

Complaints Procedure Policy



Serenity School

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Approved by:	Proprietary Board
Policy Holder:	Headteacher
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1. Policy Statement

Serenity Education Group (SED) is committed to maintaining high standards of education, care and support. This policy sets out a clear, fair and transparent procedure for addressing concerns and complaints in all Serenity Schools. It meets the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Part 7.

2. Principles

This procedure is underpinned by the following principles:

- Concerns should be resolved quickly and at the earliest opportunity.
- Complainants will be treated with respect and will not be disadvantaged for raising a concern.
- Complaints will be investigated fairly, objectively and without prejudice.
- Each stage of the procedure will be handled by individuals not involved in previous stages.
- Safeguarding concerns will always be addressed in accordance with statutory guidance.
- Clear written outcomes will be provided within stated timescales.

3. Scope

This policy applies to complaints raised by:

- Parents and carers of current pupils
- Local authorities
- Members of the public
- External stakeholders with a legitimate interest

Concerns relating to safeguarding are managed under the school's safeguarding policy and statutory guidance.

4. Safeguarding

Any complaint containing safeguarding information will be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Safeguarding matters will be addressed in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026. Any remaining elements of the complaint may proceed through this procedure once safeguarding concerns have been resolved.

5. Timeframes for Handling Complaints

Serenity Education Group aims to resolve all complaints as promptly as possible and within the timescales set out in this policy. Please note that any complaint received within two weeks of the end of term may take longer to resolve due to school holidays and the unavailability of personnel required to complete the investigation. However, an overall timeframe of three months for resolution will be enforced.

6. Complaints Procedure

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Most concerns can be resolved quickly through conversation with an appropriate member of staff. Parents or stakeholders should raise concerns directly with the relevant staff member in the first instance.

A response will be provided within five working days.

If the matter is not resolved, the complainant may proceed to Stage 2.

Complaints Against the Headteacher

If a complaint concerns the Headteacher, it should be submitted in writing to the Executive Headteacher responsible for that school. A complaint about an Executive Headteacher should be submitted to the CEO; a complaint about the CEO to the Chair of the Proprietary Board; and a complaint about the Chair to the Independent Governor or another suitably impartial person. The person considering the complaint must have had no previous involvement in the matter.

The process and timescales for Stage 2 will apply.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the investigation, the complaint may be escalated to Stage 3 for review by the next appropriate level of leadership. The Final Stage (Independent Complaints Panel) remains available if dissatisfaction continues.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution (Headteacher Investigation)

A formal complaint should be submitted in writing to the Headteacher, using the form at Appendix 1.

The Headteacher will:

1. Acknowledge the complaint within five working days.
2. Conduct an investigation, which may include meeting with staff, reviewing relevant records and gathering appropriate evidence.
3. Provide a written outcome within ten working days of acknowledging the complaint.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may escalate the matter to Stage 3.

Stage 3: Senior Review

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 2, they may request escalation to Stage 3. The review will be undertaken by the next appropriate level of leadership, provided that person has had No previous involvement:

- Headteacher decision → Executive Headteacher responsible for the school.
- Executive Headteacher decision → CEO.
- CEO decision → Chair of the Proprietary Board; Chair decision → Independent Governor or another suitably impartial person.

The person undertaking the Stage 3 review will:

- Review the Stage 2 investigation and outcome
- Determine whether procedures were followed correctly

- Consider whether the decision reached was reasonable and supported by evidence
- Consider any new information relevant to the complaint

A written response will be provided within ten working days of the request for Stage 3. If dissatisfaction remains, the complainant may request escalation to the Final Stage.

Final Stage: Independent Complaints Panel

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 3, they may request that the complaint be considered by an Independent Complaints Panel. This is the final stage of the procedure and meets the requirements of Part 7 of the Independent School Standards. The panel will be appointed by, or on behalf of, the Proprietary Board.

Panel Composition

The panel will consist of:

- One individual who is independent of the management and running of the school concerned. This may include a suitably experienced person from another Serenity school, provided they have no management responsibility for the school concerned, no prior involvement in the complaint and no conflict of interest. Where appropriate, an external independent person may instead be appointed.
- One individual with relevant experience (educational, safeguarding or operational)
- One member of the Proprietary Board or senior leader not previously involved in the complaint

Panel Process

- A hearing will be arranged within fifteen working days of the request for this stage.
- The complainant may attend and may be accompanied by a representative.
- The panel will consider all evidence from earlier stages and may request additional information.

Outcome

A written decision setting out the panel's findings and recommendations will be issued within ten working days of the hearing. A copy will be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, to the person complained about. The findings and recommendations will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the Proprietary Board and the Headteacher. This will include:

- The panel's findings
- The reasons for the decision
- Any actions that the school must implement

This decision is final and concludes the school's internal complaints procedure.

7. Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

The school may implement an Unreasonable Complainant Procedure where a complainant's behaviour becomes persistent, abusive or obstructive. Written notice will be issued if such measures are applied.

8. Record Keeping

The school will maintain a written record of all formal complaints, including whether they were resolved following the formal procedure or proceeded to a panel hearing, and:

- The nature of the complaint
- The stage at which it was considered
- The outcome and actions taken

Records will be available for inspection by the Proprietary Board, Headteacher, Secretary of State or an inspection body where required. Safeguarding-related complaints will be recorded separately and securely. The number of formal complaints registered during the preceding school year will be made available to parents and prospective parents.

9. Confidentiality

All complaints will be treated confidentially in accordance with data protection legislation. Information will only be shared where necessary to conduct an investigation or implement recommendations, except where the Secretary of State or an inspection body requests access to complaint records.

10. Availability of the Policy

This policy is available on the school website and can be provided in hard copy upon request.

11. Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Proprietary Board and updated to reflect statutory changes and organisational developments.

APPENDIX ONE - PARENTS/CARERS COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete and return to the Headteacher, or to the appropriate person under the escalation arrangements in this policy where the complaint concerns the Headteacher or a more senior leader. Receipt will be acknowledged and the next steps explained.

Your Name:	
Pupil's Name:	
Your relationship to the pupil:	
Address:	
Email address:	
Daytime phone number:	
Evening phone number:	
Mobile phone number:	
Please give details of your complaint:	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve the complaint? Who did you speak to and what was the response?	

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details:	
Signature:	
Date:	
<i>School use only</i>	
Date acknowledgement sent:	
Who sent acknowledgement:	
Signature:	
Please complete the following, acknowledge the stages of the complaints procedure that have been followed and make any comments as necessary.	
Stage 1: Informal Resolution (complaint heard by appropriate member of staff)	Date: Signature:
Stage 2: Formal Resolution (Complaint investigated by the Headteacher, or Executive Headteacher if the complaint concerns the Headteacher, or the next appropriate level of leadership in accordance with this policy)	Date: Signature:
Stage 3 (Complaint reviewed by the next appropriate level of leadership)	Date: Signature;

Final Stage Independent Complaints
Panel

(Panel convened in accordance with
the Independent School Standards)

Date:

Signature;

