

Complaints Procedure for Parents, Carers and Guardians

A summary overview of the complaints process at Radnor House Sevenoaks:

1. Parental concerns are normally raised informally and directly with the person concerned or through the child's Form Tutor or EYFS class teacher as a *Stage 1 Complaint*. The school aims to resolve the matter with due speed and to the satisfaction of the parents without recourse to any formal process within five (5) school days.
2. In some cases parents may be dissatisfied with the outcome following the initial concern or because they wish for the matter to be drawn directly and immediately to the attention of the Head of Prep/Senior School. Hence, parents are free to write to the Head of Prep/Senior School as part of a *Stage 1 Complaint*. The matter will be dealt with by the Head of Prep/Senior School or a senior member of staff acting on behalf of the Head of Prep/Senior School. A written response to a *Stage 1 Complaint* normally will take no more than ten (10) school days, except in circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that may delay resolution, for example the need for further investigation, school holidays or illness.
3. Where parents are dissatisfied with the outcome of a *Stage 1 Complaint*, or because they wish for the matter to be drawn directly and immediately to the attention of the Head of the school, then they may proceed to Stage 2, by writing to the Head directly to invoke a process for a *Stage 2 Complaint*. A *Stage 2 Complaint* will be dealt with by the Head or a senior member of staff acting on behalf of the Head. The process of dealing with a such a complaint in writing from the moment that it is received by the school to resolution, normally will take no more than ten (10) school days, except in circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that may delay resolution, for example the need for further investigation, school holidays or illness.
4. Where parents are dissatisfied with the outcome of a *Stage 2 Complaint*, or because they wish for the matter to be drawn directly and immediately to the attention of the Board of Directors, they should write to the Board of Directors. This will be treated as a *Stage 3 Complaint* and will be dealt with by the Chairman of Directors through the Panel Convener appointed by him and the Directors. There is no further internal stage for the consideration and resolution of complaints. The process of dealing with a formal Stage 3 complaint in writing from the moment that it is received by the school to resolution normally will take no more than eighteen (18) school days, except in circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that may delay resolution, for example the need for further investigation, school holidays or illness.

This Complaints Procedure applies to the whole school. It, and other school policies and procedures are available through the school's website <http://www.radnor-sevenoaks.org/school-information/policies/> or from the School Office.

Review Process

The Board of Directors undertakes a formal annual review of the Complaints Procedure.

Signed



Fraser Halliwell
Head
August 2023



Dr Colin Diggory
Chairman of the Board of Directors

Introduction

- 1.1 This document is made available to parents, staff and pupils in the following ways: via the school website, and on request from the School Office.
- 1.2 Throughout, the term 'staff' is inclusive of all teaching and support staff and is also inclusive of students on placement, contractors, supply or agency staff, volunteers, the Proprietor and the Board of Directors. The term 'parents' is used to apply to all parents, guardians and carers of children in the school.
- 1.3 Radnor House Sevenoaks will ensure that the quality of teaching and pastoral care offered to pupils will be of the highest order. However, if parents have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure. We are always willing to listen to concerns and anxieties, parental and pupil concerns being of particular importance. We aim for the closest co-operation between parents and the teachers to whom our pupils are entrusted. Dealing with parental concerns is a vital part of the ethos and mission of the school. We aim to be open about the decisions we make and the actions we take and will always explain our rationale.
- 1.4 A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional wellbeing and security at stake, or when the school's stated aims or values are being ignored. A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint. If parents of pupils at the school do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure.
- 1.5 The term "complainant" is used to refer to the individual or individuals making the complaint. These may be one or a combination of any of the following: a parent or guardian of a pupil at the school, parents or guardians of a pupil at the school or several parents or guardians of pupils at the school.
- 1.6 Complaints will be resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils and their parents.
- 1.7 At every stage of the procedure, the handling of the complaint will be carried out with due speed (using the agreed timeframe), fair and necessarily confidential.
- 1.8 Throughout the process, the school will be willing to: listen, learn, admit mistakes, apologise if appropriate, address any issues raised and change practices and procedures if appropriate.
- 1.9 Parents may, if they wish, be accompanied to any meeting, for example by a friend or relative. However legal representation is not normally appropriate.
- 1.10 Throughout this document, the term 'school days' refers to days within term-time only.

2. Stage 1a Complaints to Form Tutor/Class Teacher : Informal Resolutions

- 2.1 It is hoped that most concerns will be resolved quickly and informally if parents feel able to voice them as soon as they arise. In most cases, discussion, explanation, further information or an apology, if appropriate, will resolve any issues. Every effort will be made to allay concerns at this stage and with the least possible formality achieving through open dialogue a satisfactory resolution.

If parents have a concern they should normally contact their child's Form Tutor or EYFS/Prep School Class Teacher. In most cases the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Tutor or Class Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to consult another colleague, as appropriate.

