

**COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PREP SCHOOLS
IN THE RADLEY SCHOOLS GROUP**
(Including EYFS and Boarding where applicable)

Owner:	CEO	Date Reviewed:	August 2026
Review Period	Annual	Next Review Date:	August 2027

1. Introduction

This is a Group policy template for use in all Radley Schools Group Prep schools.

The Radley Schools Group (“RSG”) and its schools pride themselves on the quality of the education, pastoral care and wider opportunities provided to pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated seriously, sensitively and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure.

This Procedure applies to complaints from parents of current registered pupils and is available on the School website.

Complaints from parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Procedure only where the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to whom the complaint relates was still registered at the School.

For the purposes of this Procedure, “parent(s)” means any person with parental responsibility for a current pupil.

This Procedure does not apply to:

- complaints relating to pupil exclusions or required removal; complaints relating to permanent exclusion or required removal, which are dealt with under the School's [Permanent Exclusion and Required Removal Policy] and the review procedure contained within it;
- safeguarding allegations or child protection matters, which are dealt with in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- whistleblowing complaints from staff;
- complaints relating to third party providers using school premises;
- subject access requests or complaints arising under data protection legislation, which are dealt with under the School's Data Protection Policy and/or Data Protection Complaints Procedure.

The School will make available, on request, to parents, the Department for Education (“DfE”), the Independent Schools Inspectorate (“ISI”), Ofsted (where applicable) and any other relevant regulatory body:

- details of this Complaints Procedure; and
- the number of complaints registered under the formal stages of this Procedure during the preceding school year.

Where provided in the school, this Procedure also applies to boarding provision and complies with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.

2. Principles

The School will seek to resolve complaints fairly, sensitively, proportionately and as promptly as reasonably practicable. It will maintain appropriate confidentiality and records and will ensure that no pupil is disadvantaged because a complaint has been raised in good faith.

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively.

Where parents are separated, the School will consider the rights of each person with parental responsibility and any relevant court order. The School may communicate with each parent separately and will not ordinarily exclude a parent from the process merely at the request of another parent.

Raising a complaint under this Procedure does not alter or suspend the contractual arrangements between parents and the School. Fees and other sums remain payable in accordance with the Parent Contract unless the School agrees otherwise in writing.

Anonymous complaints will generally not be pursued. However, any anonymous information raising a safeguarding concern will be considered in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

3. What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the School's actions, decisions, provision or failure to act. It may concern the School as a whole, a particular area of provision or an individual member of staff.

A concern or enquiry may often be resolved informally without the need to invoke the formal stages of this Procedure.

4. Timeframes

References to "working days" in this Procedure mean weekdays during term time, excluding bank holidays.

The School will normally:

- acknowledge complaints within five (5) working days during term time;
- seek to resolve Stage 1 complaints within ten (10) working days;
- seek to resolve Stage 2 complaints within twenty (20) working days;
- convene a Stage 3 Panel Hearing within twenty (20) working days of the request being received;
- issue the Stage 3 outcome letter within ten (10) working days of the hearing.

Where a timescale cannot reasonably be met because of school holidays, absence, complexity or the involvement of an external agency, the School will inform the parents and provide a revised timescale.

Complaints should normally be raised within three months of the matter arising. The School may consider an older complaint where there are exceptional circumstances or it is otherwise fair and reasonable to do so.

5. Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most concerns and complaints can be resolved quickly and informally.
- Parents should normally raise concerns initially with the relevant member of staff, but parents can raise a concern with any member of staff.
- In many cases, the matter will be resolved immediately or following appropriate enquiries.
- The relevant member of staff may refer the matter to a senior member of staff or to the Head where appropriate.
- A proportionate record will be kept of informal complaints, including the nature of the concern, the response and any action taken.
- If the complaint is not resolved satisfactorily within ten (10) working days, parents will be advised to proceed to Stage 2.
- Complaints made directly to the Head will usually be referred to a member of the Senior Team unless the Head considers it more appropriate to deal with the matter personally. Should this be the case, the aim would still be to resolve the matter quickly and informally.
- Complaints made directly to the Chief Executive or Group Office will normally be referred back to the School for consideration under Stage 1 of this Procedure, unless the Chief Executive considers that the nature of the complaint warrants direct involvement at that stage.
- Only complaints concerning the personal conduct of the Head, or where the complaint relates directly to the Head and it would be inappropriate for the matter to be managed within the School, should proceed directly to Stage 2 and be addressed to the Chief Executive of the Radley Schools Group. The email address for the CEO is ashton@radleyschoolsgroup.org.uk or in writing to the CEO, Radley Schools Group, Radley College, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 2HR.

6. Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, parents should put the complaint in writing to the Head.

The written complaint should include:

- details of the complaint;
- relevant dates and persons involved;
- copies of relevant documents or correspondence;
- the outcome sought.

The Head will:

- acknowledge the complaint;
- consider the appropriate course of action;
- investigate the complaint personally or nominate another senior member of staff to investigate;
- keep written records of meetings, discussions and evidence considered.

Where the substance and manner of a complaint clearly indicate that a parent wishes to invoke the formal procedure, the School will not require the parent to complete the informal stage before accepting the complaint at Stage 2. Similarly, where an issue has previously been raised informally and the parent makes clear that they remain dissatisfied and wish to make a formal complaint, it will be recorded and considered at Stage 2.

The Head or investigator will normally contact the parents within five working days to clarify the complaint and determine whether a meeting or conversation would assist the investigation.

Once the Head is satisfied that all relevant facts have, so far as is reasonably practicable, been established, the Head will provide a written decision and reasons for that decision.

The written response will normally include:

- findings;
- conclusions;
- any actions taken or proposed;
- whether the complaint is upheld in whole or in part.

If parents remain dissatisfied, they may request within ten (10) working days of the Stage 2 outcome, a Stage 3 Panel Hearing.

If a parent's complaint is about the Head, then the complaint should be made to the Chief Executive, and this will initially be dealt with as a stage 2 complaint.

7. Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing

Requesting a Panel Hearing

If parents remain dissatisfied following the Stage 2 response, they may request that the complaint be considered by a Complaints Panel.

Requests must be made in writing to the Chief Executive of Radley Schools Group within ten (10) working days of the Stage 2 response and should:

- identify the aspects of the complaint that remain unresolved;
- explain why the parent remains dissatisfied with the Stage 2 outcome; and
- state the outcome sought.

The Panel will normally only consider matters that have previously been raised and investigated under Stages 1 and 2 of this procedure. It is not intended to consider entirely new complaints. Where a matter has not previously been investigated, the Chief Executive may refer it back to the appropriate stage of the complaints process before convening a Panel.

Constitution of the Panel

The Stage 3 process is administered centrally by Radley Schools Group. The Chief Executive, acting on behalf of Radley Schools Group, will appoint a Chair of the Complaints Panel, and together they will appoint a panel.

The Panel will consist of at least three people. No Panel member will have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one Panel member will be independent of the management and running of the School. In determining independence, regard will be had to any current or previous connection with the School, RSG, the parties or the matters complained about that could reasonably call the person's impartiality into question.

Purpose of the Panel

The purpose of the Panel is to consider the complaint and review whether the Stage 2 investigation was fair and sufficiently thorough, whether the conclusions reached were reasonable on the available evidence and whether the complaint should be upheld in whole or in part. The Panel may consider additional evidence where it is relevant and fair to do so.

The Panel may make appropriate recommendations arising from its findings.

A hearing may take place in person, remotely or in hybrid form, as determined by the Chair after considering fairness, accessibility and the reasonable preferences of the parties.

The Panel does not have the authority to waive fees or other contractual payments, award compensation or impose disciplinary sanctions on pupils or members of staff.

Before the Hearing

The Panel may request further written information or supporting documentation from either party where this would assist its consideration of the complaint.

Relevant documentation will normally be circulated to all parties no later than five (5) working days before the hearing.

Parents are entitled to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by one person over the age of 18, such as a relative, friend or adviser. The name of any companion should be provided at least five (5) working days before the hearing. Any companion is expected to respect the confidential nature of the proceedings.

Legal representation will not normally be appropriate and will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Chair of the Panel.

