

Policy 18

Complaints Policy 2024/2025

This policy applies to all concerns and complaints other than those relating to Child Protection issues.

18.1 Timescales

18.1.1 We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage of the Complaints Procedure are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. For the purposes of this policy, a "working day" is defined as a weekday during term time, when REACH is open. The definition of "working day" excludes weekends, Bank Holidays and school holidays.

18.2 Policy Aim and Statement Aim

18.2.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure that a concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, it is fair to those concerned and it helps to promote parents' and students' confidence in our ability to safeguard and promote welfare. We will try to resolve every concern or complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing our systems and procedures in the light of circumstances.

18.3 Policy statement

18.3.1 We need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. We recognise that a difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment, which could be damaging to relationships and also to our culture. We intend that parents / carers and students should never feel – or be made to feel – that a complaint will be taken amiss or will adversely affect a student or his/her opportunities at Reach. The policy, however, distinguishes between a concern or difficulty which can be resolved informally and a formal complaint which will require investigation.

18.4 Stage 1: Concerns and Difficulties

18.4.1 (1) *Concerns:* We expect that most concerns, where a parent / carer seeks intervention, reconsideration or some other action to be taken, can be resolved informally.

18.4.2 (2) *Notification:* Please raise the concern initially as follows:

18.4.2.1 (2.1) *Pastoral care* – for concerns relating to outside of the allocated Reach worker then please speak or write to Reach Alternative Education SW Ltd, PO Box 37, Martock, Somerset, TA12 6WN.

18.4.3 (3) *Unresolved concerns:* A concern which has not been resolved by informal means within ten working days from the receipt of the complaint can be notified as a formal complaint in accordance with Stage 2 below by the complainant.

18.4.4 (4) *Record of concerns:* In the case of concerns raised under Stage 1 of this procedure, the only record of the concern and its resolution will be file notes by the person dealing with the complaint and/or file correspondence between the person raising the concern and the respondent.

18.5 Stage 2: Formal complaints

18.5.1 (5) *Notification:* An unresolved concern under Stage 1, or a complaint which needs investigation, or a more serious dissatisfaction with some aspect of Reach's policies, procedures, management or administration should be set out in writing with full details and sent with all relevant documents and your full contact details for the attention of the Director. Should a formal written complaint be received

by another member of Reach staff, they will immediately pass it to the Director or, in their absence, another member of the leadership team.

18.5.2 (6) *Acknowledgement:* Your complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing normally within five working days of receipt. The acknowledgement will indicate the action that is being taken and the likely timescale for resolution.

18.5.3 (7) *Investigation and resolution:* The Director may deal with the matter personally or may ask a senior member of staff to act as “investigator”. The investigator may request additional information from you and may wish to speak to you personally and to others who have knowledge of the circumstances. Following appropriate investigation, the Director will then notify you in writing of the decision and the reasons for it.

18.5.4 (8) *Outcome:* The aim of the Director would be to inform any complainant of the outcome of an investigation and the resolution to the complaint within one calendar month from the receipt of the complaint. Please note that any complaint received during a school holiday or within one month of the end of term or half term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to the presence of school holidays and the unavailability of Reach personnel.

18.5.5 (9) *Record of complaints:* The Director is responsible for keeping a log of all complaints received by or referred to them under this stage of the procedure. The log should provide a brief written summary of the name of the complainant, the date the complaint was received, the matter complained of, and the manner and date of its resolution. Written records will also be kept of any meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

18.5.6 (10) *Attendance:* You will be asked to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by one other person such as a relative, teacher, or friend, who should not be legally qualified. Your child, if aged 13+, may attend part or all of the hearing at the discretion of the Chair. The Director or nominated deputy will also attend the hearing in order to keep a record of the proceedings. Copies of additional documents you wish the Panel to consider should be sent to the Director at least three clear working days prior to the hearing.

18.5.7 (11) Confidentiality: A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at Stage 1 or proceed to a panel hearing. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year will be supplied to parents on request. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 25(k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, that is where access is requested by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required in the course of a school's inspection or under other legal authority.

In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will normally be destroyed following each school inspection. In exceptional circumstances some details will be retained for a further period as necessary.

Any further questions regarding guidelines in this policy then please contact one of the leadership team.

To ensure the effectiveness of this document our 'Complaints' policy will be reviewed annually.

Signed: _____

Date: _____