Parent concerns should be responded to, by the school, within five (5) school days.

- 2.2 Should the matter not be resolved to their satisfaction, parents will be free to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 1b of this procedure.
- 2.3 Not all written concerns are intended by parents to be formal and so invoke the formal process. Hence, the person to whom the concern or complaint is addressed will check with the parents whether or not they wish to invoke the formal process at that point. If not, then the written communication will be dealt with informally within the scope of a Parent Concern.

3. Stage 1b Complaints to Head of Prep/Senior School : Informal Resolutions

- 3.1 If parents consider that their initial concern has not been addressed satisfactorily or they have a more serious complaint they should contact the Head of Prep/Senior School. The Head of Prep/Senior School or a senior colleague will speak with the parents and other relevant staff and pupils to gain as full an understanding of the matter as possible. The Head of Prep/Senior School or their delegate will then meet with the parents to explain their findings and seek a resolution to the parents' satisfaction. The decisions made by the Head of Prep/Senior School or their delegate will be shared with parents in writing following the meeting.

Stage 1 Complaints should be responded to, by the school, within ten (10) school days.

- 3.2 Should the matter not be resolved to their satisfaction, parents will be free to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.
- 3.3 A summary record of a *Stage 1 Complaint*, its' resolution and any action taken as a result will be made.
- 3.4 Where a complaint is about the Head, parents may choose to speak to the Head directly and informally, or contact the Chairman of the Board of Directors invoking the formal process by registering a Stage 2 Complaint as below, either immediately or because they are dissatisfied with the Head's response to their informal approach. If they are still not satisfied following a failure to reach an earlier resolution, they may then register a Stage 3 Complaint as below, whereby they will be referred to the Panel Convener who has been appointed by the Board of Directors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.

3 Stage 2 Complaints: Formal Resolution

- 3.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- 3.2 In most cases, the Head will speak to the parents concerned, normally on the day of receiving the complaint, so as to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- 3.3. The Head will:
- a) Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved.
 - b) Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved.
 - c) Meet with the complainant or contact them clarifying what the complainant feels would resolve the issue.
 - d) Interview those involved, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
 - e) Conduct each interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in questioning.
 - f) Keep notes of each interview and meeting.
- 3.4 Normally within ten (10) school days of receiving the complaint, the Head will complete the investigation and contact the complainant to arrange a meeting. At any point in the process the Head may decide or agree to commission a further investigation. If this occurs, the timescale may be extended by a further five (5) school days and the complainant will be informed in writing of the extension and the reason for it.
- 3.5 When the investigation is complete, the Head will meet the complainant to try to resolve the complaint. Any of the following may be appropriate at this point:
- a) An acknowledgement that the complaint is valid in whole or in part; an apology; an explanation; clarification of any misunderstanding; an admission that the situation could have been handled better or differently.
 - b) An assurance that the event complained of will not recur; an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it will not be repeated.
 - c) An undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint. A written record of this meeting will be made.
- 3.6 Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision and the reasons for it in writing. This will normally be immediately after the meeting specified in 3.4 and 3.5 above. The parents will also be informed at this point that if they are dissatisfied with the outcome they should proceed to Stage 3 of the complaints process.

- 3.7 Normally the Head will write to parents with his/her decision on a formal Stage 2 complaint within ten school days (or fifteen school days if any further investigation is required) of the receipt of the formal Stage 2 complaint.
- 3.8 A summary record of the concern or complaint, its resolution and any action taken as a result will be made. This record will be made available to the Directors.

4 Stage 3 Complaints: Action by the Directors

- 4.1 If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution of this procedure) they will be referred to the Panel Convener who has been appointed by the Board of Directors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. This should be in writing and include the nature of the complaint and how the school has handled it so far. The Directors are obliged to investigate the matter and will do everything possible to resolve the issue through a dialogue with the school.
- 4.2 The contact details for the Panel Convener are: Mrs Rosie Allen, Non-Executive Member of the Board of Directors, rallen@radnor-sevenoaks.org
- 4.3 The Chairman of Directors may contact and speak to the complainant directly should there be any need for clarification of the nature of the complaint.
- 4.4 The Panel will consist of at least three people appointed by the Chairman of Directors not directly involved in matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Panel may therefore include at least two members of the Board of Directors.
- 4.5 The Department for Education has given the following guidance on the identity of an independent panel member: *"Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered."* Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Directors.
- 4.6 The Panel Convener, on behalf of the Panel, should agree with all parties the date of the Appeal Meeting within five (5) school days of receipt of the written referral of the complaint. The meeting itself should be held within fifteen (15) school days of the receipt of the referral. If the complainant or Head wishes to submit information in writing to the Panel this should be sent to the Panel Convener at least five (5) school days before the date of the hearing.
- 4.7 Complainants are free to make their complaint in writing rather than attend the meeting of the panel personally.
- 4.8 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. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five (5) school days prior to the hearing.
- 4.9 If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- 4.10 Where further investigation is required, the Complaints Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- 4.11 After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Complaints Panel will on the basis of its findings reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete normally within three (3) school days of the Hearing.
- 4.12 A copy of the Panel's decision, findings and any recommendation and the reasons for them will be:
- a) Sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person or persons complained about; and
 - b) Available for inspection on the school premises by the Chairman of the Board of Directors and the Head.
- 4.13 As far as possible, the meeting should not be delayed if the referral comes at the end of term, especially at the end of the Summer Term. Since the aim of the procedure is to resolve the issue and effect reconciliation if necessary, it will be best if the matter can come to the Panel as quickly as possible and so a panel hearing may need to take place during the school holiday period.