The Head may be accompanied by the Chair of the Governing Board, another Governor or an appropriate member of the School's leadership team. Any accompanying person will act in a supportive capacity and will not participate in the Panel's decision making.

The School will make reasonable efforts to agree a hearing date that enables the parents to attend. If the parents decline to attend, or fail to attend without good reason, the hearing will nevertheless proceed and the Panel will determine the complaint on the available evidence.

Unless agreed in advance as a reasonable adjustment or in other exceptional circumstances, no audio, video or other recording of the hearing may be made by any party. Notes of the proceedings will be taken for the Panel's use in reaching its decision and preparing its outcome letter.

Conduct of the Hearing

The conduct of the hearing is at the discretion of the Chair of the Panel, who will ensure that the proceedings are fair, proportionate and allow both parties a reasonable opportunity to present their case.

The Panel may ask questions, seek clarification, request further evidence or adjourn the hearing where it considers that further investigation is necessary before reaching a decision.

All participants are expected to behave courteously and respectfully throughout the hearing. Following an appropriate warning from the Chair, the hearing may be adjourned or terminated if a participant's conduct prevents the hearing from proceeding fairly.

Decision of the Panel

Once the hearing has concluded, the Panel will reach its decision by majority, applying the balance of probabilities.

The Panel's decision will be communicated in writing, normally within ten (10) working days of the hearing. The outcome letter will include:

- the Panel's findings;
- the reasons for its decision; and
- any recommendations arising from the complaint.

A copy of the outcome letter will be provided to:

- the parents;
- the Head;
- the Chief Executive of Radley Schools Group; and
- where appropriate, the individual who was the subject of the complaint.

The decision of the Complaints Panel represents the final stage of the School's complaints procedure.

Records of complaints and a copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the School premises by Council and the Head.

8. Complaints about the Head, Chief Executive or members of Radley Council

A complaint concerning the personal conduct of the Head will be made to the Chief Executive and considered under Stage 2.

A complaint concerning the personal conduct of the Chief Executive will be made to the Chair of Radley Council, who will appoint an appropriate person to investigate it under Stage 2.

A complaint concerning the Chair of Radley Council will be made to the Clerk to Radley Council, who will refer it to an appropriate unconflicted member of Council initially as a Stage 2 complaint.

Where the complainant remains dissatisfied following the Stage 2 response, a Stage 3 Panel will be appointed by an individual who has had no involvement in the matters complained about.

9. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

The School will maintain written records of:

- all formal complaints, including any subsequently withdrawn;
- whether complaints were resolved at Stage 2 or Stage 3;
- actions taken by the School as a result of complaints;
- whether complaints relate to boarding provision (where applicable).

The School will record at least:

- the date the complaint was received;
- the name of the parent;
- the name of the pupil;
- the nature of the complaint;
- investigation notes and findings;
- correspondence;
- witness statements where applicable;
- notes of meetings and hearings;
- outcomes and actions taken.

Records will be retained in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy, Privacy Notice and Records Retention Policy.

Complaints records will normally be retained for at least seven (7) years from resolution.

Where a complaint has safeguarding implications, records will be retained in accordance with current safeguarding requirements and statutory guidance.

The School processes personal data in accordance with its Privacy Notice.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent that disclosure is required by law, required by the Secretary of State or an inspecting body, necessary for safeguarding purposes, or reasonably required to investigate and determine the complaint fairly.

10. Managing Persistent or Unreasonable Complaint Behaviour

The School is committed to dealing with complaints fairly and impartially. However, the School also has a duty to protect staff and pupils from unacceptable behaviour. A complaint may be considered unreasonable where a parent:

- refuses to articulate the complaint or desired outcome;
- refuses, without reasonable explanation, to cooperate with reasonable steps required for the fair investigation of the complaint;
- pursues a complaint aggressively or abusively;
- repeatedly raises the same issues after the Procedure has concluded;
- repeatedly seeks to reopen matters after all stages of the Procedure have been completed, without presenting materially new information;
- makes frequent, repetitive or disproportionate contact that materially interferes with the School's ability to conduct its normal functions or respond to the complaint fairly;
- uses offensive, threatening or discriminatory language;
- deliberately provides information known to be false or materially misleading.

