Rise
Flourish & Succeed

Rise Multi Academy Trust: Complaints Policy

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Approved by the Trust Board: October 2025

Review Date: October 2027

Signed:

Introduction
Rise Multi Academy Trust is committed to providing the very best education and school experience to pupils across all our schools. We welcome any feedback as an important part of the continuous improvement of the educational services we provide.

When concerns are raised, they will be dealt with promptly through a fair, transparent process and without prejudice.

This policy explains how to raise a concern or make a complaint and what process Rise staff will follow to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. We ask for all involved in the process to act in good faith with a focus on resolution.

Who can make a complaint?
Raising a formal complaint is limited to parents or carers of children that are currently registered at any of our schools. Any person, including members of the public, may raise a concern to the Trust about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints policy.

Where the complaint concerns a third party used by Rise Multi Academy Trust or an individual Rise school, please contact the third party directly and follow their complaints procedure.

Safeguarding
Wherever a complaint indicates that a child's safety or wellbeing is at imminent risk, Rise Schools have a duty to report this immediately to the relevant Local Authority. Any action taken will follow the trust safeguarding and Child protection Policy, available on the Trust website.

The difference between a concern and a complaint
A **concern** may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A **complaint** may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or lack of action'.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Rise Multi Academy Trust takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible. Further information on how to raise a concern can be found on page 3 of this policy.

Scope of this complaint procedure
This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by the Trust, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below:

Scope of this complaint procedure

Exceptions	Who to contact
• Admissions to schools	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process either through the appeals process or via the local authority.
• Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our safeguarding and child protection policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. 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).
• Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-disciplineexclusions/exclusions. *complaints about the application of the School Behaviour policy can be made through the schools complaints procedure
• Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. 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: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. You may also be able to complain directly to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
• Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the Trust's internal grievance procedures.
• Staff conduct	Complaints about staff conduct will be dealt with under the Trust's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action against the school/Trust in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Raising Concerns

Most concerns can be dealt with outside of the formal complaints process. We encourage parents/careers to approach school staff with any concerns they may have and aim to resolve all issues with open dialogue and mutual understanding. Concerns should be raised by phone, email or in person with a relevant member of staff. The best person tos peak to initially will be the member of staff who will have the best understanding of the situation and can best answer your queries, for example:

- A parent's concern about their child's friendship with another child in their class could be raised with the class teacher
- A concern about a member of staff could be raised with a Senior Teacher or Headteacher

Wherever possible, informal concerns will be responded to quickly and resolved amicably. Ideally, your concern will be addressed within two school days, or a meeting may be arranged with you to discuss the issue. Parents/carers should expect an approach that is proportionate to the complaint made.

Where a concern is raised to classroom-based staff please be mindful of their availability and reasonable in your expectation of response times, particularly to concerns received by email. Concerns should not be raised with Rise school governors as they are not involved in the initial stages of complaints.

Procedure and timeframes

Wherever possible, please raise initial concerns with the relevant member of staff as detailed in above. If you are not satisfied with the response and believe the issue has not been resolved, please follow the procedure below.

For the majority of complaints, Rise staff will follow the timescales in this policy.

However, in complex cases more time may be needed to conduct a full and fair review or convene a panel of experienced individuals to review the complaint. In this instance, extended timescales will be confirmed at the earliest possible opportunity.

Rise Schools reserve the right not to investigate complaints that have been made more than three months after the subject of the complaint took place unless in exceptional circumstances; for example: where new evidence has come to light; if the complaint is about an especially serious matter or where there is reasonable justification for why the complainant couldn't raise the matter sooner. The Headteacher (or another appropriate leader for complaints relating to the Headteacher) will make the decision on whether or not to invoke the complaints procedure in this instance.

The complaint process only operates during term time, we will consider complaints made outside of term time after the holiday period.

How to make a complaint
Complaints against staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the headteacher via the school office. Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to the Director of Education and submitted via the Trust admin email address, admin@risemat.co.uk.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing committee should be addressed the Headteacher in the first instance to resolve the issue informally. If the 5 complainant is not satisfied with the outcome they should submit a complaint to the Trust Governance Professional via the Trust admin email address, admin@risemat.co.uk.

Where a complaint concerns the CEO, this should first be raised directly with the CEO to try and resolve the issue informally. Ifthe complainantis notsatisfied with this outcome,they should notify the Trust Governance Professional. The complaints process will then begin at Stage 1 with the Chair of Trustees as the individual responsible for the review.