4.14 The role of the Panel Convener is to:

- a) Confirm to all parties in writing the date, time and venue of the hearing; to receive and distribute any documentation to be read before the hearing; to meet and welcome all parties as they arrive at the hearing.
- b) Make a fair summary record of the proceedings, noting any specific details requested by the complainant or panel
- c) Notify all parties of the Panel's decision. The wording of any letters will be agreed with the Chair of the Panel.

4.15 The role of the Chair of the Panel is to ensure that:

- a) Appropriate procedure to allow a full and fair hearing is properly followed.
- b) The procedure for the hearing of the complaint is explained to all parties and that they have the opportunity to put their case without undue interruption.
- c) The issues are addressed; all parties are put at ease, especially those who are unfamiliar with such a hearing.
- d) Proceedings are kept as informal as possible and that everyone treats each other with respect and courtesy.
- e) The Panel operates in an open-minded and independent way and time is given for all parties to consider 'new' evidence.

4.16 The Panel may decide upon one or more of the following actions:

- a) Uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
- b) Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- c) Decide on an appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint or recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

4.17 After the Panel has come to a decision, the Chair of the Panel agrees with the Panel Convener the wording of the letter to be sent to both parties.

4.18 The Panel Convener will: provide the written record of the meeting for the Chair of the Panel; ensure that the letter of decision will normally be sent out within three (3) school days of the hearing and in accordance with the agreed time scales and procedures as stated above; and ensure that any consequent recommendations to change school policies or procedures is put on the agenda for the next meeting of the Board of Directors. However, if a hearing takes place in the school holidays then the decision will be sent to parents as soon as possible after the meeting.

4.19 A summary record of the concern or complaint will be made, detailing its resolution, at what stage it was resolved, and any action taken as a result, regardless of the outcome.

4.20 There is no further internal stage for any complaint should a parent remain dissatisfied with the outcome. In such a case any aggrieved parent may wish to write to the Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

5 Confidentiality, records and other matters

5.1 Parents are assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Such correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 of the 2008 Education and Skills Act requests access to them; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

5.2 A written record of all Stage 1, 2 and 3 complaints and of whether they are resolved at Stage 1, 2 or 3, is kept by the Head. The record, regardless of the outcome of the complaint includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint. The written record will include the date when a final outcome was reached. The Proprietors and Board of Directors examine this written record on an annual basis. The school will provide, on request to the Independent Schools Inspectorate or to any other inspectorate carrying out an inspection on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education, a written record of all complaints made during a specified period and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint.

- 5.3 Any concern or complaint which involves a potential child protection or safeguarding issue must be made in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Policy immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the Head or the Chairman of the Board of Directors. Any appeal against the exclusion of a pupil may be made to the Chairman of the Board of Directors with reference to the school's Behaviour Policy. More general or other concerns or complaints relating to the application of the Behaviour Policy should be made in accordance with the procedures set down above.
- 5.4 This Complaints Procedure is totally separate from any Disciplinary or Capability Procedures for members of staff. Should a complaint lead to concerns on the part of the Head or Board of Directors about the capability or conduct of a member of staff, these would not be discussed or dealt with within this complaints process. Parents with concerns about individual members of staff must understand that the processes involved in staff discipline and in staff capability are sometimes protracted and do not always lend themselves to speedy resolution.
- 5.5 This complaints process does not apply to members of staff who may wish to make a complaint against another member of staff. All such complaints must follow the school's Grievance Procedure.
- 5.6 The number of complaints in the previous school year may be obtained by contacting the Head's PA or the school office

6 EYFS Complaints

Although the above procedure also applies to parents, guardians and carers of children in the EYFS, the following additional points apply:

(a) The school will investigate written complaints (typically addressed to the class teacher or Head of Pre Prep) relating to their fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint. The record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

(b) Should the complainant be dissatisfied with the outcome, then any aggrieved parent may contact ISI or Ofsted directly, at the addresses below:

Independent Schools Inspectorate
CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane London, EC1A 9HA
Tel: 0207 600 0100
Email: info@isi.net

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk