PU RICHMOND PARK EDUCATION SARAJEVO

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COMPLAINTS POLICY

RPE-PL-13

POLICY OWNER	Education Quality and Accountability Office
MONITORING AND EVALUATION	Principal and Senior Leadership Team
APPROVED BY	School Board
APPROVAL DATE	
DATE POLICY CAME INTO EFFECT	
PERIOD OF REVIEW	3 years
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW	

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1 RPE Mission and Vision

Mission

Richmond Park Education aims to provide an inclusive learning environment that **nurtures**, **inspires and empowers** the students to reach their full potential academically, socially, and emotionally. Through innovative teaching methods, engaging and challenging enrichment programmes, personalised attention, and collaboration with families and the community, we cultivate critical thinking, creativity, and a lifelong passion for learning.

Vision

Vision of Richmond Park Education is to prepare the students to become compassionate, confident, and responsible global citizens who are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values to thrive in an ever-changing world.

2 Introduction

This policy was prepared by RPE Education Quality and Accountability Office.

The School Board has agreed and ratified this policy.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with all other policies as relevant.

3 Rationale

Richmond Park International School, Sarajevo (hereinafter: the School) is committed to providing an optimal educational environment and support system for all enrolled pupils. Central to this commitment is the establishment of a transparent, equitable, and efficient policy and procedure for addressing parental complaints regarding the School. This policy aims to facilitate the prompt and effective resolution of any issues that may arise.

4 Aims and Scope

The aim of this policy is to provide the outlined procedure, which should be consulted and adhered to by both pupils and their parents whenever concerns emerge. Should adjustments to the designated time limits and deadlines within this policy become necessary, the concerned parties will be duly informed, given an explanation, and provided with revised timeframes.

It is imperative to note that this document **does not** encompass complaints pertaining to:

- pupil admissions,
- pupil exclusions,
- statutory assessments of special educational needs,
- disciplinary matters involving staff members,
- issues necessitating child protection investigations,
- curriculum content,
- complaints regarding services rendered by external providers utilising school premises or facilities.

In instances involving allegations or suspicions of physical or sexual misconduct against a child,

or when there is reason to believe that a child may be subjected to severe harm, the school reserves the right to promptly refer the case to Child Protection Services and/or law enforcement agencies. Should an official investigation be warranted, decisions made by these authorities will supersede those outlined in this document.

In cases where a complaint is related to a safeguarding referral initiated by a school staff member, the school's examination of said complaint will be confined to an assessment of the reasonableness of the referral decision, considering the evidence available to the staff member at the time, and in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

For further insights into our school's measures for safeguarding pupils, readers are encouraged to consult our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, which encompasses allegations of staff abuse.

Concerns or complaints should be promptly brought to the School's attention to facilitate thorough investigations. Complaints raised more than one month after the incident in question (or within one month following a series of associated incidents) will generally not be considered, unless under exceptional circumstances.

Anonymous complaints will not be addressed under the purview of this document.

5 Roles and Responsibilities

School Board

The School Board has devolved responsibility from the Richmond Park Education Board for approving this policy and ensuring it is implemented appropriately. Additionally, the Board is responsible for:

- receiving and addressing the complaints that pertain to Principals,
- receiving and addressing the complaints of parents/guardians unsatisfied with the outcome of the complaint they lodged to the Principal,
- receiving and addressing the complaints regarding the disciplinary measures of the School Teaching Council.

Principal

Principal is responsible for:

- ensuring this policy is shared annually with staff and made available to parents and carers via the school website, or in printed form upon a request from the Secretary,
- ensuring that the period of review is maintained appropriately with the senior leaders,
- receiving and addressing formal complaints,
- receiving and addressing complaints that pertain to staff members,
- moderating the work of the School Teaching Council in handling relevant complaints.

Staff

All school staff are mandated to acquaint themselves with the School's complaints procedures and to periodically review this documentation. This ensures their familiarity with the process of managing complaints, thereby enabling them to provide maximal assistance when issues are brought to their attention.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers should read this policy thoroughly and closely adhere to the procedure it outlines.

