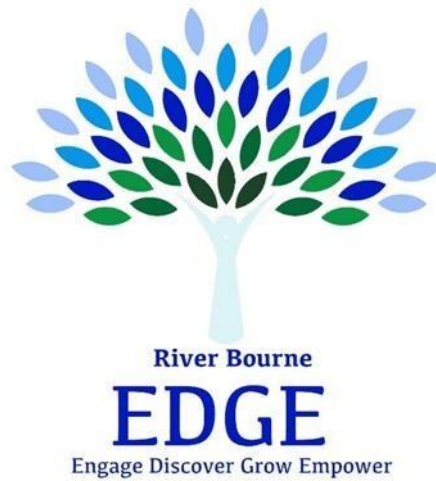




River Bourne Edge Alternative Provision

Complaints Policy

Policy Owner: Head of Provision
Approved by: Senior Leadership Team
Policy Date: July 2026
Review Date: July 2027

1. Policy Statement

At The River Bourne Edge we value open, honest and respectful communication.

We believe that concerns and complaints provide an opportunity to listen, learn and improve. Wherever possible, we aim to resolve concerns through positive relationships, open dialogue and restorative conversations before moving to formal procedures.

We are committed to ensuring that every concern or complaint is handled fairly, consistently, sensitively and within appropriate timescales. We recognise that raising a concern can sometimes feel difficult and encourage anyone with a genuine concern to speak with us as early as possible so that we have the best opportunity to resolve it.

We view complaints as an important source of feedback that helps us continually improve the quality of education, care and support provided at The River Bourne Edge.

Everyone involved in the complaints process will be treated with dignity, respect and impartiality.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide a clear and transparent complaints procedure;
 - encourage concerns to be raised and addressed promptly;
 - resolve complaints fairly and consistently;
 - ensure complaints are investigated appropriately;
 - protect the rights of all parties involved;
 - promote positive relationships and effective communication;
 - use feedback to improve our provision and the experience of students and families.
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3. Our Approach

At The River Bourne Edge we believe that positive relationships are built through trust, openness and respectful communication.

Most concerns can be resolved quickly through honest conversations and a willingness to understand different perspectives.

For this reason, we encourage concerns to be raised at the earliest opportunity so they can often be resolved before becoming formal complaints.

When concerns cannot be resolved informally, we are committed to ensuring that formal complaints are investigated professionally, impartially and sensitively.

Throughout the process we will:

- listen carefully;
- remain respectful;
- be fair and objective;
- communicate openly;

- keep people informed;
 - seek solutions wherever possible;
 - learn from feedback.
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4. Legislation and Guidance

This policy has been developed in accordance with current legislation and guidance, including:

- Education Act 2002
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Current Edition)

The River Bourne Edge will review this policy whenever significant changes to legislation or statutory guidance occur.

5. Definitions

Concern

A concern is an expression of worry or uncertainty where reassurance, clarification or discussion is being sought.

Concerns can usually be resolved quickly through discussion with the appropriate member of staff.

Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction regarding an action, decision or lack of action by The River Bourne Edge that requires a formal response.

Wherever possible, concerns should be addressed before they develop into formal complaints.

6. Scope

This policy applies to:

- parents and carers;
- students where appropriate;
- commissioning schools;
- partner organisations;
- visitors;
- members of the public;
- any individual wishing to raise concerns regarding The River Bourne Edge.

The policy applies to concerns relating to the services, education or support provided by The River Bourne Edge.

Some matters fall outside the scope of this policy and must be referred directly to the appropriate authority.

Examples include:

Issue	Appropriate Agency
Child protection concerns	Local Authority Children's Social Care
Criminal behaviour	Police
Data protection breaches	Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)
SEND Tribunal appeals	First-tier Tribunal (SEND)
Allegations against staff meeting the harm threshold	Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Where appropriate, The River Bourne Edge will support individuals in contacting the relevant organisation.

7. Safeguarding Concerns

The safety and wellbeing of children and young people will always take priority.

