



FIRST BRIDGE SCHOOL

Complaints Procedure

Summary of the number of complaints registered and resolved under our formal complaints procedure during the preceding school year (ISS 32(3)(f))

In the 2024 to 2025 academic year, First Bridge School registered and resolved one complaint at stage 2 of the procedure.

Aim

The aim of this procedure is to provide a clear framework within which any current parent/caregiver of the school may raise their concerns.

Scope

This procedure applies to parents of pupils on First Bridge School's admission register, only, i.e. parents of pupils for whom education is being provided at the school. It does not apply to complaints from prospective or former parents (including where a pupil has left or been excluded), unless the complaint was initiated while the pupil was on roll. This procedure is not for the use of members of the public or First Bridge School employees.

Complaints made under this procedure are considered to relate to the school's provision and/or systems, rather than to individual members of staff. Where concerns relate to the actions and/or decisions of a specific staff member, the complaint will be understood and investigated as a matter relating to the relevant area of provision. This ensures that concerns are handled fairly and that they support continuous improvement across the school.

The school may, at its discretion, review correspondence from former parents, visitors or members of the public outside of this procedure, particularly where safeguarding or data protection concerns are raised.

Legislation

This procedure reflects the requirements set out in the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Part 7, which states that the school must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils at the school.

Timelines

Any and all concerns will be dealt with professionally and in a timely way, as per this procedure, so that any issues arising can be handled efficiently to ensure the continued welfare of all pupils, to enable ongoing cooperative partnership with families and to continually improve the quality of our school.

Complaints must be raised in accordance with this procedure and within three months of the date of the concern/incident. Complaints received outside of the three-month complaint window will not be considered.

Complaints procedure

- Stage 1 – Informal complaint to the clinical supervisor
- Stage 2 – Formal complaint to the headteacher
- Stage 3 – Formal complaint to the formal complaints panel

Stage 1

- Any concerns about the care, education and/or therapy provided by the school should in the first instance be reported informally to the pupil's Clinical Supervisor, either in person, via email or telephone, so that they can resolve the matter as quickly as possible.
- The Clinical Supervisor will take your concern seriously, acknowledging your concern or complaint within two school days. They will ordinarily investigate and provide a response within five school days.
- Almost all concerns can be addressed and resolved at this informal stage.

Stage 2

- If the concern remains unresolved or the complainant feels they have received an unsatisfactory outcome, then they must present their concerns in writing, either by letter or email, as a formal complaint to the headteacher (david.beezadhur@firstbridge.school) within five school days of the conclusion of stage 1.
- The complaint should contain sufficient information for the headteacher to further investigate, such as relevant dates, times, names of any witnesses of events and copies of any relevant correspondence or documents or evidence they feel would support the investigation and help with finding an appropriate resolution to the complaint. The headteacher may call on the most suitable person to conduct the investigation from senior management, for example, the clinical director for clinically-specific complaints.
- The appropriate senior leader will then investigate the complaint further and report back to the complainant, in writing, within 10 school days. The written response will confirm the outcome of the investigation and any actions that have/will be taken.

Stage 3

- If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome at stage 2, they may request a formal review hearing by the formal complaints panel. The complainant must request this in writing via the complaints@firstbridge.school email, within five working days following receipt of the stage 2 outcome.
- As the school will be required to share all relevant details about the complaint with the formal complaints panel members, the complainant will be asked to sign a copy of a data sharing consent form.
- The school will then convene a panel comprising three individuals, all of whom will not have been directly involved in the subject/concern and/or the handling of the stage 2 complaint. At least one member of the panel will be entirely independent of First Bridge School. The hearing may be held face-to-face, if location permits, or via an online platform, such as Microsoft Teams.

- The complainant will be informed of the hearing date at least ten working days prior. The school will attempt to schedule a suitable date for all parties. If the school is unable to find a date that is suitable from up to three offered dates, the hearing may be held, in accordance with panel members' availability, in the absence of the complainant.
- The complainant may be accompanied to the meeting by one other appropriate person if there is no conflict of interest. Whether there is a conflict of interest at play, will be decided by the panel. Neither party should enlist the attendance of a legal representative at this stage, as this process is not a form of legal proceeding.
- The complainant will ordinarily be expected to attend the hearing, but a written submission will be accepted if the complainant chooses not to; this submission should detail only information relating to the outstanding complaint, and not any new, or un-investigated complaints.
- The time allocated to formal complaints panel hearings will vary; time allocated will reflect the complexity of the complaint and should not exceed three hours. The structure and organisation of the hearing is at the discretion of the panel chair.
- Following all oral and/or written submissions given by the complainant, and consideration of all the available evidence, the panel will make a record of their findings and recommendations to draw a final conclusion. The complainant and school's leaders will receive a copy of the findings and recommendations.
- The conclusion of the stage 3 formal complaints review is final. There is no appeals process.

Managing unreasonable behaviour and serial/persistent complaints

First Bridge School is committed to doing our utmost to reaching resolution with complainants, at the earliest possible stage. However, we acknowledge there may be times when this may not be possible.

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.

We do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from such behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive, or threatening.

We define 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 considered 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;
- 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.

Whenever possible, we will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an *'unreasonable'* marking. If the behaviour continues, the headteacher or another senior leader will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it.

For complainants who excessively contact the school, 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 and/or violence, we will inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from First Bridge School.

Recording complaints, their stage of resolution, and any action taken

A record of all complaints received is kept in the school's complaints log. This record includes the name of the complainant, the nature of the complaint, date, the stage of resolution and any action(s) taken as a result, including the result of any investigations and any information given to the complainant, including the dated response.

Copies of the complaint and all relevant documentation is kept on record, confidentially and in accordance with the GDPR. Complaints will be only accessible by the parties involved, except where the Secretary of State and/or school inspectors require access to them.