6 Complaints Procedure

Our complaints procedure is divided into the following key segments outlined below.

First Identification of an Issue or Concern

Upon encountering an issue or a concern that warrants attention, individuals are advised to initially **notify a staff member**, either in person, via the phone, SchoolMind app, or in writing via email. Subsequently, they may be invited to an informal meeting with the most appropriate staff member for addressing the concern.

It is recommended to **approach the child's Form Tutor** initially, as they are well-positioned to provide direct assistance or to facilitate engagement with relevant staff members.

Parents are encouraged to engage openly with staff members regarding any concerns they may harbour, with the aim of **resolving issues through dialogue and mutual understanding**.

A **written explanation** of the concern should be provided to the staff member to whom the concern is conveyed. This facilitates clarity and ensures that the essence of the initial problem is readily discernible in subsequent references or escalations.

In the event that **the complaint pertains to a staff member**, it should be raised initially with the respective Principal (Primary or Secondary), either in person or in writing. A meeting may be scheduled to discuss the matter at hand.

In instances where **the complaint pertains to a Principal (Primary or Secondary)**, it should be articulated in writing and delivered to the School Board, addressed to its members. As a last instance, only to be used for matters of utmost urgency and necessity, a meeting may be requested with the Secretary of the General Director of Richmond Park Education via email: info@rps.edu.ba

Complaints directly addressed to any member of the Board will be redirected to the appropriate staff member, unless exceptional circumstances warrant otherwise.

Initial Informal Meeting

Upon raising a concern, individuals may be invited to participate in an **informal meeting** with a staff member, Principal, or a Board member to further discuss their concerns.

Participants may opt to be accompanied by a partner, or in the case of pupil-initiated concerns, a parent. Depending on the nature of the issue, it may be deemed appropriate for a pupil to attend the meeting alongside the parent that raised a concern.

Staff members are tasked with ensuring that participants understand the future courses of action agreed upon during the meeting. Staff members are required to make comprehensive written records of discussions, outcomes, and action plans, if any.

Every effort is made to address concerns in an appropriate and expeditious manner. In the event that a mutually agreeable resolution cannot be reached, or if participants are dissatisfied with the meeting's outcome, they reserve the option to escalate the matter by lodging a formal complaint in writing with the Principal (Primary or Secondary).

Given the paramount importance of dialogue in informal discussions, **no specific timeframe is prescribed for issue resolution at this stage**, although a response within **five working days** would generally be expected. It should be noted that the school office is closed during weekends and staff, including members of the leadership team, may be unavailable during school holidays.

Formal Complaint

In order to ensure the efficient and effective processing of complaints, the School adheres to a **four-stage approach** in addressing formal complaints:

• Stage 1 - Lodging a formal complaint with the Principal

- o If an individual feels that their concern has not been adequately addressed or is dissatisfied with the outcome of an informal meeting, they may escalate the matter by lodging a formal written complaint with the Principal (of Primary or Secondary). Should the complaint pertain to the Principals themselves, bypass this stage and proceed directly to Stage 2.
- The written complaint must provide sufficient detail to enable the Head of Principal (Primary or Secondary) to investigate and respond to the complaint.
 Additionally, the complainant should articulate proposed resolutions to address the complaint.
- Acknowledgement of the complaint will be provided in writing within five working days, with an accompanying outline of the procedural steps and a target date for furnishing a written response. Should it be necessary to adjust the time limits and deadlines outlined in this procedure, relevant parties will be duly informed, given an explanation, and provided with revised timescales.
- The Principal (Primary or Secondary) may opt to convene a meeting to discuss the matter, provide updates on outcomes, or explore potential solutions. A comprehensive written record of interactions, meetings, and decisions pertaining to the complaint will be maintained.
- In cases involving complaints against staff members, the Principal will initiate discussions with the implicated employee. Allegations of abuse may prompt a formal inquiry by either the School or external child welfare authorities.
- Subsequent to review, the Principal will provide a written response delineating their stance on the concern raised, actions taken or proposed, and avenues for further recourse, if deemed necessary.
- If the decision is made not to pursue further action, rationale for this outcome will be provided, along with information regarding the complainant's rights and available avenues for escalating the complaint further.

