



## COMPLAINTS POLICY

Complaints Policy		Associated Policies
Last reviewed	April 2021	<i>Admissions</i>
Next review	<b>April 2022</b>	<i>Whistleblowing</i>
Gov. sub-committee	Full Governors	<i>Safeguarding</i>
Owner	Headmaster	

Richmond House School aims to provide the highest quality of teaching and pastoral care to its pupils. We value the positive relationships we have with parents and guardians, however, we recognise that, on occasion, misunderstandings, errors and conflicts of interest may occur between parents, pupils and staff and concerns arise. Parents or guardians can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

In the first instance, we hope that parents 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 procedures in this policy. It is our intention to deal with such complaints fairly and as quickly as possible in accordance with this policy.

We wish to ensure that:

- All Parents/guardians wishing to make a complaint know how to do so.
- We will respond to all complaints within a reasonable time.
- Parents realise that we listen and will take all complaints seriously.
- We will take action where appropriate.

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

### 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 the Safeguarding lead or Headmaster if in doubt.
2. For an educational issue, relating to either the classroom or curriculum, please contact the Deputy Head, Academic.
3. For issues relating to matters outside of the classroom, or of a pastoral nature, the Assistant 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 Headmaster, a letter should be written to the Chair of Governors who will appoint an appropriate Governor to investigate the complaint.

### **Stage 1 Informal Complaint**

If a concern remains unresolved, it can become a complaint. In these circumstances, a 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 Headmaster 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.

### **Stage 2 – Formal Complaint**

If the Parent/Guardian is not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 1, they may write to the Headmaster 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 Headmaster 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 Headmaster 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 Headmaster 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 Headmaster or Bursar in the Complaints File.

If the complaint is against the Headmaster, then the complaint should be put in writing to the Chair of Governors. Correspondence for the Chair should be labelled “confidential” and be delivered to the School Office. The Chair of Governors will appoint an appropriate governor to hold a meeting with the Parents/guardians, and the Headmaster 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 go to a Stage 3 complaint within **15 school days** of receiving the written decision at Stage 2. This should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, labelled “confidential” and be delivered to the School Office. 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. The Chair of Governors will 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 3 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.

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 Headmaster 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.

#### **Record Keeping**

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

A log of all formal complaints is kept by the Headmaster 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.

#### **Timeframe during School Holidays**

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.

### **Provision for Children in EYFS**

Ofsted (The Office for Standards in education – a government body) and the ISI (the Independent Schools Inspectorate) have particular responsibility for monitoring standards regarding the provision of care and services for children under 5 years of age as required by the EYFS Framework.

Written complaints at the EYFS age group about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated following the same procedures and a record of complaints in EYFS will be available to Ofsted and ISI on request. Parents/guardians with a complaint about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirement for children under 5 years of age may wish to contact Ofsted/ ISI directly;

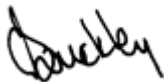
Ofsted - [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk), Telephone 0300 1231231.

ISI - <http://www.isi.net/home/>, or [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net) Telephone 020 7600 0100


### **Number of Formal Complaints made in the year 2019-2020**

There were three formal complaints.

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



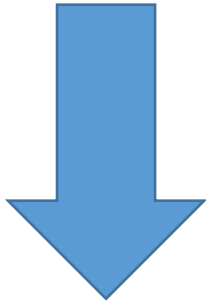
Signed (Headmaster):



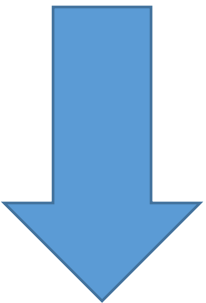
Signed (Chair of Governors):

## Appendix

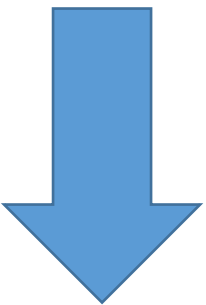
Flow diagram outlining steps for concerns/complaints



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



**Complaint stage 1 – Informal**  
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**  
If dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 1, write to the Headmaster (or Chair of Governors if about the Headmaster) explaining your wish to move the complaint to Stage 2, a formal complaint.



**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.