Where a complaint raises concerns regarding the welfare or safety of a student, the matter will immediately be managed in accordance with The River Bourne Edge Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Safeguarding concerns may be investigated alongside the complaints procedure where appropriate.

8. Principles of Complaints Handling

Every complaint will be managed in accordance with the following principles.

We will:

- treat everyone with courtesy, dignity and respect;
- investigate complaints fairly and objectively;
- remain impartial throughout the process;
- maintain confidentiality wherever possible;
- make reasonable adjustments where required;
- communicate clearly throughout the investigation;
- explain decisions and outcomes;
- identify opportunities for learning and improvement.

We ask complainants to:

- raise concerns as soon as reasonably possible;
- provide accurate information;

- work constructively with the process;
 - communicate respectfully with staff;
 - avoid publishing details of ongoing complaints on social media whilst investigations are taking place.
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9. Timescales

Complaints should normally be raised within **three months** of the incident occurring, or within three months of the final incident where concerns relate to a series of events.

The Head of Provision may exercise discretion where there are exceptional circumstances preventing a complaint from being raised within this timescale.

Where complaints are received during school holidays or periods of closure, they will normally be treated as having been received on the next working day.

If additional time is required to complete an investigation, the complainant will be informed of:

- the reason for the delay;
 - the revised timescale;
 - any interim actions being taken.
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10. Stage 1 – Early Resolution

The River Bourne Edge believes that many concerns can be resolved quickly through respectful discussion.

Complainants are encouraged to raise concerns with the most appropriate member of staff as soon as possible.

Concerns may be raised:

- in person;
- by telephone;
- by email;
- in writing.

If individuals are unsure who to contact they should email:

info@theriverbourneedge.com

The concern will normally be acknowledged within **three working days**.

Where appropriate, staff will:

- listen carefully to the concern;
- seek clarification where required;
- discuss possible solutions;
- agree any actions;
- provide a response within **five working days**, wherever possible.

If the matter cannot be resolved at this stage, it may progress to Stage 2.

11. Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

Where Early Resolution has not resolved the concern, a formal complaint may be submitted to the **Head of Provision**.

Complaints may be submitted:

- by letter;
- by email to **info@theriverbournedge.com**;
- by telephone;
- in person;
- through a representative acting on the complainant's behalf.

Where possible, the complaint should include:

- a clear description of the concern;
- relevant dates and times;
- names of individuals involved;
- details of any witnesses;
- copies of supporting documentation;
- the outcome the complainant is seeking.

The Head of Provision, or an appropriately appointed investigating officer, will:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint;
- investigate the concerns objectively;
- speak with relevant individuals;
- review available evidence;
- consider all relevant information;
- provide a written response within **10 working days**, wherever reasonably possible.

If additional time is required, the complainant will be informed of the reasons and provided with an updated timescale.

Where the complainant remains dissatisfied following the formal investigation, they may request that the complaint progresses to **Stage 3 – Review Panel**.

12. Stage 3 – Review Panel

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the Stage 2 investigation, they may request that the complaint is reviewed by a Review Panel.

The request should normally be submitted in writing within **10 working days** of receiving the Stage 2 outcome and sent to:

info@theriverbournedge.com

The request should explain:

- why the complainant remains dissatisfied;
- which aspects of the complaint they believe have not been addressed;

- the outcome they are seeking.

The Review Panel will normally consist of individuals who have had no previous involvement in the complaint.

Where appropriate, this may include members of the Senior Leadership Team, Directors or an independent panel member.

The Review Panel will:

- review all documentation;
- consider whether the complaints procedure has been followed correctly;
- determine whether the investigation was fair and reasonable;
- decide whether further investigation is required;
- communicate its decision in writing, normally within **20 working days**.

The decision of the Review Panel represents the final stage of The River Bourne Edge's internal complaints procedure.

13. Complaint Outcomes

Following investigation, complaints may be:

- upheld;
- partially upheld;
- not upheld;
- resolved through agreement between the parties.

Where appropriate, outcomes may include:

- an explanation or clarification;
- an apology;
- agreed actions to resolve the issue;
- changes to procedures;
- staff guidance or training;
- improvements to communication;
- recommendations for future practice.

