



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Complaints Policy	Associated Policies
--------------------------	----------------------------

Last reviewed	May 2024	<i>Admissions Policy</i>
Next review	May 2025	<i>Whistleblowing Policy</i>
Gov. sub-committee	Full Governors	<i>Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy</i>
Owner	Headteacher	<i>Data Protection Procedure</i>

Richmond House School aims to provide an outstanding education, that realises the unique potential of every pupil, whilst ensuring the very best pastoral care. . The School values positive relationships with parents and guardians, but recognises that, on occasion, misunderstandings, errors and conflicts of interest may occur between parents, pupils and staff, and that concerns may arise. Parents or guardians can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially, and in accordance with this Complaints Policy.

Richmond House School makes this Complaints Policy available to all parents on the School’s website and will ensure that parents 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) Regulations 2014, Richmond House 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.

“Parent(s)” means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a [current] [or prospective] pupil about whom the complaint relates.

In the first instance, parents should make contact with the relevant member of staff or member of the senior leadership team (SLT), to allow an opportunity for a concern to be handled swiftly and appropriately, leading to a positive outcome.

If concerns have been discussed with the relevant member of staff and the parent or guardian still feels dissatisfied they may wish to make a complaint following the steps in this policy. It is the School’s intention to deal with such complaints fairly and as quickly as possible in accordance with this policy.

The School aims to ensure that:

- All Parents/guardians wishing to make a complaint know how to do so.
- All complaints are responded to within a reasonable time.
- All complaints are listed to and taken seriously.
- Action is taken where appropriate.

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.

Who to contact?

1. An issue relating to Safeguarding or child protection should follow the Safeguarding policy, a copy of which can be found on our website. Contact should be made with a designated member of the Safeguarding team or Headteacher if in doubt.
2. For an educational issue, relating to either the classroom or curriculum, please contact the Senior Lead for Teaching and Learning.
3. For issues relating to matters outside of the classroom, or of a pastoral nature, the Deputy Head, Pastoral, should be contacted.
4. A concern about the health and safety of your child should be notified immediately to Bursar.
5. Financial issues including queries relating to fees should be directed to the Bursar.
6. If a complaint is regarding the Headteacher, a letter should be written to the Chair of Governors who will appoint an appropriate Governor to investigate the complaint.

The following provides clear and stepped procedures for handling complaints from Parents/guardians of pupils at Richmond House School.

The Three-Stage Complaints Policy

Stage 1 Informal Resolution

If a concern remains unresolved, it can become a complaint. In these circumstances, the Parent/Guardian is requested to put the issue in writing (an email is acceptable) to the appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) stating that they wish for it to be a complaint to be handled under this policy. (Refer to the "Who to contact" section above). Depending on the nature of the complaint, the SLT member will either deal with it themselves or delegate it to the most relevant member of the SLT.

Following receipt of the complaint, the SLT member will contact the complainant and the complaint will be fully investigated. A meeting will be arranged with the Parents/guardians, normally within 10 school days of receipt of the complaint, to report and discuss the findings of the investigation. A written record of the complaint will be stored by the Headteacher in the Complaints File which will give a clear indication of whether the matter has been resolved at Stage 1 or if it has passed to Stage 2, a Formal Complaint.

If the complaint is against the Headteacher, then the complaint should be put in writing to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will appoint an appropriate governor to hold a meeting with the Parents/guardians, and the Headteacher if appropriate, normally **within 10 school days**.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the Parent/Guardian is not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 1, they may write to the Headteacher to request to make the complaint formal. This must be **within 15 school days** of receipt of the written outcome of Stage 1.

A formal meeting with the Headteacher and other relevant staff will be arranged normally **within 10 school days** of receiving the request to move this to a Stage 2 complaint. If a resolution cannot be reached at this stage, then further investigations will take place. Once the Headteacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established and considered, a decision will be made and Parents/guardians will be informed of this decision in writing normally **within 10 school days** of the meeting. The Head will give reasons for any decision.

A written record of the complaint at this stage and any actions taken by the School as a result of the complaint will be kept by the School, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld, and will include whether the complaint has been resolved or is proceeding to Stage 3. This will be retained by the Headteacher or Bursar in the Complaints File.

If the complaint is against the Headteacher, then the complaint should be put in writing to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will appoint an appropriate governor to hold a meeting with the Parents/guardians, and the Headteacher if appropriate, normally **within 10 school days**.

If a resolution cannot be reached at this stage, then further investigations will take place and Parents/guardians will be informed of the decision/outcome in writing. The timescale for the investigation and communication of the outcome will be given at the meeting.

If the Parents/guardians are not satisfied at this point, they can proceed to a Stage 3 complaint.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If the parent/guardian is not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, a written request should be made to move to a Stage 3 complaint within **15 school days** of receiving the written decision at Stage 2. This should be sent to the Chair of Governors. It should contain the grounds of the complaint, full contact details and should specify that they wish for this to move to a Stage 3 complaint. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.

If parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated due to extenuating circumstances, parents should request an extension in writing. Such a request should be made to the Chair of Governors in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. This will be considered.

The Chair of Governors will acknowledge the complaint **within 5 school days** and convene a panel hearing normally **within 15 school days** of receipt of the request. The panel will not normally sit during school holidays. The panel will comprise of at least three members appointed by the Governors, who are not directly related to the matters raised in the complaint. One of the panel will always be independent of the current management and running of the School and the other two will be from the Governing Body.

The parent/guardian will be invited to attend the panel meeting and may be accompanied, but not represented, by a friend or family member, if they wish. Parents and the School are entitled to provide evidence for their positions, in advance of the meeting, and this information will be shared with all parties.

The Headteacher shall also be entitled to attend the hearing, accompanied by one other person if they wish.

The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.

In addition, 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. A full copy of papers for the hearing encompassing the original complaint, all correspondence and the Stage 2 decision, together with any further particulars requested, will be sent to all parties attending the panel no later than 2 school days prior to the hearing.

The hearing will be chaired by one member of the Panel (chosen by the Governors) and will be conducted in an informal manner. All those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chairperson of the Panel. If terminated, the original Stage 2 decision will stand. Such panel hearings are private proceedings and no notes or other recordings or oral statements may be made available to any third party.

The considered decision of the panel will be communicated to the Parent/Guardian **normally within 10 school days** of the panel hearing and will be final and binding and will formally close the complaint. A copy of the panel's findings and recommendations will be made available to the subject(s) of the complaint, the Headteacher and the Governors. A written record will be kept in the School's Complaints File which includes any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld.

Confidentiality

All complaints are handled confidentially, and the correspondence and written evidence relating to them will be kept confidentially by the School 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. In addition, there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (eg, in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

Record Keeping and Use of Personal Data

Formal notes will be taken in all formal complaint meetings by a member of the school's administration team or other appointed note taker if deemed more appropriate. These should be circulated to both parties.

A log of all formal complaints is kept by the Headteacher or Bursar in the Complaints File which includes the stage at which it has been resolved. Records of complaints are kept for 6 years following the date of resolution, and then reviewed for retention in the case of continuous disputes.

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information.

This may include 'special category personal data' (for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Data Protection Procedure.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Records Retention Policy.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 45 school days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 40 school days.

For any stage of a complaint, if it is being handled during school holidays, then the timeframe for an investigation or a response may be extended according to the nature of the complaint and the length of the holiday. This would be notified to the Parents/guardians on receipt of their complaint. The time period would be as short as is reasonably practicable, while allowing for a full and proper investigation to take place during that holiday period or immediately after it. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence 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.

Provision for Pupils in EYFS

Parents of EYFS pupils should follow the three stages of this Complaints Policy. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. 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.

Richmond House School will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Records Retention Policy.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the ISI:

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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

ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

Number of Formal Complaints made in the year 2022-2023

There were no formal complaints raised in 2022/23.

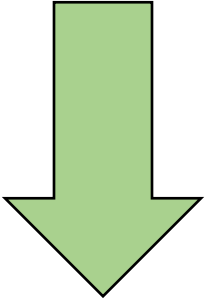
A review of this policy, through the SLT and Governing body, will take place annually.



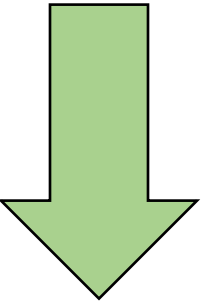
Signed (Headteacher)

Signed (Chair of Governors)

Appendix: Flow diagram outlining steps for concerns/complaints

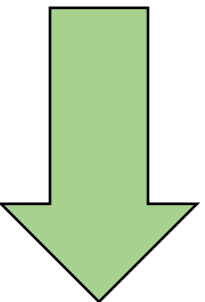


Contact the relevant member of staff to discuss any concerns or issues.



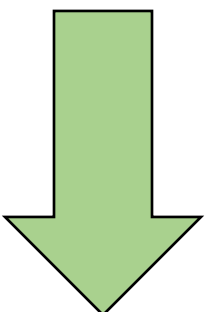
Complaint Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

If not happy with how your concern has been resolved, write to a member of the SLT, explaining you wish this to be a complaint at Stage 1.



Complaint Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 1, write to the Headteacher (or Chair of Governors if complaint is against the Head) explaining your wish to move the complaint to Stage 2, for formal resolution.



Complaint Stage 3 – Panel hearing

If dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 2, write to the Chair of Governors, explaining your wish for your complaint to be moved to a Stage 3 complaint for panel hearing.