Redbourn Park

Safety | Empathy | Ambition

Grievance Policy

Approved by	Richard McCabe
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Applies to	All Redbourn Park School employees working at or across Grovehill and Gaddesden
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Related policies

Staff Code of Conduct Policy
Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

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1. Aims

Guided by Safety, Empathy and Ambition, this policy enables employees to raise workplace concerns without fear of victimisation or detriment and ensures grievances are handled promptly, fairly, objectively and accessibly.

2. Legislation and guidance

We are required to set out grievance procedures under general employment law.

These grievance procedures follow the Acas Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures that is in force when the matter is handled.

These grievance procedures also comply with the:

- Equality Act 2010
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Data Protection Act 2018

The school will review this procedure when employment law or the Acas Code changes. Draft or consultation proposals do not replace the Code currently in force.

3. Definitions and scope

A grievance is a concern, problem or complaint raised by an employee about work, including working conditions, health and safety, bullying, harassment, discrimination or working relationships. Agency workers, contractors and volunteers should raise concerns through their named manager or school contact; the school will direct them to the appropriate grievance, whistleblowing, safeguarding or complaints route without prejudicing any legal protection they may have.

Complaints made under this policy should be made as soon as possible, in order to help the school bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion for everyone involved.

This policy does not apply to:

- Personal complaints from parents/carers or other members of the public, which normally fall under the Complaints and Compliments Policy. Safeguarding concerns, protected disclosures and concerns raised by workers, contractors or volunteers must still be directed immediately to their appropriate route
- A concern that may amount to a protected disclosure or other public-interest wrongdoing. The title used by the person raising it is not decisive: the school will assess the substance, explain the appropriate whistleblowing route and protect the person from detriment. From 6 April 2026, qualifying disclosures about sexual harassment may be protected whistleblowing disclosures
- Dismissals or disciplinary action
- Redundancy dismissals
- Non-renewal of fixed-term contracts
- Collective grievances, raised on behalf of 2 or more employees by a representative of a recognised trade union or other appropriate workplace representative

These are covered by separate policies and procedures.

4. Roles and responsibilities

The school will identify an impartial route for each grievance. Informal resolution may be offered where appropriate but is never compulsory, particularly for harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, safeguarding, whistleblowing or where there is a power imbalance. No person may investigate, decide or hear an appeal if they are the subject of the grievance or have material prior involvement.

4.1 The line manager

Provided they are not the subject of the grievance and there is no conflict, the line manager is the normal first contact. The employee may instead contact the Headteacher, the proprietor/chair, an independent person named for the case, or the whistleblowing or safeguarding route where appropriate.

4.2 The Headteacher

Provided they are impartial and have had no material prior involvement, the Headteacher may manage the formal stage. Where the Headteacher is involved or conflicted, the proprietor/chair will allocate the matter to an impartial person.

4.3 Proprietor/chair or an independent person

Where the Headteacher is the subject of the grievance or is conflicted, the proprietor/chair will manage the route or appoint an independent person with no prior involvement. Where the proprietor/chair is the subject of the grievance, has material prior involvement or is otherwise conflicted, an external independent person will manage and decide the formal stage. A different independent person will hear any appeal.

4.4 Investigating officer

The person managing the formal stage will appoint an investigating officer with no prior involvement to collect and present the relevant facts in an investigation report. The investigator will not decide the grievance or hear any appeal.

4.5 Grievance panel

The formal decision will be made by one impartial decision-maker or, where the complexity or seriousness warrants it, a panel of up to three impartial people. The decision-maker or panel will be separate from the investigator and have no material prior involvement. An independent chair will be used where the proprietor/chair, the Headteacher or another senior leader is involved.

4.6 Other members of staff or trade union staff

A work colleague, trade union official or trade union representative who has been certified as being competent to attend such meetings may accompany the employee raising the grievance at a formal grievance meeting.

5. Grievance procedures

We are committed to dealing with grievances fairly and objectively. Employees will be protected from discrimination or victimisation after raising a work-related grievance.

5.1 Informal stage

An employee may try to resolve a concern informally with their line manager where they feel safe and the matter is suitable. Informal resolution is not a prerequisite to a formal grievance and will not normally be used for harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, safeguarding, whistleblowing or a serious power imbalance.

If the employee's concerns relate to their line manager, they should discuss the issue with the line manager's manager, or other appropriate person.

Mediation may be considered only where it is safe, appropriate and freely agreed by both parties. It will not replace investigation or formal action where safeguarding, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, violence, serious misconduct or protected disclosure concerns require another route.

It may be necessary for the employee who has raised a grievance to attend a meeting to discuss the concerns in more detail. However, this will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

It is anticipated that a number of grievances will be resolved at this informal stage with no need to progress matters further. However, if the matter has not been resolved at the informal stage, it may then proceed to the formal stage of the procedure.

5.2 Formal stage

An employee may set out a formal grievance in writing using Appendix 1 or another accessible format. It should be sent to the line manager unless they are involved or conflicted; alternatives are the Headteacher, the proprietor/chair or the independent person appointed for the case. The school will provide reasonable adjustments and assistance to record a grievance where needed.

The school will acknowledge a formal grievance within 5 working days, identify the person managing it and provide the expected timetable. That person will appoint an impartial investigating officer with no prior involvement and will keep the employee informed if the timetable changes.

The person managing the formal stage will appoint an impartial decision-maker or a panel of up to three people in accordance with section 4.5. No decision-maker will have investigated the matter or had material prior involvement.

Depending on the subject of the grievance, this may include the Headteacher (where impartial), the proprietor/chair, an external independent person, an HR adviser or another suitably experienced person with no prior involvement.

The investigating officer will undertake a grievance investigation and will make a recommendation.

The investigating officer may invite the employee to an investigatory interview to clarify the facts. The school will allow a companion at this interview.

The person managing the case, supported by an HR adviser where appropriate, will arrange a formal meeting in person or by an accessible video route. The meeting will normally take place within 10 working days once a proportionate investigation and evidence exchange can be completed. If this is not achievable, the employee will receive the reason, the steps outstanding and a revised date. The employee may explain the grievance, evidence and desired outcome to the impartial decision-maker or panel.

If the grievance needs further investigation, follow-up meetings will be arranged without unreasonable delay.

If timelines change due to unforeseen circumstances, the employee will be notified of any delays.

Employees have a statutory right to be accompanied by a companion at a grievance meeting. The companion must be a work colleague, trade union official, or trade union representative who has been certified as being competent to attend such meetings.

The employee will be provided with a copy of the investigation report and any relevant evidence 5 working days before the meeting.

The employee must let the investigating officer know if they wish to be accompanied. If the chosen companion will not be available on the initial date and time proposed for the formal meeting, the investigating officer must move the meeting to an alternative time proposed by the employee, provided that the alternative time is both reasonable and no more than 5 working days after the date originally proposed.

If the employee does not attend the rearranged meeting without good reason, the meeting may take place in their absence, and a decision will be made based on the available evidence.

If they have the permission of the person raising the grievance, the companion may address the hearing to put and sum up the employee's case, respond on behalf of the employee to any views expressed at the meeting, confer with the employee during the hearing and take notes. The companion may not answer questions on the employee's behalf, address the hearing if the employee does not wish it or prevent the employer from explaining their case.

5.2.1 Suggested standard agenda structure

1. Introduction: the decision-maker or panel chair introduces all parties and explains the purpose of the hearing and the roles of those present
2. Employee's presentation: the employee or their companion presents the grievance, referring to their evidence, and clarifies the desired outcome
3. Questions to the employee: the decision-maker or panel and investigating officer may ask questions to clarify points raised
4. Investigation findings: the investigating officer presents a summary of their report and evidence gathered
5. Questions to the investigator: the decision-maker or panel and the employee (or their companion) may ask questions regarding the investigation process or findings
6. Final summary: the employee has the 'last word' to summarise their case. No new evidence can be presented at this stage
7. Adjournment: the decision-maker or panel chair will close the meeting so the evidence can be considered

5.3 Deciding on appropriate action

The meeting will be adjourned so that the impartial decision-maker or panel can reflect on the evidence and reach a decision.