Where a complaint concerns a Trustee, this should be raised with the Trust Governance Professional where an informal resolution will be sought. However, where this fails, the complaints process will begin at Stage 1 with a Trustee (who is unrelated to the complaint) responsible for the review.

All complaints must be raised using the template complaint form includedat the end of this procedure and emailed to the school or trust admin email address marked Private & Confidential.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

Anonymous complaints
We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the anonymous complaint warrants an investigation.

Serial, Unreasonable and Duplicate Complaints
Where a complainant raises an issue that has already been dealt with via the complaints process in this policy, and the procedure has been completed, the issue will not be reinvestigated unless in exceptional circumstances, such as where new and relevant evidence has been provided.

If a complainant persists in raising the same, or substantially similar, issue the Complaints Coordinator/Trust Governance Professional will confirm in writing that their complaint has been dealt with fully in line with this policy and the case is now closed. They will also provide details of how to raise the issue with the Department for Education if they wish to take the matter further.

Frivolous and Vexatious Complaints
In cases where the school or Trust have taken every reasonable step to address a complainants' concerns and given a clear statement of the position and/or options the decision may be taken that no further response will be made to the complainant. The Headteacher will make a recommendation to the Trust Governance Professional providing full reasonings. The Trust Governance Professional will either confirm the Headteacher's recommendation and inform the complainant or direct that the complaint be addressed using the process set out in this policy.

The characteristics of a 'frivolous' or 'vexatious' complaint are:

- complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
- insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes
- insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- demands for redress that lack any serious purpose or value

Duplicate Complaints
When a complaint has been through the full complaints process and is closed, any subsequent complaint received from a spouse, partner, grandparent or child (where the child is a subject in the complaint) about the same subject matter will be deemed a duplicate complaint.

In this instance, the complainant will be informed that the matter has already been considered and the full complaint process completed. Rise Schools will therefore not re-investigate the matter. The complainant will be advised to contact the Department for Education if they are unhappy with the School/Trust's handling of the original complaint. Before deciding that a complaint will be treated as 'duplicate', Rise Schools will take care to ensure there are no new aspects to the complaint that have not previously been considered. Any new aspect identified can be investigated through the full complaint process as a new complaint.

Complaint Stages
Complaints will usually be handled in the order and procedure outlined below, from Stage 1 to Stage 3 consecutively. However, in exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Trust Governance Professional the process may begin at Stage 2. The first point of contact for making a complaint is the school's main email address (available on the school's website) or if appropriate the Trust via the trust email (admin@risemat.co.uk) who can forward your complaint onto the relevant party.

At each stage of the process, the complainant should clarify what their complaint is regarding and what outcomes would resolve the matter for them. Complainants are not able to change the subject of their complaint or add new, unrelated concerns throughout the process. New concerns should be raised as a separate complaint.

Resolving complaints
At each stage in the procedure, the Trust wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- An explanation
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- An assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- An explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- An apology

Withdrawal of a complaint
If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Stage 1 – Informal Complaints
If an initial concern has been raised and the complainant feels the issue has not been addressed or if the school decides the initial concern warrants a more detailed review, a Stage 1 review will be conducted following the below process:
i. Complainant contacts the **main school email address** (available on the school's website) to request their complaint is investigated **using the complaints form appended to this policy.**

The complainant should confirm:
- A summary of the complaint
- Who has been involved (use job titles if names are not known)
- Anything that has already been done to resolve the matter and why this is not satisfactory
- Any evidence they have to support their complaint
- What is needed to resolve the complaint (e.g. an explanation / apology / further action)

1. Within 2 school days a response will be given to acknowledge receipt of the complaint, confirm who the complaint has been forwarded to for review and the timescales for a response.
2. The Headteacher may conduct the Stage 1 review themselves or instruct an appropriate member of their team to conduct the review.
3. The outcome(s) of the review will be provided to the complainant in writing within 10 school days of confirming a review will be undertaken.
4. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 1, they may request that the complaint be escalated to a Stage 2 Formal Complaint by submitting the Complaint Form to the school or Trust Office (as appropriate).
5. A request to escalate to Stage 2 Formal Complaint must be made via the school or Trust office (as appropriate), within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 outcome letter.
6. Written records of the complaint and stage 1 review will be held at the school for twelve months, in line with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018.

Stage 2 - Formal complaints
Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (unlessthey are about the headteacher), via the school office. This should be done in writing using the Complaint Form.

The headteacher (or another appropriate leader for complaints relating to the Headteacher) will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 2 school days including the timescales for a response.

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see.

During the investigation, the headteacher (or investigator) will consider any evidence they deem relevant to the complaint; this may include but is not limited to:

- Written records from Stage 1 including the original complaint
- Previous correspondence regarding the complaint
- A statement or supporting evidence from either party
- If necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- Written records of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation

We aim to complete the investigation within 10 school days from when the complaint has been acknowledged. However, this can vary depending on the nature and complexity of the complaint. If the investigating officer is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the investigating officer will provide a formal written response within 10 school days of the conclusion of the investigation.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school/Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

The investigating officer will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, the Director of Education will appoint an appropriate investigating officer to complete all the actions at Stage 2.

Complaints about any member of a local governing committee must be made to the Trust Governance Professional.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 Panel Hearing consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint with one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made to the Investigating Officer, via the school/Trust office, within 5 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response.

The investigating officer will record the date the stage 3 complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 2 school days.

Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Chair of the panel will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within 20 school days of receipt of the Stage 2 escalation from the complainant. If this is not possible, the investigating officer will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If the complainant rejects the offer of a proposed date, without good reason, the investigating officer will officer will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissionsfrom both parties.

A panel will be convened of at least three panel members who have not been previously involved at any stage of the complaint

- A complainant may bring one person along to the panel meeting to provide support. This can be a relative or friend.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under (Human Resources) staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, and outcomes will not be shared with them.

Representativesfrom the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 5 school days before the meeting, the Clerk to the panel will:

- Confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- Request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the panel at least 3 school days before the meeting

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 3 school days before the date of the meeting. The panel will not accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally be permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The panel will consider the complaint, and all the evidence presented. The panel can:

- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- With the support of an appropriate trust senior leader make relevant recommendations

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the panel with the support of the Trust senior leader will:

- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint

Where appropriate, recommended changes to the school/Trust's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the panel will provide the complainant and the school/Trust with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days from the date of the hearing.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education(DfE) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the school/Trust.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school/Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher.

A complaint log will be kept of all complaints, including the stage at which they were resolved and what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection requests access to them under relevant legislation.

If the complainant believes the school / trust 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 Department for Education (DfE) after they have completed Stage 3.

Where appropriate, recommended changes to the school/Trust's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the panel will provide the complainant and the school/Trust with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 school days from the date of the hearing.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education(DfE) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by the school/Trust.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the school/Trust will take to resolve the complaint.

The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. Furthermore, they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher.

A complaint log will be kept of all complaints, including the stage at which they were resolved and what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision.

All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection requests access to them under relevant legislation.

If the complainant believes the school / trust 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 Department for Education (DfE) after they have completed Stage 3.

COMPLAINT FORM

Please complete and return to relevant school or to the Trust (depending on stage of complaint) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Pupil's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):
Address: **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:** **Email address:**
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it

What actions have been taken to date to resolve this matter and why you feel this is unsatisfactory?
What actions do you feel might resolve the concern at this stage?
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.
Signature: **By signing this form you agree to share data regarding yourself and your child only to be used during the complaint process.** **Date:**
Official use
Date acknowledgement sent:
By who:
Complaint referred to:
Action taken:
Date:

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- Explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- Co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- Respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- Ask for assistance as needed
- Treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- Refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigating Officer

The investigating officer's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:

- Sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
- Interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
- Consideration of records and other relevant information
- Analysing information
- Liaising with the complainant and the Complaints Co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right

The investigating Officer should:

- Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- Keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- Ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- Be mindful of the time scales to respond
- Prepare a comprehensive report for the Headteacher or complaints panel that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.
- The Headteacher or complaints panel will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details

Complaints Co-ordinator (School/Trust Administrator)

The Complaints Co-ordinator should:

- Ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- Liaise with staff members, Headteacher, CEO, Chair of Governors, Chair of Trust or the Clerk and to ensure the smooth running of the complaint's procedure
- Keep the complaints log up to date

Be aware of issues regarding:

- Sharing third party information
- Additional support that may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person

Trust Governance Professional

The Trust Governance Professional isthe contact point for the complainant and the panel and should:

- Ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- Collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example: stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- Act as the Clerk and record the proceedings
- Circulate the minutes of the meeting
- Notify all parties of the panel's decision

Panel Chair

- The Chair of the Panel who is nominated in advance of the panel hearing, should ensure that:
- Both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- The meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- Complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- The remit of the panel is explained to the complainant
- Written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it doe snot breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the Data Protection Act 2018 or GDPR
- If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- Both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissionsaheadofthe meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- The issues are addressed
- Key findings of fact are made
- The panel is open-minded and acts independently
- No member of the panel has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- The meeting is minuted
- They liaise with the Clerk (and Complaints Co-ordinator)

Panel Member

Panel members should be aware that:

- The meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
- No governor / trustee may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant

Panel Member

Panel members should be aware that:

- We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- Many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
- Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting
- Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.
- The panel should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.
- If the child/young person isthe complainant, the panel should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the panel should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.
- However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the panel considers is not in the child/young person's best interests
- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount

Appendix A - Managing serial and unreasonable complaints

Rise Multi Academy Trust 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 schools. 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.

Rise 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.

Whilst the complaint is in progress, complainants should try to limit their communication with the school regarding their complaint. 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 and/or a member of the central team will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking.
If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact our schools or central team 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 our school premises.

Definition and Management of Unreasonable or Persistent Contact

Unreasonable or persistent contact refers to communication with the school or central team that is excessive, disruptive, or inappropriate, and not directly linked to a formal complaint. This includes contact that is frequent, lengthy, or complicated, and which places undue pressure on staff or resources. Examples include repeated correspondence on resolved matters, refusal to accept procedural boundaries, or the use of abusive, offensive, or threatening language.

Rise Multi Academy Trust will manage such behaviour by first attempting informal resolution through discussion. If the behaviour persists, a formal written warning will be issued, and a communication plan may be implemented to restrict contact methods and frequency. In cases of serious aggression or violence, immediate action will be taken, including police involvement and potential barring from premises. Reviews of any restrictions will occur after six months to assess ongoing appropriateness.

Data Usage Access Act 2025 - Complaint Process Appendix B

Introduction
Rise Multi Academy Trust is committed to protecting the privacy and personal data of its students, staff, parents/carers, governors and the wider school community. This policy outlines the procedure for handling complaints related to data usage and access, in accordance with the Data Usage Access Act (DUAA) and other relevant UK data protection legislation, including the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018).

The UK GDPR documents as set out on our website provide an overview of how personal data is managed across our settings.

This is an appendix to the main complaint policy and reflects the requirement for standalone data usage complaints to be handled using a separate procedure. Any complaint that is linked to other matters whether raised as a formal or informal complaint are to be dealt with under the standard complaint process as outlined within the main complaint policy.

Roles and responsibilities
The Data Controller (DC) is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and the legal obligations imposed by the UK GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018, Data Usage and Access Act 2025 and other relevant legislation. The Rise MAT Trust Board Academy Trust is the Data Controller for the personal data processed across all its schools. Each school acts on behalf of the Trust in managing personal data in line with the Trust's Data Protection Policy. The DC will delegate day to day management of this to the relevant staff member and the DC will expect that staff member to investigate any complaint unless there is a conflict of interest, in which case the DC will appoint a suitable person.

The headteacher and leadership team are responsible for ensuring all staff are aware of this policy and their data protection obligations.

All staff members are responsible for handling personal data in a secure and lawful manner and for co-operating fully with any investigation into a data usage or access complaint.

Scope
This policy applies to all individuals who have dealings with our Trust and believe that their personal data has been used or accessed inappropriately, or that their rights under the DUAA and other data protection laws have been infringed.
This includes but is not limited to:

- current and former students
- parents/carers
- school staff (teaching, support, and administrative)
- governors
- volunteers
- contractors and suppliers

Principles
Fairness and transparency: All complaints will be handled in a fair, impartial, and transparent manner.

Confidentiality: Complaints and all related information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, unless disclosure is required by law.

Timeliness: Complaints will be acknowledged and investigated in a prompt manner.

Compliance: All actions taken will comply with the DUAA, UK GDPR, DPA 2018, and other relevant legislation.

The complaint procedure

Step 1: Informal resolution

We encourage individuals to first attempt an informal resolution of their concerns. If you have a concern about data usage or access, you should, in the first instance, raise it with the relevant member of staff or senior person in the school. For Central team concerns, this will be Nicky Hearfield, Head of Operations who can be contacted on nhearfield@risemat.co.uk. For school level, this will be the Headteacher at the Trusts individual schools.

In many cases, issues can be resolved quickly and informally at this stage.

Step 2: Formal complaint submission

If the informal approach is not successful or deemed inappropriate, a formal complaint should be submitted in writing using the complaint form attached.