Where behaviour is considered unreasonable, the School may:

- limit methods of communication;
- require communications to be made through a single point of contact;
- refuse to respond to repetitive correspondence;
- take steps to protect staff and pupils.

Before imposing communication restrictions, the School will normally write to the parent identifying the behaviour of concern, explaining why it is unreasonable and giving the parent a reasonable opportunity to modify it. Any restriction will be authorised by the Head or Chief Executive, will be proportionate and will normally be reviewed after a specified period.

Communication restrictions will not prevent a parent from raising a new safeguarding concern, reporting a serious risk to a child, responding to a request from the School or pursuing a complaint that has not previously been considered.

Once the School's complaints procedure has concluded, the School will not reopen the complaint unless the parent presents significant new evidence that could not reasonably have been provided earlier and which may have materially affected the outcome. Correspondence that merely repeats previously considered arguments will be acknowledged but will not receive a substantive response.

Where the School requests information reasonably required to investigate a complaint and the parent does not respond within ten working days, the School may place the complaint on hold. If no response is received within a further ten working days, the School may close the complaint and notify the parent accordingly. The School may reopen it where there is a reasonable explanation for the delay.

Serious incidents may result in restrictions on access to school premises.

11. Safeguarding

Safeguarding allegations and immediate child protection concerns will be managed under the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and will not be investigated through this Procedure while safeguarding or external-agency processes are ongoing. A complaint about the School's management of a safeguarding matter may subsequently be considered under this Procedure, insofar as this does not prejudice safeguarding, disciplinary, police or local authority processes.

The School may need to refer matters to external agencies, including children's social care or the police, where appropriate.

12. Early Years Foundation Stage ("EYFS")

This section applies where the School provides EYFS provision.

Complaints relating to EYFS provision will be considered under this Procedure. The School will investigate any written complaint relating to its fulfilment of the EYFS requirements and will notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint.

The School will keep a written record of EYFS complaints and their outcomes and will make that record available to Ofsted and/or the School's relevant inspectorate on request, as applicable.

Parents and carers who believe that the School is not meeting the EYFS requirements may also contact Ofsted. The relevant current contact details are available from the Ofsted website and from the School.

Where applicable, parents may also raise a concern with ISI concerning the School's compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI does not determine contractual disputes or provide an additional appeal against the School's decision.

Ofsted may be contacted at:

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
0300 123 1231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

ISI may be contacted at:

Independent Schools Inspectorate
CAP House
9-12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA
020 7600 0100
concerns@isi.net

12. Boarding Provision

This section applies where the School has a boarding provision.

This Procedure applies to complaints relating to boarding provision.

The School will comply with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools and maintain records of complaints relating to boarding provision separately where required.

The School maintains a separate Boarders' Complaints Procedure, details of which are contained within the Boarders' Handbook. Boarders may raise concerns with any member of staff, the Head, the designated independent listener or another appropriate adult. No boarder will be penalised for raising a concern in good faith.

13. Parent Complaint Procedure Flow Chart

1. **Start**
2. **Informal Complaint** - Discussion with Staff and/or Head: Initially, try to resolve the issue informally by speaking with the relevant staff member.
3. Satisfied?: If you are satisfied with the resolution, the process ends. If not, proceed to either a further informal complaint to the Head, or:
4. **A Formal Written Complaint:** Submit a formal written complaint to the school.
5. Initial Investigation: The school will conduct an initial investigation based on the formal complaint.
6. Satisfied?: If you are satisfied with the outcome, the process ends. If not, you can appeal.
7. **Stage 3 Complaint:** Submit a stage three complaint.
8. Final Resolution: The Stage 3 panel will provide a final resolution.
9. **End:** The complaints process is concluded.

14. Monitoring and Review

The School will consider whether complaints identify any lessons learned or improvements that should be made to policy, practice or training.

Radley Schools Group may review complaints across the Group to identify:

- systemic issues;
- policy implications;
- training needs;
- operational improvements.

For regulatory reporting purposes, a complaint is recorded under the formal complaints procedure when it is accepted for consideration at Stage 2.

From the academic year 2025–26 onwards, each school publishes separately the number of complaints registered under its formal complaints procedure during the preceding academic year. This information is available in the policies section of each school's website.