



RADLETT
PREPARATORY SCHOOL
SMALL BUT MIGHTY

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Written by:	Mrs L Flynn	Approved by: RPSL Advisory Board
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1. Related Information

1.1 Statutory Guidance

This policy has been reviewed in accordance with the following Independent Schools Statutory Regulations:

- Paragraph 33 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

1.2 Supporting Documents

- Data retention policy
- Terms and Conditions for Parents

2. 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 policy applies to all pupils at Radlett Preparatory School, including those within the EYFS.

This procedure is made available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website or from the school office. 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.

The School will be mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in the application of this policy.

Although the School endeavours to manage complaints in an open and transparent manner, parents should be aware that there may be circumstances which mean the School is unable to share complete details about how a complaint has been handled by the School, the evidence collated, steps taken in response or other related matters. This could be the case even when a complaint is upheld. For example, this may be because such information constitutes sensitive third-party data (for example belonging to a staff member, pupil or other parent), legal or regulatory requirements prohibit disclosure, or withholding information is in accordance with specific instructions from a statutory agency. This list is not exhaustive.

“Parent(s)” means any parent, guardian, or carer with day-to-day responsibility for a pupil, whether or not they hold parental responsibility for that pupil.

3. 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 Procedure 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.

4. 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.

5. The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

5.1 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.

- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's class teacher in the first instance. If the class teacher is unable to resolve the matter alone, the class teacher may consult a Phase Leader or a member of the SLT to help resolve it.
- Complaints made directly to a member of the SLT will usually be referred to the relevant class teacher/Phase Leader unless the member of SLT deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.
- The class teacher/phase leader/SLT member will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received.
- If the complaint is against a member of the senior leadership team, including the Head of School, parents should make their complaint directly to the Principal.
- If the complaint is about the Principal, parents should make their complaint to the Chair of Directors whose contact details are available from the School Office on request.

Should the matter not be resolved **within 5 working days** or in the event that the class teacher/phase leader/SLT member and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure.

5.2 Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved at Stage 1 (Informal Resolution) then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head of School, stating explicitly that, having been through Stage 1 of the procedure, they remain dissatisfied and now wish to make a "formal complaint".

The Head of School, with the guidance of 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 these should be dealt with under Stage 1 of this procedure.

The Head of School may require further information from the parents to help clarify the scope and nature of their concerns. The Head of School may, in some circumstances, deem it appropriate to nominate a member of the SLT to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The

Head of School (or their nominee) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Head of School (or their nominee) will make initial contact with the parents concerned, **within 5 working days** of receiving the complaint, to acknowledge it and discuss next steps. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out. The Head of School (or their nominee) will determine who should carry out any investigation and this may be someone external to the School.

Written records will be kept of all formal meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Head of School (or their nominee), 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 in writing. The Head of School (or their nominee) will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Head of School (or their nominee) will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons **within 20 working days** of the complaint being put in writing (or following the provision of any further clarificatory information about the complaint, if so requested).

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

5.2.1 Complaints against the Head of School

If the complaint is against the Head of School, it should be made directly to the Principal. The Stage 2 process set out above will then apply, with each reference to “the Head of School (or their nominee)” read as a reference to the Principal.

5.2.2 Complaints against the Principal

If the complaint is against the Principal, it should be made to the Chair of Directors. The Chair of Directors will either determine the complaint themselves or nominate a member of the Advisory Board (or another suitably independent person) to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process set out above will then apply, with each reference to “the Head of School (or their nominee)” read as a reference to the individual nominated by the Chair of Directors.

5.2.3 Complaints against the Advisory Board/Chair of Directors

If the complaint is against the Chair of Directors, or another member of the Advisory Board, the complaint should be made to the Principal who will review the complaint and make recommendations. The Principal will appoint a member of the Advisory Board to lead the response. The stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the references to the Head of School (or their nominee) is to the Advisory Board member to determine the complaint against the Chair of Directors/Advisory Board member.

5.3 Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the Chair of Directors within **5 working days** of receiving the decision at Stage 2, 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. In the event the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated (including to the extent applicable any extensions if agreed) the School reserves the right to conclude the complaint process and not progress the matter to Stage 3.

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 Directors 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 and running 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. The Stage 2 decision-taker 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 be appropriate for either party, and the companion should not be a lawyer. The identity of the companions should be confirmed to the convenor as soon as possible and by no later than **2 working days** before the hearing. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.

A note-taker will attend the hearing to take a note. This will not be a verbatim note but an accurate reflection of what was discussed. Notes of the hearing will be shared with attendees as soon as practicable after the hearing. To the extent there is any disagreement about the content of those notes or further comments from the parties, these will be considered by and, where possible, resolved by the Chair. A copy of any comments on the notes will be appended to the notes.

The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Directors and 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 the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:

1. dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
2. uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
3. make recommendations for the School to consider. Stage 3 Panels cannot require that any financial compensation is paid to parents or otherwise obligate the School to take particular steps.

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 email or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Directors and the Stage 2 decision-taker. 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 Directors and the Principal.

6. 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: info@isi.net

Ofsted:

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

General Helpline: 0300 123 1231

Telephone: 0300 123 4666

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.

7. 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 Directors 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.

8. 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 because 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.

When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name and contact details of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes/minutes of any hearing, and
- The written decision/outcome

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.

9. Data protection complaints handling

Complaints regarding data protection should be addressed for the attention of the School's Data Protection Officer (DPO). The DPO will acknowledge any complaints within 30 days of receipt. The school will ensure that all record keeping will happen without undue delay and will communicate the outcomes promptly, matching the new statutory obligations. This includes providing a complaint form, in line with the requirements of section 164A of the Data Protection Act 2018 (as inserted by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025).

Record of Stage 2 or Stage 3 complaints

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

Academic Year	Stage 2	Stage 3
2025/26	2	1