Real Inspiration Complaints Procedure

September 2026

Real Inspiration aims to provide a safe, respectful and high-quality alternative provision service. We welcome feedback and take concerns and complaints seriously. Complaints will be handled fairly, promptly, sensitively and, wherever possible, at the lowest appropriate level.

This procedure is intended to be accessible to children and young people, parents and carers, commissioners, schools, local authorities and other people who use or are affected by our services.

1. Principles

- A person will not be treated adversely because they have raised a concern or complaint in good faith.
- Complaints will be considered impartially and with appropriate confidentiality.
- The person complained about will not normally investigate the complaint about themselves.
- Children and young people will be supported to express concerns in a way that is accessible to them.
- Reasonable adjustments will be made for disability, SEND, communication needs or other accessibility needs.
- Safeguarding concerns will be dealt with under safeguarding procedures rather than waiting for the complaints process to conclude.
- Records will be kept of formal complaints, decisions, actions and outcomes.

2. What this procedure covers

This procedure can be used for concerns or complaints about Real Inspiration's service, including the quality or delivery of provision, communication, staff conduct, facilities, reasonable adjustments, agreed support, administration or the way a previous concern has been handled.

Where a matter is governed by a separate procedure, that procedure may take precedence. Examples include safeguarding concerns, allegations against staff, whistleblowing, data protection complaints, qualification or awarding-body appeals, and contractual disputes with a commissioner. The complainant will be told which process is being followed.

3. Safeguarding and immediate risk

Any complaint that indicates that a child or young person may be at risk of harm will be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and managed under Real Inspiration's Safeguarding Policy. The complaints process must never delay a safeguarding referral, contact with Children's Social Care, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), police or emergency services where required.

If a complaint concerns the DSL and raises a safeguarding allegation, it must not be investigated solely through this complaints procedure. Real Inspiration's Allegations Against Staff procedures and relevant external safeguarding arrangements will be followed.

4. How to raise a concern

Concerns can initially be raised with the member of staff involved, where appropriate, or with Real Inspiration management. A concern may be raised verbally or in writing. We will try to resolve straightforward concerns quickly and informally where appropriate.

A person does not have to use the informal stage where the matter is serious, relates to a senior member of staff, involves safeguarding, or they do not feel comfortable raising it informally.

5. Stage 1 – Informal resolution

The member of staff or manager receiving the concern will listen to the issue, clarify the outcome being sought and try to resolve the matter.

We aim to acknowledge an informal concern promptly and, where possible, resolve it within 10 working days. If more time is needed, the person raising the concern will be told.

If the concern is not resolved, the complainant may ask for it to be considered formally under Stage 2.

6. Stage 2 – Formal complaint

A formal complaint should normally be made in writing to info@realinspiration.co.uk and marked for the attention of the Directors: Natasha Rehman, Ele Stevens and Jacky Bryant. If writing is difficult, Real Inspiration will make reasonable arrangements to help the complainant record the complaint.

The complaint should, where possible, explain what happened, relevant dates or people involved, any steps already taken and the outcome being sought.

Real Inspiration will normally acknowledge a formal complaint within 5 working days.

A Director or other appropriate person who is sufficiently independent of the matters complained about will be appointed to consider the complaint. They may speak with the complainant, staff, the young person and relevant professionals and may review records or other evidence.

We aim to provide a written Stage 2 response within 20 working days of acknowledging the formal complaint. Where the matter is complex or information is required from other organisations, additional time may be needed. The complainant will be told the reason and given an updated timescale.

The written response will normally summarise the issues considered, the findings, any action or learning arising and how to request a review if the complainant remains dissatisfied.

7. Complaints about a Director

Where a complaint is about one Director, it should be considered by another Director who has not been directly involved in the matter wherever practicable.

Where a complaint concerns all Directors, or it would not be reasonable for a Director to review the complaint, Real Inspiration will appoint or seek an appropriately independent person to consider or review it. This may be an external professional or another suitably experienced person with no material involvement in the matters complained about.

8. Stage 3 – Review

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 2, they may request a review. The request should normally be made within 10 working days of the Stage 2 response and should explain why they believe the complaint has not been adequately addressed.

The review will be undertaken by a Director not previously involved, or by an appropriately independent person where necessary. The purpose is to consider whether the complaint was handled fairly, whether relevant evidence was considered, whether the conclusions were reasonable on the information available and whether any further action is appropriate.

We aim to issue the Stage 3 outcome within 20 working days of acknowledging the review request. The Stage 3 response will normally conclude Real Inspiration's internal complaints procedure.

9. Commissioned placements

Where a learner's placement is commissioned by a school, local authority or another organisation, the commissioner retains its own responsibilities for the placement. Depending on the nature of the complaint and the commissioning arrangements, the complainant may also raise concerns with the commissioning organisation.

Real Inspiration may inform or involve the commissioner where this is necessary to resolve a complaint, safeguard a learner, review the suitability of a placement or meet contractual or statutory responsibilities. Only relevant information will be shared and this will be handled in accordance with data-protection and safeguarding requirements.

Because Real Inspiration works with more than one commissioning authority, this procedure does not name a single local authority as the universal escalation route. The appropriate commissioner will depend on the individual placement.

10. Complaints from children and young people

Children and young people may raise a concern or complaint themselves. They may speak to a trusted member of staff, the DSL or another appropriate adult, and may ask a parent, carer, advocate or professional to help them.

A complaint from a child or young person will be taken seriously. Information will be explained in an accessible way and their wishes and feelings will be considered, while recognising that safeguarding information may need to be shared even if they would prefer it not to be.

11. Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints will be considered where sufficient information is available to identify a potential safeguarding, safety, conduct or service concern. The extent to which the matter can be investigated may be limited if further information cannot be obtained.

12. Persistent, repetitious or unreasonable complaint behaviour

Real Inspiration will not label a complaint unreasonable merely because it is persistent or because the complainant disagrees with the outcome. However, where repeated contact substantially duplicates matters already fully considered, is abusive or threatening, or places unreasonable demands on the organisation, Real Inspiration may set proportionate boundaries on communication.

Any such decision will be explained in writing where practicable and will not prevent new safeguarding concerns or genuinely new information from being considered.

13. Confidentiality and data protection

Complaint information will be shared only with people who need it to consider the complaint, protect a child or young person, meet legal or contractual duties, or implement resulting actions. Personal information will be handled in accordance with Real Inspiration’s Data Protection Policy.

The privacy of children and young people will be protected as far as reasonably possible. A complainant may not be entitled to confidential information about another child, family member or member of staff simply because it relates to their complaint.

14. Records and learning

Real Inspiration will keep an appropriate record of formal complaints, the evidence considered, correspondence, outcomes and actions taken. Complaint records will be retained in accordance with Real Inspiration’s retention arrangements and data-protection obligations.

Complaints will be reviewed for patterns, safeguarding implications and opportunities to improve practice. Where a complaint identifies a policy, training, communication or service issue, appropriate action will be considered.

15. External routes

The appropriate external route depends on the nature of the complaint and who commissioned or regulates the relevant service. Once Real Inspiration's internal procedure has been completed, a complainant may contact the commissioning school or local authority where the complaint concerns a commissioned placement or where that organisation retains responsibility for the matter.

Where a complaint concerns personal data, the complainant may also raise the matter with the Information Commissioner's Office after first giving Real Inspiration an opportunity to address the concern.

Where a complaint concerns an awarding organisation or qualification, the relevant awarding organisation's complaints or appeals process should be followed where applicable.

Where there is an immediate safeguarding risk, external safeguarding agencies should be contacted without waiting for completion of this procedure.

16. Contact

Formal complaints: info@realinspiration.co.uk

For safeguarding concerns, follow Real Inspiration's Safeguarding Policy and contact the DSL or the relevant safeguarding agency as appropriate.

17. Linked policies

- Safeguarding Policy
- Allegations Against Staff Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Data Protection Policy

18. Review

This procedure will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where legislation, commissioning arrangements, guidance or Real Inspiration's practice changes.

Last reviewed: 22 September 2026

Review date: September 2027

Signed: Natasha Rehman

Role: Director / Designated Safeguarding Lead