Stage 2 - Escalating the Formal Complaint with the Board

o If after discussing your concerns with the Principal (of Primary or Secondary), you find the resolution unsatisfactory or if your complaint pertains to the Principal, you have the option to escalate your complaint to the Board. This escalation should occur within five working days of the Stage 1 outcome. Failure to

- escalate within this timeframe will result in the acceptance of the Stage 1 decision, leading to the closure of the complaint, barring exceptional circumstances.
- It is imperative that the complaint be submitted in writing, providing sufficient detail about your concerns and the preceding steps that led to this course of action. Additionally, articulate the actions you believe are necessary for resolving the complaint.
- In cases where the complaint involves a member of staff or a member of the leadership team, the concerned individual will have the opportunity to provide a response, which will be submitted to the Board within five working days of lodging the complaint.
- The Secretary of the Board typically responds in writing within five working days, outlining the response to your concerns and any actions taken or to be taken. Should adjustments to the time limits and deadlines specified in this procedure be necessary, relevant parties will be duly informed, given an explanation, and provided with revised timescales. If the Board decides against further action on the issue, they will provide the reasoning behind such a decision and outline your right to appeal and the procedure for initiating an appeal.

• Stage 3 - Appeals:

- Should you wish to file an appeal subsequent to the resolution of a formal complaint at Stage 2, it will be referred to the appeals panel. To exercise this right, you must communicate with the School Secretary within five working days of the Stage 2 outcome. Failure to request an appeals panel hearing within this timeframe will result in the acceptance of the decision, leading to the closure of the complaint, unless exceptional circumstances are present.
- Upon receiving an appeals panel request, the Secretary will acknowledge the appeal, make necessary arrangements, and typically convene the appeals panel within five working days from the acknowledgment date. Efforts will be made to schedule a hearing at a mutually convenient time and date for all parties. However, if such scheduling proves challenging, the Secretary may determine that the hearing proceeds based on written submissions from both parties.
- The Secretary ensures equal access to documentation for all appeal participants and establishes a timetable for document compilation and distribution. Both parties must submit any relevant supporting documentation to the appeals panel at least five working days prior to the hearing. While the appeals panel is not obligated to hear oral evidence from witnesses, it may do so and may consider written statements. Covertly obtained recordings of conversations without informed consent from all parties involved are typically not accepted.
- You have the right to be accompanied to the appeals panel hearing and should inform the Secretary in advance if you plan to bring someone.

Appeals Panel

Comprising three to five members of the Board, the Appeals Panel must include at least one individual independent of the School's management and operation (this is usually the representative of parents in the School Board). Panel members with prior knowledge or involvement in the case under consideration cannot participate. The Panel Chair is nominated from within the group, and all members are familiar with and have access to the Complaints

Policy.

At this stage, the Appeals Panel does not entertain new complaints or unrelated evidence; such matters must be addressed from **Stage 1** of the procedure. The Panel must prioritise the complainant's comfort in presenting to the panel, particularly in cases involving young individuals.

Appeals Procedure

The Appeals Panel determines the procedure to ensure optimal handling of issues arising from the complaint. Typically, the appeal procedure involves:

- 1. Joint entry of the complainant and the Principal into the hearing.
- 2. Introduction of Panel members and outlining of the process by the Chair.
- 3. Explanation of the complaint by the complainant.
- 4. Questioning of the complainant by the Principal and the Panel.
- 5. Explanation of the school's actions by the Principal.
- 6. Questioning of the Principal by the complainant and the Panel.
- 7. Summation of the complaint by the complainant.
- 8. Summation of the school's actions by the Principal.
- 9. Notification to both parties of the Panel's decision within five working days.
- 10. Departure of both parties while the Panel deliberates.
- 11. Secretary remains and provides assistance to the panel in decision-making.

Note: The procedure may be adjusted in certain situations to allow separate presentations from the School and the complainant. Adjustments to time limits and deadlines will be communicated with corresponding parties, along with explanations and revised timescales if necessary.

