



READING BLUE COAT SCHOOL

Complaints Policy

Introduction

The School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure. This policy is available on the school's website.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

If parents and pupils have a complaint they should as a first step contact their son/ daughter's Form Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a more senior colleague, usually the Head of Year or Director of Section.

Complaints made directly to a Head of Year, Head of Department, Director of Section or Headmaster might be referred to the relevant Tutor or subject teacher unless he/she deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

The Form Tutor will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. This should be recorded on the pupil's file on Sims. Should the matter not be resolved within two weeks or in the event that the Form Tutor 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.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

The Headmaster will meet with or speak to the parents concerned, within seven days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations. 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 the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision. The Headmaster's decision will be passed on to parents as soon as possible, and no later than seven days after the first meeting or discussion with

parents. This means parents should expect a clear decided, response from the Headmaster within two weeks of the Headmaster receiving the complaint.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Chairman of Governors. The Chairman of Governors can be contacted by the Headmaster's Secretary.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chairman of Governors. The Convenor/Chairman, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within fourteen days. 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 all parties not later than seven days prior to the hearing.

The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within fourteen days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmaster, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of. Records of these findings and recommendations will be kept securely in the Headmaster's Secretary's Office where they will be available for inspection by the Headmaster and Chair of Governors.

Records

The Headmaster's Secretary keeps a log and a written record of all formal complaints are kept. These records note whether complaints are resolved following a formal procedure (i.e. Stage 2) or proceed to Appeal (i.e. Stage 3) and action taken by the School as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

Confidentiality

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

It is the School's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children.

Appendix: Complaints Procedure – Independent Member of the Panel

The DfES has supplied the following guidance in a letter to the ISC General Secretary:

'Whilst we do not intend to be prescriptive our general view is that suitable people would be those who have held positions of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments/points. It would add credibility if independent panel members had some standing in the local community. In this connection serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other school's, people with a legal background – perhaps retired members of the Police Force – might be considered suitable by schools. Schools will have their own views and may well have other suitable suggestions to make.'

The Appendix does not form part of the actual procedure.

In 2015-16 six formal complaints were brought to the Headmaster's attention.

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