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## COMPLAINTS POLICY

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This policy relates to all sections and activities of the school e.g. the Senior School, the Junior School (including EYFS), Wrap Around Care, Offsite Activities and School run Holiday Activities or Clubs.

Red House School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents, and takes seriously concerns or complaints which may arise, as they can help us to improve the educational experience that we provide.

### THE PURPOSE OF THE PROCEDURE

The aim of this procedure is to achieve a fair, effective and as rapid as possible resolution of parental concerns about the education and/or welfare of individual children in the care of Red House.

The expression 'parents' is used for those having parental responsibility for the child. These procedures apply to all parents of pupils and to prospective parents of the school. A copy of this procedure is available on the school's website and can also be obtained on request from the school office.

### TIMING

Effective and fair resolution of concerns usually requires that they are brought to the School's attention promptly, which should normally be within three months of the relevant event(s). Complaints may be heard after this time if the Chair of School Council considers that the delay has not prejudiced an effective and fair resolution.

### LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

Where legal proceedings exist between the School and the parents/pupil, this procedure may be subject to the constraints of the legal process.

### RECORD KEEPING

- A written record of all complaints (which may include notes, correspondence and statements) will be kept at each stage of the procedure, as detailed below, and will include details of whether individual complaints were resolved following a formal or informal procedure, or proceeded to a panel hearing. The record will include details of any action taken by the school as a result, regardless of whether they are upheld.
- The written record of complaints will be reviewed regularly by the Headmaster.
- Records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. The record of complaints relating to EYFS must be made available to OFSTED on request.
- The number of complaints recorded under the formal procedure during the preceding school year is available to parents of pupils (and prospective pupils) on request from the school office.

### PROCEDURE

Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the School is seen as a complaint. If you are concerned about anything, please observe the following procedure:

#### Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. Please speak, as soon as possible, to the member of staff most directly concerned with the matter. In many cases the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction.
- In the Junior School, you can always catch your child's class teacher immediately before the start of school.
- The school secretary in the Senior School will endeavour to contact a member of staff should you wish to talk to them. Alternatively, a senior member of staff is always available in the morning should you wish to raise a concern.
- If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult with other staff within the school. The teacher will make a written record of all complaints, the date on which they were received and any action taken by the school as a result. All verbal or written complaints will normally be acknowledged within 24 hours during term time. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 school days or in the event that the member of staff 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 procedure.
- Following a formal investigation, a written response should be sent within 28 days of the initial complaint.

## **Stage 2 - Formal Resolution**

- In the unlikely event that this fails to resolve the matter, the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster as soon as possible. The Headmaster (or his or her representative if the Headmaster is not in School) will investigate the complaint.
- The Headmaster will normally acknowledge receipt of a written letter or e-mail of complaint within 24 hours.
- The Headmaster will always offer to meet with concerned parents, but the meeting can be more productive if he has been briefed on the matter, in advance. This meeting will normally take place within 10 school days of receipt of their original letter.
- The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents informed of this decision in writing. This will usually be within 10 school days of the meeting. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.
- The school will also keep a written record of complaints, any action taken by the school as a result, and whether they were resolved at the informal or formal stage or were referred to School Council.
- Complaints about the Headmaster should be made directly to the Chair of School Council.

## **Stage 3 - Referral to a Complaints Appeal Panel**

In the unlikely event that this fails to resolve the matter, parents should write to the Chair of School Council, via the School Office, setting out their complaint. The Chair will then convene a Complaints Appeal Panel to investigate the matter.

In the interests of resolving the complaint expeditiously, complaints should focus on the main issues. It is helpful if the complainant is able to indicate the nature of the outcome which they are seeking as a means of resolving their complaint.

Upon written receipt of a request by the complainant, a representative of the Complaints Appeal Panel will write to the complainant informing the complainant that the complaint will be heard by the Panel. The letter will explain that the complainant should supply copies of their previous written complaint to the Headmaster and any other documentation they may wish to rely on to the Complaints Appeal Panel and Headmaster not more than 5 school days after the date of notification of the hearing. Documentation must be relevant to those matters set out in the complaint.

The parents will be supplied with copies of any statements and supporting/background documentation provided by the Headmaster to the Panel not less than 10 school days before the hearing.

The Panel may refuse to consider matters of which written notice has not been given if doing so appears to them likely to be prejudicial to a fair and effective consideration of the complaint.

The Complaints Appeal Panel will meet as soon as practical and normally within 15 school days of receipt of the parents' letter. If, despite the best efforts of the School, a hearing cannot be arranged within this time period a representative of School Council will write to the parents before the expiry of the 15 school day period setting out the likely timeframe for the hearing.

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 the Panel not less than 5 school days prior to the hearing, for circulation to all parties.

The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher, advisor or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The Head will be accompanied by a member of School Council who is not on the Complaints Appeal Panel.

Red House School Council will nominate a number of members with delegated powers to hear complaints at that stage and appoint a Chair to set out its terms of reference. The panel shall consist of three to five members, the Chair as appointed by Red House School Council, a further member of School Council and a panel member independent of the School. Up to two other members of School Council may be appointed by the Chair, if needed. Members of the panel should not have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

The DFE defines an independent person as someone independent of the management and running of the school. They should have some standing in the local community. In this connection serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background or retired members of the Police Force are considered suitable.

The Chair will appoint one of the panel members as Clerk to the Panel or engage a minute taker.

Conduct of the hearing shall be at the Panel's discretion which will be exercised in the interests of a fair, effective, and appropriately rapid resolution of the complaint. The Chair of the Panel will normally write to the parents before the hearing, having considered the nature of the complaint and the documentary material, to state how the hearing will be conducted. Prior to the hearing, decisions relating to procedure may be dealt with by the Chair of the Panel acting alone.

After due consideration of all relevant facts, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations.

The Panel will write to the parents normally within 10 school days informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The Panel's findings, and (if any) recommendations will also be sent in writing to the Headmaster, the Chair of School Council and, where relevant, the person(s) against whom the complaint was made.

The findings and recommendations referred to may be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about.

A copy of the findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by School Council and the Headmaster.

The Headmaster will keep a copy of the findings and recommendations for all complaints which have been dealt with at a Panel hearing under this procedure. A written record is kept of all written complaints received under the formal procedure or heard by the complaints appeal panel. The record includes whether the complaint is resolved following a formal procedure or proceeds to a panel hearing. Any actions taken by the School as a result of a complaint will also be recorded.

Any correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State of a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

The school also has detailed Procedures giving guidance to staff dealing with expressions of concern from parents. A copy of these internal Procedures can be obtained by writing to the Headmaster.

### **EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS)**

The School will investigate written complaints relating to the fulfillment of EYFS requirements and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.

Parents of EYFS pupils may make a complaint to the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and/or the Independent Schools Inspectorate if they feel the School is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

#### **Ofsted**

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

Tel: 0300 123 1231  
Text phone: 0161 618 8524

#### **ISI**

CAP House  
9-12 Long Lane  
London  
EC1A 9HA

Tel: 020 7600 0100

A record of all complaints involving EYFS children is kept for a minimum of three years. In the last twelve months there has been one formal complaint.

(A school day is a day during the school term when the school is in session.)

Reviewed by K D James  
Ratified by the Management Committee of School Council  
June 2021