The Panel Chair will inform the complainant of the Panel's decision in writing within five working days of the appeal hearing. The correspondence will delineate the Panel's decision alongside the underlying rationale. Additionally, the letter may outline recommendations proposed to the governing body.

The Appeals Panel reserves the authority to:

- · dismiss all or part of the complaint,
- uphold all or part of the complaint,
- determine the appropriate action for resolving the complaint,
- assess all available evidence and propose alterations to the School's systems, policies or procedures to forestall similar issues in the future.

The panel's decision is final. Should dissatisfaction persist, the complainant may opt to escalate the matter to legal authorities.

Serial and Persistent Complaints

Serial and persistent complaints may arise despite adherence to all stages of the School's complaints procedure (as outlined in the previous paragraphs in this policy), leading to dissatisfaction with the School and the procedural outcomes.

In cases where a complainant seeks to revisit a previously addressed issue, the Board will notify

them that the matter has been conclusively addressed under the complaints procedure. Subsequent correspondence on the same matter may be considered vexatious, absolving the School of any obligation to respond.

The School may opt **not to respond to repeat contact** from a complainant if:

- The School has exhaustively addressed the complainant's concerns, with its stance clearly articulated alongside available options.
- The complainant repeatedly contacts the School reiterating the same points.
- The complainant refuses to adhere to complaints procedures.
- The School reasonably perceives that the contact aims to cause disruption and inconvenience.
- The complainant communicates inappropriately or threateningly with School staff.

Upon deciding to discontinue responses, the School will formally notify the complainant in writing. However, the School ensures that **new complaints from the complainant are duly heard and addressed in a reasonable manner.**

Unreasonable Complaints

The School defines that unreasonable complaints are those where the complainant's actions hinder the School's consideration of their own or others' complaints due to the frequency or nature of their interactions.

Characteristics of an unreasonable complainant may include:

- Failure to articulate or specify the grounds of a complaint despite assistance offers.
- Refusal to cooperate with the complaints inquiry process while desiring resolution.
- Rejection of certain issues being outside the scope of complaints procedures.
- Insistence on incompatible complaint handling methods.
- Introduction of irrelevant information or unreasonable demands for immediate and comprehensive responses.
- Unjustified complaints about staff or baseless repetition of complaints.
- Refusal to accept investigation findings or pursuit of unrealistic outcomes.
- Excessive demands on School time and resources during complaint resolution.

A complaint may be deemed unreasonable if the complainant engages in face-to-face, telephone, written, or electronic communication characterised by:

- malicious intent,
- aggressive behaviour,
- threats, intimidation, or violence,
- · use of abusive, offensive, or discriminatory language,
- use of false assertions knowingly,
- dissemination of falsified and unacceptable information through various media such as social networks, websites, newspapers and news portals etc.

The School is dedicated to addressing all complaints equitably and impartially while delivering high-quality service to complainants. Although the School typically permits unrestricted communication between complainants and the institution, it does not condone unacceptable conduct and endeavours to safeguard staff from abusive, offensive, or threatening behaviour.

If such behaviour persists, the Principal will correspond with the complainant, explaining the unreasonableness of their conduct and requesting a change. In cases where complainants excessively contact the School, causing significant disruption, the institution **may implement communication restrictions and contact limitations, subject to review every six months.**

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include banning an individual from entering the School premises.

7 Complaints Procedure for Grades

In case of parent/guardian complaints that pertain to students' final grades from subjects (obtained through internal assessments as outlined in the Curriculum Policy and detailed in Assessment and Reporting Policy), as well as the disciplinary measures and behaviour grades they bear, the School follows the procedures established by local authorities.

Complaints Regarding Final Grades from Subjects

Final grade from a subject is defined as the expression of a student's attained level of competencies in a particular subject and it is the result of continuous internal assessment throughout the school year by the subject teacher. The final grade is derived from a variety of conducted assessment and attained grades, as well as subject teachers observations on a student's work, efforts and progress. The final grade must not be less than the arithmetic mean of all grades achieved by the student, but it may be higher according to the teacher's judgement. Final grade is determined by the subject teacher (or primary school teacher in Years 1-4) following regulations defined in the Assessment and Reporting Policy.

According to the Sarajevo Canton Law on Primary Education and Law on Secondary education, parents/guardians have the right to lodge a complaint regarding the final grade for any subject at the end of the school year. The process is outlined in Table 1, with appropriate deadlines as prescribed by laws.

For complainant's reference, decision-making bodies mentioned in Table 1 are defined below:

- The Class Teaching Council is the assembly of all teachers that enter the lessons and teach subjects to the class of the student for which the complaint has been lodged.
 Meeting sessions of the council are moderated by the class' Form Tutor. Opinions and decisions are upheld/rejected by a majority vote.
- The School Teaching Council is the assembly of all teachers that enter the lessons and teach subjects to all classes in the School, members of the Senior Leadership Team and the Principal. Meeting sessions of the council are moderated by the Principal. Opinions and decisions are upheld/rejected by a majority vote.
- The commission to reevaluate student's knowledge is appointed by the School Teaching
 Council has three members, usually a member of Senior Leadership Team (Curriculum
 Leader or Deputy Principal), School Pedagogue (who serves as DSL and SENDCo) and a
 member (it may be the subject teacher complaint pertains to, or another teacher of the
 same or similar subject, if parents/carers request in their written complaint the exclusion
 of relevant subject teacher.)

Table 1: Procedure for lodging a complaint regarding a final grade from a subject.

Stage	Action	Deadline in Primary School (Years 1-9)	Deadline in Secondary School (Years 10-13)
1	Written complaint is submitted to the Class Teaching Council. The complaint may include a request that the subject teacher it pertains to is excluded from the commission formed in Step 4.	3 working days from grade finalisation	2 working days from grade finalisation
2	The Class Teaching Council convenes and deliberates on the received complaint. They analyse the teachers grading process and determine if there are any irregularities. Finally, they prepare a written opinion, attach it to the written complaint they received, and immediately submit it to the School Teaching Council.	2 working days after reception of complaint	First upcoming meeting session after reception of complaint (usually held a day or two after the last they of classes)
3	The School Teaching Council convenes and deliberates on the received written opinion attached to the complaint. They prepare a written decision to uphold or reject the complaint, as described in Stages 4 and 5 respectively.	3 working days after reception of written opinion attached to the complaint	3 working days after reception of written opinion attached to the complaint
4	If the School Teaching Council decides to uphold the complaint, this incites the reevaluation of the final grade. The Council must name a commission for reevaluation of student's knowledge. The commission must evaluate a student's knowledge through an oral and written exam prepared by the subject teacher. If parents have indicated it in their written complaint submitted at the Stage 1, the subject teacher may be excluded from the commission. Commission grades the oral and written exam, and derives the final grade as the average of the two. The commission's grade is then final and not open to further complaints.		2 working days after decision to uphold the complaint and form the commission
5	If the School Teaching Council decides to reject the complaint, the final grade established by the subject teacher remains unchanged. The decision on rejection is final and not open to further complaints.	Within the deadline of Stage 3	Within the deadline of Stage 3

In terms of notices and complaints regarding the individual marks, assessment procedures and criteria, parents/guardians may submit a formal complaint in writing to the Principal (following the regular complaints procedure defined by the Section 6 of this policy), **only if** they first contacted and held a meeting with the Form Tutor and relevant subject teacher.

Complaints Regarding Disciplinary Measures and Behaviour Grades

The School's Behaviour Policy defines the circumstances and relevant procedures for the disciplinary measures and behaviour grades that accompany them. According to the Sarajevo Canton Law on Primary Education and Law on Secondary education, students are sanctioned with disciplinary measures and behaviour grade decreases in Years 4-9 of Primary and Years 10-13 of Secondary School, as summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: The summary of disciplinary educational measures and behaviour grades.