The complaint should be addressed to Estelle Skinner, Rise Multi Academy Trust at admin@risemat.co.uk

The written complaint should be made on the **Personal Data Misuse form (Appendix C)** and shall include the following information:

1. your full name and contact details.
2. a clear and concise description of the complaint, including what happened, when it happened, and who was involved.
3. a description of the data involved and how you believe it was used or accessed inappropriately.
4. any relevant dates, times, or evidence.
5. details of any informal steps you have already taken to resolve the issue.
6. the desired outcome of the complaint.

Step 3: Acknowledgment and investigation

You will receive an acknowledgment of the written complaint within 5 working days of the setting receiving it.

The DC will conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the complaint.

This may involve:

- interviewing the complainant
- interviewing relevant staff members
- reviewing school records, logs, and policies
- consulting with external legal or data protection experts if necessary

The trust will aim to complete the investigation and provide a substantive response within 20 working days of the complaint's acknowledgment. If the investigation is complex and requires more time, the DC will write to the complainant to explain the reason for the delay and provide a new estimated completion date.

Response
The DC will provide a formal written response to the complainant.

This response will include:

- the findings of the investigation.
- a clear and reasoned conclusion as to whether the DUAA or other data protection laws have been breached.
- details of any corrective action taken or planned to prevent a recurrence of the issue.
- the outcome of the complaint, including whether it has been upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld.
- information on the next steps available to the complainant if they remain dissatisfied.

Escalation
If the complainant is not satisfied with the trust's final response, they have the right to escalate their complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

The ICO's contact details are as follows:
Website: https://ico.org.uk
Telephone: 0303 123 1113
Postal Address: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

Policy Review
This policy appendix B and form C will be reviewed annually by the Data Protection Officer and the school leadership team to ensure it remains relevant, effective, and compliant with all current legislation.

Date of implementation: October 2025

Review date: October 2027

Appendix C - Data Usage Access Act 2025 – Complaint Form

To be completed by the complainant
Please return this form to Estelle Skinner admin@risemat.co.uk

Part 1: Complainant's Details
Please provide your full contact information so we can communicate with you regarding your complaint.

Full Name:	
Relationship to the school/central team: (e.g. student, parent/carer, staff member, former student, volunteer, contractor)	
If student:	
year group:	
form/class:	
If parent/carer:	
student's full name:	
student's year group:	
Contact telephone number:	
Email address:	
Postal address:	
Preferred method of contact: (e.g. email, phone or post)	

Appendix C - Data Usage Access Act 2025 – Complaint Form

To be completed by the complainant
Please return this form to Estelle Skinner admin@risemat.co.uk

Part 2: Details of the complaint
Please provide a clear and concise description of your complaint.

Date(s) of the incident(s)	
When did the misuse occur or when did you become aware of it?	
Nature of the complaint	
Please tick all that apply and provide details below:	
Unauthorised access to personal data	
Unauthorised disclosure of personal data	
Incorrect or inaccurate personal data	
Unlawful processing or use of personal data	
Failure to respond to a data subject request e.g. Subject Access Request or Right to Erasure	
Other (please specify)	
Description of the incident(s)	
What happened? *Provide a detailed narrative of the events.*	

Appendix C - Data Usage Access Act 2025 – Complaint Form

To be completed by the complainant
Please return this form to Estelle Skinner admin@risemat.co.uk

Part 2: Details of the complaint
Please provide a clear and concise description of your complaint.

Who do you believe was involved? e.g. specific staff member, department, external party	
What personal data was involved? e.g. name, address, medical information, academic records, disciplinary records, financial details, sensitive personal data	
How do you believe your data was misused or accessed inappropriately?	
Where did the incident occur (if applicable)	
Has there been any previous attempts to resolve this issue informally? e.g. discussed with a teacher, GDPR lead, head of department.	**Yes or No**
If yes, please provide details of who you spoke to and when.	

Part 3: Supporting evidence

Please list and attach any evidence that supports your complaint. This could include:

- emails or correspondence
- screenshots
- dates and times of relevant events
- witness statements (if applicable)

Please list attached documents here:

Part 4: Desired outcome

Please specify the resolution that you are seeking as a result of this complaint?

☐	**Investigation and explanation of what happened**
☐	**Correction of inaccurate data**
☐	**Deletion of unlawfully processed data**
☐	**An apology**
☐	**Assurance that similar incidents will not occur in the future**
☐ **Other (please specify):**	

Appendix C - Data Usage Access Act 2025 – Complaint Form

Part 5: Declaration

I understand that the trust will investigate this complaint in accordance with its Data Usage Access Act 2025 Complaint Process.

Signature:

Date: