COMPLAINTS & APPEALS PROCEDURE

Company Operations

ADO Services C.I.C

Incorporating ADO River Valley

Version 5.5 ©2026

Next Review Date August 2026

2026-2027

Last Ratification By Management Committee	March 2025
Next Review By Management Committee	September 2027
Latest Update	September 2027

Number of Complaints Recorded

Complaints Received	Year 2025 / 2026	0 informal complaints
Complaints Received	Year 2024/2025	0 informal complaints
Complaints Received	Year 2023/2024	2 informal complaints, dealt with at stage 1
Complaints Received	Year 2022/2023	0 informal complaints

Our families are always very supportive of us and see themselves as members of our Community Interest Company. We take on the feedback of our families, ensuring that we are always remaining as fair and ethical as possible. We have had two elements of feedback within 2023/2024 which we took seriously, families felt supported and were very clear that they did not want to escalate their feedback through the complaints process even to 'stage 1'.

The last school year 2025-2026, there was no informal or formal complaints.

1. Complaints & Appeals Procedure Overview

It is the policy of ADO River Valley to offer a fully open and accessible Complaints and Appeals Procedure for our, students and partners.

As part of the nature of complaints raised by students or families , our expectations are that confidentiality should always remain during all stages by both parties. Any breaking of confidentiality or incorrect use of the Complaints and Appeals Procedure may invalidate proceedings and any further action.

It is not the intention of this procedure to deal with whistleblowing or safeguarding incidents. These must be dealt with by the designated DSL or DDSL members of the team. Please refer to the **Safeguarding Policy**.

2. How to Make a Complaint

In line with our main General Terms, the complaints procedure will always start with the educator or relevant adult working with the student at the time. Most cases should be dealt with in the first instance with these members of staff, unless the complaint is with regards to them.

3. Complaint Aims and Objectives

It is hoped that any complaints can be resolved very early on in the process and informally before any stage two process. This is why we ask the complainant to have or arrange a frank talk with the relevant staff members. Often simple complaints can be dealt with this way without the need to escalate. It allows problems to be handled quickly and decisively. The staff member will always have their line manager for support.

In line with current guidance, we would ensure that we publish any complaints on our website but keeping the confidentiality of any stakeholder involved. Any queries surrounding a complaint would be answered on a 'need to know basis'. We value constructive and developmental feedback, as it is a fundamental part of improving our services going forward.

Please find below the stages of complaint for all our services.

Stage One Complaint – Informal

If students or parent-carers have any reasons for concern or are unhappy about any aspect of our school, you should in the first instance raise the matter with the educator in charge of that area.

For students or parent-carers, your concerns should be directed at the **Deputy Headteacher.**

The issue should be raised in the form of a short informal meeting. The complaint should be concise and there should be an action raised for the ADO River Valley staff member to address and find a solution. The ADO River Valley staff member will also liaise with their line manager as part of internal process and advice on finding a solution. The complaint will be treated confidentially. The complainant will be fully supported throughout without judgement.

If the complaint is resolved, the issue and outcome will be forwarded to the **Quality Assurance Lead** to be securely stored for future reference. This allows for continuity to help resolve any Stage Two complaints if they develop in the future. Communication will be made to the complainant documenting the outcome for their records. This allows for continuity to help resolve any future complaints or provide findings for any Stage Two complaints.

At this stage, the complaint shall be considered **Informal**.

If the complainant is still unhappy and wishes to escalate, they will raise the complaint to Stage Two on appeal.

Escalation - Stage Two Complaint – Formal – Quality Assurance Lead

A Stage Two complaint must be in writing. We offer a short online **Customer Feedback Form** that can be completed. Alternatively, you can request our paper feedback form to complete and forward in confidence, available from the ADO River Valley Office. Once completed, the Customer Feedback Form will be stored on our secure network.

Once the feedback form is completed, the complaint can be dealt with by the **Quality Assurance Lead**. We aim to acknowledge response to any complaints within 3 days of the completed form being received. In the case of malpractice or maladministration, the response time will be within 24 hours.

If you feel that your complaint may be compromised and is regarding the quality assurance lead or it is deemed serious enough to escalate immediately, you should skip the informal stage one complaint and escalate immediately to Stage Two - Formal.

For any complaints against malpractice or maladministration, these should always be directed straight to Stage Two, as educators' positions will automatically be compromised by such claims.

At the point of formal complaint, for all students, the **Quality Assurance Lead** will review the written complaint and respond accordingly**.** This response may be in writing or could involve a follow up meeting with the complainant.

The complaint will be fully documented with the remit of dealing satisfactorily with the issue and bringing closure. We set no time limit on this stage as complexities with the

complaint vary. If the complaint requires further escalation, Stage Three will be arranged, following a second appeal.

For students, if malpractice or maladministration is identified at the core of the complaint a short internal investigation will immediately identify whether the complaint is directed at ADO River Valley staff or another student(s). If there is suspected malpractice or maladministration, an immediate internal escalation to Stage Three will be actioned accordingly.

Escalation – Stage Three Complaint – Formal – Proprietor

If the complainant is still unhappy with resolutions or wishes to escalate further, a second appeal is made against a Stage Two compliant. The matter must be appealed to the **Proprietor**, with a request to be escalated to Stage Three Complaint. At this point our legal advisors will be provided with any evidence, reports or findings for their records.

It is still our prerogative to support the complainant and offer solutions. At this stage a thorough, internal investigation will be carried out and a report will be written for evidence.

Escalation – Stage Four Complaint – Panel Hearing for ADO River Valley

In the unlikely event the three previous stages cannot resolved, Stage Four complaints will be heard by a **Panel Hearing**. The panel hearing will be in possession of the **Proprietor** report and any written information or further information provided by the complainant. These will be distributed amongst the panel to assess and examine the complaint. The panel will then invite the complainant to the hearing after 20 school days of time to discuss further.

- Allow the complainant to attend and be accompanied if they wish by a family member or friend
- ADO River Valley will ensure at least one member of the panel is independent of the management and running of the school.
- At least three ADO River Valley members will have had no direct input into the complaint

The panel will consist of senior members of staff within ADO River Valley, an independent representative from outside of ADO River Valley and the complainant and anyone they wish to accompany them. The panel meeting date will be agreed with all parties and recorded.

Through all the previous stages the parent-carers will be supported fully to understand the complaint and its impact on them or their children or young people. They will be reminded of our expectations for ensuring confidentiality.

The final decision and report will be available for distribution 3 days after the panel hearing.

Escalation - Final Stage Complaint – ADO River Valley

Should the complainant wish to take the matter further, the **Proprietor** will escalate the complaint to our Legal Advisors within 5 working days after the panel meeting and additionally write to the Secretary of State for Education.

4. Additional Support for Students– Pearson Only

Students must go through the ADO River Valley Complaints and Appeals stages in the first instance. Directly contacting the controlling examination body, bypassing this procedure and ADO River Valley as your examination centre, will cause delay in your complaint and may in some cases create additional problems, including confidentiality and data protection issues.

Once you have at least reached Stage Two Compliant and if you want to enquire about or appeal against the ADO River Valley examination centre's decision which you feel has disadvantaged you, then you should email the examination body directly.

For Pearson you should contact:

vocationalqualitystandards@pearson.com within 14 calendar days of being told outcome of the ADO River Valley centre appeals process. All cases are reviewed by Pearson assessment experts who have responsibility for the matter being appealed.

In addition, Pearson will:

- Acknowledge your enquiry application within 3 days.
- Respond to your enquiry within 30 days of receiving it.
- If you are not happy with the outcome of the enquiry you have 14 days in which to request that a Preliminary Appeal Review is undertaken.

Further information on how ADO River Valley deal with any issues of malpractice or maladministration and work with Pearson can be found in the ADO River Valley Library – Policies and Procedures.

5. Expectations and Liabilities

Throughout these proceedings, ADO River Valley will uphold the various stages of complaints and appeals as directed by these procedures. We similarly have expectations of what to expect from our students and parent-carers when following these stages and any subsequent appeals. As a private company we reserve the right to act immediately if the relationship with students or parent-carers has irretrievably broken down, either mutually or if the process is invalidated by their actions of the following incidents;

- Being abusive, aggressive or threatening violence to staff or other parent-carers
- Posting harmful or defamatory comments on social media platforms or similar public forums
- By breaking confidentiality with other parties, or students contracted to ADO River Valley or partner services.
- Continuous and persistent complaints over a period time without substance or are consistently not found in the favour of the complainant.
- Breaking any other clauses or sections of their contract with ADO River Valley

If any of these invalidations are met, ADO River Valley reserves the right to suspend the Complaints and Appeals Procedure, seek legal advice and act accordingly. It may result in the immediate cancellation of contract if in place.

5 Recording and Logging Complaints

All complaints are recorded and logged appropriately at all levels.

A written record of complaints is stored on our internal systems, specifically those that are resolved or those that escalate to a panel hearing as un-resolved.

The actions and outcomes are recorded and logged with each complaint, regardless of whether they are upheld or not.

The logs will provide an overall summary of complaints for the school year. The recorded information is shown in this document within Appendix A.

6. Review

All ADO River Valley policies and procedures follow ITIL guidelines to ensure version control, change control and release management of any documents. As a matter of policy, documents can be updated at any time to reflect changes to ADO River Valley procedures, legal changes, OFSTED directives or any other reason to ensure the policies and procedures are accurate and correct. This involves consultation with stakeholders, the ADO River Valley Management Committee and approval from the directors. All policies and procedures are reviewed at the very least on an annual basis. Regular communication through newsletters, social media, text systems and through our website within the ADO River Valley Library is part of our Release Management.

7. References

Internal ADO River Valley References include:

Customer Feedback Form
Complaints & Appeals QuickGuide

All these documents can be found in the ADO River Valley Library at:

http://adorivervalley.co.uk/index.php/parent-carers-professionals/policies-and-procedures.html

8.Contact

This document was produced by the ADO River Valley Operations team (Kylanja Ltd). This version supersedes any previous versions and will be reviewed annually.

All correspondence with regard to this policy, or any other operational policy and procedure should be directed to the ADO River Valley by e-mailing education@adorivervalley.co.uk or calling 0208 855 6778, requesting to speak to the School Business Manager or in writing c/o School Business Manager, ADO River Valley School, 126 Upper Wickham Lane, Welling, Kent, DA16 3DP.

Appendix A

Key Information Fields to Populate

- Complaints Reference
- Date Received
- Complainant Type
- Complainant Name
- Service User-Student Name
- Nature of Complaint
- Outcome Sought
- Investigation Lead

Complaint Record Log Fields

- Complaint Reference
- Date Received
- Method of Complaint
- Level of Complaint
- Complainant
- Relationship To service
- Service User-Student Name
- Immediate Action Taken
- Investigation Process
- Outcome
- Outcome Details
- Date Outcome Shared
- Right To Escalate Explained
- Learning Identified
- Service Improvements Implemented
- Manager Review and Review Date