Where a complaint is upheld, The River Bourne Edge will seek to implement appropriate actions to prevent similar issues arising in the future.

14. Roles and Responsibilities

Head of Provision

The Head of Provision is responsible for:

- ensuring complaints are managed fairly and consistently;
- appointing appropriate investigating officers where required;
- ensuring complaints are investigated within agreed timescales;
- communicating outcomes appropriately;

- identifying opportunities for improvement.
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Staff

All staff are expected to:

- respond professionally to concerns;
 - seek to resolve issues at the earliest opportunity;
 - treat complainants respectfully;
 - cooperate fully with investigations;
 - maintain confidentiality;
 - report complaints promptly to senior leaders where appropriate.
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Directors

Directors have responsibility for:

- ensuring an effective complaints procedure is in place;
 - reviewing complaints at Stage 3 where appropriate;
 - monitoring themes arising from complaints;
 - ensuring lessons learned contribute to organisational improvement.
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15. Persistent, Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

The River Bourne Edge recognises that the vast majority of concerns are raised reasonably and in good faith.

However, on rare occasions, behaviour associated with a complaint may become unreasonable due to the frequency, nature or manner in which it is pursued.

Examples may include:

- repeated complaints about the same issue after the procedure has concluded;
- excessive or abusive communication;
- unreasonable demands on staff time;
- aggressive, threatening or intimidating behaviour;
- refusal to accept reasonable explanations or outcomes.

In these circumstances, The River Bourne Edge may:

- limit methods of communication;
- nominate a single point of contact;
- decline to respond to repeated correspondence that raises no new issues;
- take appropriate action to protect the wellbeing and safety of staff.

Any decision will be proportionate, reasonable and recorded appropriately.

16. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be considered where sufficient information is provided to allow a meaningful investigation.

However, anonymous complaints may be more difficult to investigate fully if clarification or further evidence is required.

The decision to investigate an anonymous complaint will be made by the Head of Provision based upon the seriousness of the concerns raised.

17. Record Keeping

Accurate records will be maintained for all formal complaints.

Records will normally include:

- the complaint received;
- correspondence relating to the complaint;
- notes of meetings;
- evidence considered;
- investigation findings;
- actions taken;
- the final outcome.

Complaint records will be stored securely and managed in accordance with the Data Protection Policy and UK GDPR.

Access will be restricted to authorised personnel.

18. Learning from Complaints

The River Bourne Edge values complaints as an opportunity to improve.

Following the conclusion of complaints, senior leaders will consider whether improvements should be made to:

- policies;
- procedures;
- staff training;
- communication;
- curriculum;
- safeguarding practice;
- operational systems.

Where appropriate, lessons learned will be shared with staff to support continuous improvement while maintaining confidentiality.

19. Monitoring and Review

The Senior Leadership Team will regularly monitor complaints to identify:

- recurring themes;
- trends;
- areas for improvement;
- effectiveness of complaint handling;
- opportunities to improve communication and service delivery.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if changes to legislation, statutory guidance or organisational practice require amendments.

20. Equality Statement

The River Bourne Edge is committed to ensuring that everyone has fair access to the complaints process.

Reasonable adjustments will be made where required to enable individuals with disabilities, communication needs or additional support requirements to participate fully.

Complaints will be managed fairly, impartially and without discrimination.

21. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Relationships Policy
 - Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
 - Whistleblowing Policy
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
 - Data Protection Policy
 - Staff Code of Conduct
 - Anti-Bullying Policy
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22. Policy Summary

At The River Bourne Edge we believe that strong relationships are built through openness, trust and respectful communication.

We encourage concerns to be raised early and will always seek to resolve issues through positive dialogue wherever possible. Where formal complaints are necessary, they will be managed fairly, sensitively and professionally.

We value feedback as an opportunity to strengthen our provision, improve our practice and ensure that every student, family and partner organisation receives the highest possible standard of support.

Our commitment is not simply to respond to complaints, but to listen, learn and continually improve.