The decision-maker or panel chair will communicate the decision to the employee in writing within 10 working days. The decision will set out the action that will be taken to resolve the grievance, confirm the right of appeal and explain how to appeal.

5.4 Appeals

If the employee is not satisfied with the grievance outcome, they have the right to appeal.

The employee should set out the appeal grounds in writing or another agreed accessible format within 10 working days. It should be sent to the Headteacher, if impartial and where appropriate, otherwise to the proprietor/chair. If the proprietor/chair is involved or conflicted, it must go to an external independent person who had no role in the formal stage.

An appeal is not designed to re-hear the matter but to examine the grounds of appeal. The employee should therefore be specific about the grounds of the appeal.

However, a full re-hearing may be appropriate in exceptional circumstances.

The appeal will be heard by one impartial person or a panel of up to three people who had no involvement in the investigation or formal decision. Where the formal stage concerned the proprietor/chair, the Headteacher or another senior leader, an external independent person will chair or decide the appeal.

Appeals will be heard without unreasonable delay and normally within 10 working days of the appeal notice. The appeal lead will give reasonable advance notice of the time, place or accessible video arrangements. If the timetable cannot be met, the employee will receive the reason and a revised date.

The appeal will review the original decision and consider any new evidence that has come to light.

Employees have the same statutory right to be accompanied to the appeal meeting by a work colleague, trade union official, or trade union representative who has been certified as being competent to attend such meetings.

The appeal lead will confirm the outcome in writing to the employee within 10 working days of the appeal. The appeal decision is final under this procedure and there is no further internal appeal.

6. Overlapping procedures

When a grievance overlaps with a disciplinary, capability, harassment or whistleblowing matter, the school will decide case by case whether processes should run concurrently, be coordinated or one should be paused. There is no automatic suspension. The employee will be told the decision and reasons, and fairness, confidentiality and any reasonable adjustments will be maintained.

Any allegation that a child may be at risk, that an adult may have harmed a child or behaved in a way that meets the safeguarding harm threshold, or that safeguarding practice is unsafe must be passed immediately to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and a deputy designated safeguarding lead (DDSL) under the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. The grievance procedure will not be used to investigate or delay safeguarding action. A concern that may be a protected disclosure—including a qualifying sexual-harassment disclosure—will also be handled under the whistleblowing procedure in section 4.3 of the Staff Code of Conduct Policy, while any personal employment grievance can continue through this procedure where appropriate.

7. Record keeping

A written record will be kept of formal meetings. A copy will normally be provided to the employee within 10 working days. The employee may identify factual inaccuracies or submit written comments; agreement is not required for the record to stand, and any unresolved comments will be retained with it.

Records of all materials relating to the grievance process will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and record retention schedule.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher with appropriate HR advice and may be revised sooner when law, the Acas Code or school arrangements change.

The proprietor/chair will approve each review.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff Code of Conduct Policy (including the whistleblowing procedure in section 4.3)
- Staff Handbook (Disciplinary Policy)
- Positive Workplace Policy
- Equality Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (including low-level concerns)

Appendix 1: staff grievance notification form

Name:	Site:
Post held:	Team/department:
Describe the nature of your grievance, including: ■ A full description of your grievance ■ Relevant evidence, such as facts, dates and names of individuals involved	

Please state the following	
The date on which you first raised your grievance, and with whom	
The action taken in respect of your grievance at the informal stage	
The outcomes you are seeking and the actions you would like taken to resolve the situation	
Whether you would like to explore a resolution through mediation	
Whether you would like to be accompanied at a grievance meeting by a work colleague, trade union official, or trade union representative – and if so, their name and position	
Signed	Dated: