

Redmaids' High School

Complaints Policy



REDMAIDS'
HIGH SCHOOL
FOR GIRLS | BRISTOL

Applicable to: Parents and Guardians at Redmaids' High School

Redmaids' High School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its students/pupils. However, 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.

The policy is 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.

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.

What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department 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.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

If parents have a concern they should contact the relevant teacher or form tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the teacher or form tutor cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary to consult the Head of Year, Head of Department or a member of the Senior Management Team.

Making a Complaint

Stage 1

- If the concern cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head/Headteacher. The Head/Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

- It is normal practice for a stage 1 complaint to be formally investigated by a member of the Senior Team which is then reported back to the Head/Headteacher for the decision.
- The Head/Headteacher will speak to the parents concerned, within 5 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head/Headteacher, or their deputy, to carry out further investigations.
- The Head/Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head/Headteacher 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/Headteacher will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Head will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 14 working days of the complaint being put in writing. Parents will be informed if more time is needed for investigation.
- If the complaint is against the Head/Headteacher, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors or their nominee will call for a full report from the Head/Headteacher and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors or their nominee may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further, if necessary. Once the Chair of Governors or their nominee 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 Governors or their nominee will give reasons for their decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 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 their behalf.
- The Chair of Governors will re-examine the evidence and the outcomes of the investigation from stage 1 to ensure that the procedure carried out has been consistent and fair, as well as in-line with the policy. There is no requirement to re-investigate the complaint unless it is felt that there is an exceptional reason to do so.
- Any requests by the parent/guardian to go to Stage 2 must be made within 14 working days of the judgment of Stage 1 being received.

Stage 3

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the Clerk to the Governors within 14 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.
- The Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Chair of Governors will appoint one Panel member to act as Chair of the Panel. The Chair of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and schedule a hearing to take place within 20 working days.
- Selection of the Complaints Panel will be made by the Chair of the Board of Governors.
- 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 be appropriate. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- 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.
- The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors 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 the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and 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 email or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Head/Headteacher. 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 Governors and the Head/Headteacher.

The Complaint Hearing

- This will take place at the School premises
- 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 their deputy
- 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.
- All those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners. The Chair may at their discretion adjourn, arrange a further meeting or terminate the hearing. If the hearing is terminated the original decision will stand.
- 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 their discretion may direct that the person be identified.

- When the Chair of the panel decides that all issues have been sufficiently discussed and if by then there is no consensus they may adjourn the hearing.
- The requirements of natural justice will apply.
- 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.
- 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 the School's confidential '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

- 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.
- The School will ensure that if there are any new aspects of the complaint that this will be investigated.

In the academic year 2022 – 2023 there was one formal complaint

Paul Dwyer/ Lisa Brown/ Liz Clarson Reviewed Autumn term 2023

Review Date Autumn term 2024



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.....