



RADLETT
PREPARATORY SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Approved by:

Mrs L Flynn

Signature:

Last reviewed on:

September 2023

Next review due by:

September 2024

This statutory policy has been prepared to meet the school's responsibilities under Paragraph 33 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Introduction

At Radlett Preparatory School, we hope all parents have a positive relationship with the school and are involved in their child's education in the complete sense, this being their academic, social and physical development and their general well-being. As a school, dialogue is encouraged between parents, pupils and teachers. Whilst this formal procedure is required, it is not intended to cover the normal process of dialogue with parents and pupils, including the expression of negative comments about aspects of the school, and it is hoped that parents will normally use informal approaches to the school. If parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure.

This procedure is made available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and in the school office during the school day. Radlett Preparatory School will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year. In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulation 2014, the school will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Although this procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils. Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this complaints procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the school.

What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school, about a specific department/issue or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the school is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly. The school will not deal with anonymous complaints (except for those concerning child protection matters) and therefore these procedures do not provide for a resolution of anonymous complaints.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for the students and the parents can be assured that the student will not be penalised for a complaint that they raise in good faith.

Separate procedures apply in the event of a child protection issue- please refer to the School's Safeguarding policy.

The Complaints Policy does not apply with regards to decisions made by the Principal to exclude or suspend a Student from the School. Parents seeking a review of a decision made by the Principal under the Expulsion and Suspension Policy, may seek a Director review in accordance with section 7.11 of the terms and conditions for parents.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales. If a complaint relates to a matter which may have an immediate adverse impact on a student (for example proposed disciplinary action by the School in relation to the Student) all effort will be made to address the complaint as promptly as possible having regard at all times to the Student's best interests.

Working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays. The dates of terms are published on the school's website. This means that during school holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the school will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to school life or because of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the school will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay. If this happens, amended timelines will be communicated to Parents.

Should parents provide notification of a complaint outside of the stated timeframes for any stage, they should include details of the circumstances that prevented the notification being given sooner for consideration along with the notification.

Procedure

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

The Parents should, in the first instance, always approach the school, dealing directly with the appropriate member of staff who will make every effort to find a satisfactory resolution, normally **within 5 working days** during term time. Initially this should be with the student's class teacher, however for more serious concerns parents should contact the following:

- Head of Lower School
- Head of Middle & Upper School
- Vice-Principal

If the complaint is about a member of the senior leadership team, parents should make their complaint directly to the Principal. If the complaint is about the Principal, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of the Proprietary Board whose contact details are available from the school Office on request.

Should the matter not be resolved **within 5 working days**, or parents feel that a satisfactory resolution has not been reached, they should proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint and Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved at Stage 1 (Informal Resolution), then Parents should put their complaint in writing (letter rather than email) to the Principal stating explicitly that, having been through Stage 1 of the procedure, they remain dissatisfied and now wish to make a “formal complaint.” The Principal will decide the appropriate course of action to take. In the formal complaint, Parents should state the nature of the complaint, state the remedy sought, and include all relevant information. Parents should note that the complaint at this stage should not change in scope from that presented at Stage 1. Should any new matters be presented, parents will usually be advised that they will be dealt with under Stage 1.

In most cases, the Principal will meet with or speak to the parents concerned to discuss the complaint, as soon as is reasonably practicable and **within 5 working days** of receiving the complaint, if at all possible, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out; in which case the Principal will appoint a senior member of staff to investigate the matter. The senior member of staff may wish to speak with the parents and with others who have knowledge of the circumstances. All meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, will be provided to the Principal once collated. The outcome of the investigation will be reported to the Principal. Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a meeting with the Parents will be arranged. At or after that meeting, a decision will be made and the Parents will be informed in writing, detailing the reasons. The Principal’s aim would be to inform the Parents of the outcome of the investigation and resolution of the complaint **within 15 working days** of the receipt of the complaint. The Principal will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, the action that has been taken by the School as a result of this formal complaint, and whether or not they are resolved at this point or proceed to a panel hearing. Please refer to the section on Record of Complaints. If Parents are not satisfied with the decision made by the Principal, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Should the complaint be about the principal, the complaint should be put in writing to the Chair of the Proprietary Board. the Chair of the Proprietary Board will acknowledge the complaint **within 5 working days** of receipt and indicate the action that is being taken and the likely timescale. The Chair of the Proprietary Board will call for a full report from the Principal and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of the Proprietary Board may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the The Chair of the Proprietary Board is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair of the Proprietary Board will give reasons for their decision. If the Parent is dissatisfied with the response to the complaint, the Parent can request that the complaint be referred to a complaints panel under Stage 3.

The Chair of the Proprietary Board will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If Parents are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2 of this procedure, they should write to the Chair of the Proprietary Board **within 5 working days** of the decision being communicated to the Parents, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the Parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal. A Complaints Panel hearing is a hearing to

review those elements of the decision made at stage 2 about which the Parent remains dissatisfied. The Panel is not obliged to consider any new complaints at this stage.

The Chair of the Proprietary Board, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The constitution of the panel will be three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom is independent of the management of the school. One Panel member will be nominated to act as Chair of the Panel. The Chair of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint **within 5 working days** and schedule a hearing to take place **within 20 working days**.

If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.

The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The Principal shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.

The manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and accordingly decide whether to:

- Dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
- Uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
- make recommendations.

The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, **within 5 working days** of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Principal. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of the Proprietary Board.

EYFS Complaints Procedure

Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If Parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the school's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then Parents may take their complaint to ISI or Ofsted.

ISI:

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

Telephone: 020 7600 0100

Email: concerns@isi.net

Ofsted:

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

General Helpline: 0300 123 1231

Text phone: 0161 618 8524
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Parents will be notified by ISI or Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received.

Unreasonable complaints

The School 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 Parents have with us. 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. Where repeated attempts are made by a Parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy.

Unreasonable complaints are taken seriously by the School as they put a strain on valuable resources and hinder the progress of proper investigations. We adopt the Department for Education's definition of 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 a complaints procedure;
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice;
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be taken into account and commented on, or 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 complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed;
- 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.

Whenever possible, the Principal and/or Chair of the Proprietary Board will discuss any concerns with the Parents informally before dismissing a complaint as unreasonable.

If the behaviour continues, the Principal will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the School 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 the School.

Recording Complaints and Confidentiality

All records created in accordance with this policy are managed in accordance with the School's policies that apply to the retention and destruction of records.

The School keeps a written record of all formal complaints, including the following:

- whether they were resolved at Stage 2 or Stage 3.
- the action taken by the School as a result of the complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

The records created in accordance with this policy may contain personal data. The School has a privacy notice which explains how it will use personal data about students and Parents. The privacy notice is published on the School's website.

School staff will ensure that they follow the School's Data Protection Policies and privacy notices which include procedures when handling personal data created in connection with this policy. In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances. Complaints which do not have safeguarding implications will be retained for a minimum of seven years.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where access is requested by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required in the course of an inspection or under other legal authority or court order. All parents should be aware that regardless of the nature of the complaint and whether or not it is upheld, parents are not entitled to details of any related sanctions imposed on staff, pupils or parents for reasons of data protection and confidentiality.

Record of Stage 2 or Stage 3 complaints

The following table lists the number of formal complaints received during each of the academic years and the Stage at which they concluded:

Academic Year	Stage 2	Stage 3
2016/17	0	0
2017/18	0	0
2018/19	0	0
2019/20	0	0
2020/21	0	0
2021/22	0	0
2022/23	0	0