



Complaints Policy and Procedure

Reed's School is proud of the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided for its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure.

Introduction

This policy applies to all parents of pupils currently attending Reed's School and is made available on the School website or on request from the School. This policy will only apply to past pupils if the complaint was initially raised whilst they were still a registered pupil at the School.

What Constitutes a Complaint

A complaint is a statement that something is unsatisfactory or unacceptable. Parents are likely to make complaints if they believe that the School has done something wrong, failed to take some action or acted unfairly. A complaint may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. Any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks redress by the School is within the scope of this procedure.

1.1. Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- 1.1.1. In the event of a parent having a complaint about any aspect of school life in relation to their own son or daughter the normal procedure should be to bring the matter in the first instance to the attention of the pupil's Tutor and/or Housemaster. Complaints must be made as soon as possible after an incident or cause for complaint arises and in any event within 3 months. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally, to the parents' satisfaction.
- 1.1.2. If there are further concerns the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team should be contacted by letter or e mail or by telephone – the Deputy Headmaster (Pastoral) about pastoral matters, discipline and any other matters or if the parent does not know who should be contacted; the Deputy Headmaster (Academic) about academic matters; the Senior Master (Co-curricular) about sport and activities. Complaints about financial matters should be addressed initially to the Bursar.
- 1.1.3. If the complaint is about a member of the Senior Leadership Team mentioned in paragraph 1.1.2 the parent should contact the Headmaster by letter, email or telephone.

- 1.1.4. The relevant senior member of staff will investigate complaints. The Headmaster will be informed of any complaints received by the Senior Leadership Team and the manner of proposed resolution. Every effort will be made to resolve the issue quickly and the senior member of staff will normally respond within 2 working days of the receipt of a complaint although serious issues requiring detailed investigation may take longer. Normally a full response will be sent to the parent or a meeting date will be agreed within a week.
- 1.1.5. If a satisfactory resolution is still not reached then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure.

1.2. Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- 1.2.1. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parent must put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster who will investigate the complaint at this stage.
- 1.2.2. In most cases, the Headmaster will arrange a date to meet with or speak to the parent concerned, normally within 7 working days of receiving the written letter of complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible a resolution will be reached at this stage, although it may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations. If that is the case the Headmaster or someone appointed by him will carry out the further investigations necessary and complete them as soon they can
- 1.2.3. Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be made and retained for a period of 7 years.
- 1.2.4. 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 the parent will be informed of the decision in writing together with brief reasons for that decision. The decision will be taken and communicated to the parents within 14 days of the Headmaster or the Secretary to the Governors receiving the complaint. If parents are still not satisfied with the Headmaster's decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure.
- 1.2.5. Please note if the complaint is made during a School holiday period or the time within which it is to be dealt with enters a School holiday period the times set out above may be delayed if it proves impossible to make contact with staff who are material to the investigation or the matter in question.
- 1.2.6. A formal written record of all concerns and complaints which reach the Senior Leadership Team or the Headmaster at this stage and the date on which they were received will be made. Tutors, Housemasters and teachers who receive concerns or complaints will ensure that a note is placed on the pupil's file and the corresponding member of the Senior Leadership Team is informed.

1.2.7. If the complaint is about the Headmaster, the complaint must be made in writing and addressed to the Secretary to the Governors. This will be dealt with by the Governor nominated to deal with parental complaints (the Nominated Governor). The parent must set out in their complaint what they think might resolve the issue and the process will follow the steps indicated above.

1.3. Stage 3 – Governors’ Involvement and Panel Hearing

1.3.1. If parents are not satisfied with the Headmaster’s or the Nominated Governor’s written decision they may request that their complaint is heard by a Complaints Panel. They will need to make their request in writing addressed to the Secretary to the Governors within 14 days of receipt of the written decision. The parents’ request must set out the reasons why they are not satisfied with the decision and what they think might resolve the issue. The matter will then be referred to a Complaints Panel which will reconsider the complaint and the Headmaster’s decision.

1.3.2. The Panel will consist of two School Governors who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and an independent member (see Appendix 1 as to who may be suitable to serve as an independent member of the Panel). The Secretary to the Governors will acknowledge the complaint and arrange a hearing to take place at the School within 21 days of receipt of the notice from the parents that they are not satisfied with the Headmaster’s decision.

1.3.3. The Panel will decide on the procedure to be followed at the hearing and who will attend at the hearing. The Panel may require the attendance of the Headmaster or any other member of the School’s staff at the hearing. The parents may be accompanied at the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend provided they are not legally qualified. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

1.3.4. The parents will be given every opportunity to state their case to the Panel. If possible the Panel will, after due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, make a decision without the need for further investigation.

1.3.5. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. Following such further investigations and after due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision. The decision shall be made and communicated to the parents in writing together with brief reasons for it within 14 days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel shall be final and there will be no further review or reconsideration of the complaint.

1.3.6. The Panel’s findings and, if any, its recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmaster, the Chair of Governors if he/she was not a member of the Panel, and the Governors. The Panel will recommend what action if any, should be taken in relation to any member of staff about whom the complaint was made.

- 1.3.7. Please note if parents request a Panel hearing shortly before or during a School holiday period the times set out above may be delayed if it proves impossible to make contact with staff who are material to the investigation or the matter in question.
- 1.3.8. In line with the Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information) Regulations 2015, the School will provide parents with the name and address of an alternative dispute resolution provider who has been certified by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute as competent to resolve consumer disputes, upon conclusion of the final stage of the complaints procedure.

1.4. Records and Confidentiality

- 1.4.1. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Parents are also expected to keep matters confidential. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them; where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- 1.4.2. A written record of all formal complaints and their outcomes is kept by the Headmaster and is reviewed by the Governors annually. Each record indicates whether the complaint was resolved and at what stage in the process it was resolved.
- 1.4.3. The number of formal complaints dealt with in the previous school year is available on request to parents of current and prospective pupils. Please contact the Headmaster's Secretary for this information.
- 1.4.4. This document is available on request to parents of current and prospective pupils and may also be obtained from the School website. In line with the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, this policy is also available to all staff and boarding pupils.
- 1.4.5. At the School's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:
- Date when the issue was raised
 - Name of parent
 - Name of pupil
 - Description of the issue
 - Records of the investigations (if appropriate)
 - Witness statement (if appropriate)
 - Name 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)

APPENDIX 1

Complaints Procedure – Independent Member of the Panel

The DfE has given the following guidance on who may serve as an independent panel member:

Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are: serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force.

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