



## **POLICY STATEMENT ON THE PROCEDURES WHERE A PARENT OR GUARDIAN MAKES A COMPLAINT ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

**Applicable to:** Parents, guardians, staff, students at Redmaids' High School

**Aims:** To allow the parents or guardians of current students/pupils (and past students/pupils if the complaint was raised when the student was still registered) to register a complaint or concern about the school where previous communication has not addressed their concern to their satisfaction. To ensure the complaint or concern is reviewed fairly.

To ensure the procedures for making a complaint (informal, formal and panel hearing) are available to parents at the School.

The complaint procedure should not be used for admission appeals, exclusion or suspension appeals, staff grievances or staff disciplinary procedures. These have separate policies and procedures.

A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A complaint may be defined as 'where action or resolution is required from the Head/Headteacher as reassurances have been unsuccessful or if the parent defines it as a complaint'.

### **Important Note:**

These guidelines are non-contractual in nature. They have been prepared for the information and guidance of all who may become concerned following a complaint raised with the school.

### **Making a Complaint**

1. Parents or guardians must make a complaint to the Head/Headteacher in writing. The complaint may be made and considered initially on an informal basis. (Stage 1.) The Head/Headteacher will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 48 hours and consider and respond to the issue within 14 days in term time. The Head/Headteacher will ask the complainant what they think might resolve the issue. Except in exceptional circumstances, complaints received during holiday periods will be dealt with as if received on the first day of the following term.
2. Where the complainant is not satisfied with the decision or response of the Head/Headteacher a formal complaint may be made in writing to the Chair of Governors (Stage 2) who will consider and respond to the issue within 14 days.

If the Chair of Governors is unavailable and unable to respond within 14 days then the Vice Chair will act on his/her behalf.

3. If the complainant is still not satisfied with the response of the Chair of Governors, a complaint (Stage 3) may be submitted to a 'Complaints' Panel using the Complaint Appeal form in Appendix A. This form is available on the website or from the School Office and must be returned to the Head/Headteacher within 14 working days of receipt of the Chair of Governor's written notification of the decision in question. For compliance purposes a panel hearing should take place unless the parent indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further. If the complainant does not exercise the right to attend a panel hearing, the School will still hold the hearing in line with this complaints policy.
4. Unless there are exceptional circumstances the appeal hearing will take place within 28 days of the receipt of an official complaint, and may be sooner if convenient to all parties.
5. Each member of the Complaints Panel will be supplied with a copy of any relevant documents. The complainant shall be entitled to copies of all those documents save any which, in the opinion of the Head/Headteacher, should not be disclosed because of their confidential nature.

### ***The Complaints Panel***

This panel will consist of three members, two Governors and one member independent of the management and running of the school. The panel members will not have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and will not include the Chair of Governors. Selection of the Complaints Panel will be made by the Chair of the Board of Governors.

### ***The Complaint Hearing***

1. This will take place at the School premises
2. Those present at the complaint hearing will normally be:
  - Members of the Complaint Panel
  - The Head/Headteacher
  - The Complainant (Parents or Guardians)
  - Clerk to the Governors or his/her deputy

The complainant may be accompanied by a friend or relation or by a member of the School staff if desired. The person will attend as a friend, not as a legal representative. If a friend or relation is to attend the hearing, the Clerk must be notified of his or her name and relationship with the complainant as soon as possible, and no later than two working days in advance of the hearing.

3. The proceedings will be chaired by one member of the Complaints Panel and will be conducted in an informal manner, and all statements made at the hearing will be

unsworn. The proceedings will not be tape recorded but the Clerk will be asked to keep a minute of the main points that arise. All present will be entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes. The hearing shall be directed at all times by the Chair of the panel who will conduct the hearing in such a manner as to ensure that all those present have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments. The format of the hearing is likely to be structured in the following way; this process will be at the discretion of the Chair of the panel.

- the complaint is heard from the complainant
- the school will reply
- any questions from each side should be asked through the Chair.

4. All those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners. The Chair may at his/her discretion adjourn, arrange a further meeting or terminate the hearing. If the hearing is terminated the original decision will stand.

5. If the Head/Headteacher considers it necessary in the interests of the individual or of the School that the identity of any person should be withheld, the Chair of the panel may require that the name of that person and the reasons for withholding it be written down and shown to the Complaints Panel. The Chair at his/her discretion may direct that the person be identified.

6. When the Chair of the panel decides that all issues have been sufficiently discussed and if by then there is no consensus he/she may adjourn the hearing.

7. The requirements of natural justice will apply.

8. The decision of the Complaints Panel will be final. It will be notified to the complainant and the Head/Headteacher by the Chair of the Complaints Panel or the Chair of Governors by letter or telephone within three days of the hearing.

9. The manner in which the School handles the complaint must meet Independent Schools Inspectorate regulations which:

- a) Provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is:
  - provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about;
  - available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and the Head/Headteacher;
- b) Provides a written record to be kept of all complaints that are not resolved at the informal Stage 1. This includes
  - (i) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
  - (ii) action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld); and

- c) provides that that all correspondence, statements and records relating to an individual complaint are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. The Head/Headteacher keeps the documentation securely in her office in the School's 'Complaints File'. Redmaids' High School also keeps a copy of all informal complaints, for management purposes and to enable patterns of concern to be monitored.

### ***Duplicate Complaints***

1. Any duplicate complaints (about the same issue) that come from a spouse, partner, grandparent or child that are received after the complaint has been closed will not re-open the complaint. The Head/Headteacher will inform the new complainant that the School has already considered the complaint and the process is complete.
2. The School will ensure that if there are any new aspects of the complaint that this will be investigated.

**In the academic year 2019 – 2020 there were no formal complaints to the School.**

**Paul Dwyer/ Lisa Brown/ Elizabeth Fry Reviewed and updated November  
2020  
Review Date November 2021**



**REDMAIDS'  
HIGH SCHOOL**

**FOR GIRLS | BRISTOL**

SENIOR SCHOOL & SIXTH FORM

**APPENDIX A - COMPLAINT APPEAL FORM  
To be used at Stage 3 only**

**To: Clerk to the Governors**

**Name of Complainant:**

**Relationship of Complainant to the School:**

**Address of Complainant:**

**Telephone numbers:** (daytime)

(evening)

I/We request that a sub-committee of the Board of Governors carries out a review of my complaint against the school.

I/We have received with this form a copy of the *Policy Statement on the Procedures where a Parent or Guardian makes a Complaint about the School* and I/we agree to abide by its terms.

I/We also agree that the proceedings are and will remain confidential and that this review will be final subject to such (if any) legal rights as may exist.

The grounds upon which I/we complain, and the matters which I/we wish to discuss and to ask the sub-committee to take into account, are set out in the attached letter/statement sheet.

I/We understand that I/we may be accompanied at the Complaint Hearing by a friend or relation who is not involved with the School who knows me and who is willing to speak on my behalf.

**(Two signatures required where practicable)**

**First Signature..... Second Signature.....**

**Full Name ..... Full Name.....**

**Date..... Date.....**