhill High School as part thereof) 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 our 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.**

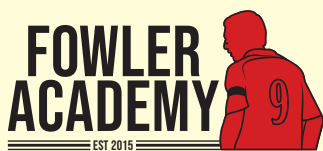
- Stephenson Multi Academy Trust defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:
- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on.
- 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 department for education.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated.
- Contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.
- Uses threats to intimidate.
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence.
- Knowingly provides falsified information.
- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the 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 Chief Operating Officer will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher or Chief Operating Officer will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Stephenson Multi Academy Trust causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from Rainhill High School.



**RAINHILL  
HIGH SCHOOL**



## STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS FORM

Your Name			
Pupil's Name & Form			
Your relationship to pupil			

Address			
Postcode			

Email			
Daytime contact number		Evening contact number	
Complaint for attention of			

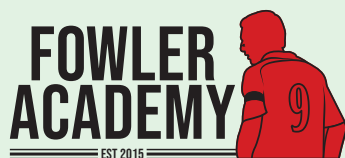
<b>Outline of complaint</b>  Include as much detail as possible – nature of complaint, people involved, key dates/ times etc.  <i>Continue on a separate sheet if required.</i>			
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What would you like as an outcome from your complaint?			
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Your Signature			
Date			

Please complete and return via email to [Complaint@rainhillhigh.org.uk](mailto:Complaint@rainhillhigh.org.uk) or send a hard copy to the school address, marked for the attention of the Complaints Officer

OFFICE USE	
Date received	
Date acknowledgement sent	
Responsible member of staff	



**RAINHILL  
HIGH SCHOOL**



**RainhillSixth**

## STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS FORM

Your Name	
Pupil's Name & Form	
Your relationship to pupil	

Address	
Postcode	

Email			
Daytime contact number		Evening contact number	
Complaint for attention of			

**Outline of complaint** - Include details of the complaint – nature of it, who it concerns. *Continue on a separate sheet if required.*

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**What action have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint**

Details of actions you have taken to date, including key information pertaining to your stage one complaint, for example: who you addressed the complaint to, any action agreed/taken, key times and dates of communication sent and received etc.

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**What would you like as an outcome from your complaint?**

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Your Signature	
Date	

Please complete and return via email to [Complaint@rainhillhigh.org.uk](mailto:Complaint@rainhillhigh.org.uk) or send a hard copy to the school address, marked for the attention of the Complaints Officer

OFFICE USE	
Date received	
Date acknowledgement sent	
Responsible member of staff	



## RAINHILL HIGH SCHOOL

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Tel: 01744 677205 Website: [www.rainhillhighschool.org.uk](http://www.rainhillhighschool.org.uk)  
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