Disciplinary educational measure		Behaviour grade	
Warning, contact to t	Remains "Exemplary"		
"Reprima	Decreased to "Very Good"		
"Reprimand by the Class Teaching Council"		Decreased to "Good "	
"Reprimand by the Principal"		Decreased to "Satisfactory"	
"Reprimand by the School Teaching Council"		Decreased to "Poor"	
Transfer to another class (only in Primary)	Temporary exclusion from attending school (only in Secondary)	Remains "Poor"	
to the closest primary	ulsion (in Primary, it includes transfer school accompanied by letter to the and is applicable in Years 5-9)	(these further measures are delivered by the School Teaching Council)	

Each disciplinary measure must be delivered in the form of a written decision to the parents/guardians of the student. Parents/guardians have rights to contest only measures delivered by the School Teaching Council (excluding the expulsion from Secondary), through a formal written complaint to the School Board, as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: Complaints regarding disciplinary measures

Primary School (Years 4-9)		Secondary School (Years 10-13)	
Disciplinary measure that can be contested:	Deadline Disciplinary measure that can be contested:		Deadline
 "Reprimand by the School Teaching Council" and behaviour grade decrease to "Poor" Transfer to another class Expulsion and transfer to the closest school (applicable in Years 5-9) 	7 working days from reception of the written decision	 "Reprimand by the School Teaching Council" and behaviour grade decrease to "Poor" Temporary exclusion from attending school 	3 working days from reception of the written decision

If parents/guardians decide to lodge a complaint regarding the disciplinary measure, the execution of that measure is postponed until the complaint is resolved. The written complaint should be delivered to the School Secretary. The Secretary will inform the School Board and schedule a meeting within the following eight working days. In the meeting, the School Board will review the complaint and ask for any additional evidence or statements from the Principal.

The Board will prepare and deliver to the complainants a written decision that may:

- reject the complaint as unreasonable (check Section 6), disallowed, not containing sufficient evidence, or delivered past the deadline, therefore upholding the decision of the School Teaching Council,
- uphold the complaint as reasonable, and forward it to the School Teaching Council to reinitiate the decision-making process on the disciplinary measure,
- uphold the complaint as reasonable, amend the decision of the School Teaching Council and impose another disciplinary measure that they find reasonable.

The decision of the School Board is final and not open to further complaints. The parents/guardians may opt to contest the decision at the court, within 30 days from reception of the written decision of the Board.

In case of a student's expulsion from the Secondary School, the School must allow the student to continue attending classes until the decision is finalised, if the student's behaviour and actions do not pose a serious threat to students, staff and property of the School.

8 Staff Complaints

For staff complaints, the School provides clear guidelines within its Whistleblowing Policy. Additional procedures for addressing staff complaints or employment grievances are outlined in the Staff Code of Conduct and Grievance Policy, available on the School website.

All staff are responsible to read both policies thoroughly and ensure that they understand the circumstances where each policy applies. If unsure, staff should seek advice from the School Secretary.

9 Complaint Campaigns

In instances of complaint campaigns involving three or more separate individuals, the School may deviate from standard procedures. Depending on the circumstances, the School may:

- issue template responses to all complainants OR
- publish a unified response on its website (if applicable).

10 Relevant Contacts

Primary School Contacts

• Email: primary@rps.edu.ba

Phone: +387 33 944-140

Secondary School Contacts

• Email: secondary@rps.edu.ba OR college@rps.edu.ba

• Phone: +387 33 944-130

11 Complaints Recordkeeping

Recording, reviewing, and monitoring of complaints are integral to the School's operations.

Comprehensive written records are securely maintained in accordance with data protection regulations. All complaints must be logged into a Complaints Register with indications of whether they were resolved following a formal procedure, or proceeded to a panel hearing and action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). These records are confidential and accessible only to authorised personnel involved in complaint investigations, except in cases where local legal requirements permit access.

Both Primary and Secondary divisions must make this policy available on their respective websites and in printed form upon request from the Secretary. Additionally, each division will publish on their website the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

12 Monitoring and Reviewing the Policy

Richmond Park Schools conducts termly reviews and evaluations of all complaints to prevent future occurrences or assess the effectiveness of past management efforts.

The Senior Leadership Team will review the complaints procedure every 3 years.