POLICY TITLE	**Complaints Policy and Procedure for Parents**

Policy Area	General
Author	Head
Relevant Statutory Regulations	• ISSR Part 7 • National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (DfE, May 2026)
Senior Team Lead	Head
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Complaints Policy and Procedure for Parents

1 Aims

1.1 The aim of the policy is to ensure that complaints from parents of current registered pupils are handled in an effective manner, the right conclusions are reached via the appropriate stages, confidentiality is maintained and appropriate records are kept of correspondence, statements and records in accordance with this Procedure. Therefore, Roedean School ('the School') needs to know as soon as possible if parents have any cause for concern and/or complaint.

1.2 This policy is written with reference to the parents of current registered students and parents of past students if complaints were raised when the student was still enrolled.

2 Introduction

2.1 The School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint about any matter of School policy or administration, they can expect it to be dealt with by the School in accordance with this Procedure. The School does not distinguish between complaints and concerns; both are treated with equal importance to resolve the matters raised.

2.2 This Procedure also applies where parents request a 'Stage 3' review of the Head's decision to permanently exclude or require the removal of a pupil from the School (for information about permanent exclusion, please see the Exclusions Policy).

2.3 This Complaints Policy and Procedure is available to parents of pupils currently registered at the School. This Policy and Procedure does not apply to prospective parents. This policy does not apply to parents of past pupils *unless* the initial complaint was raised when the pupil was still a registered pupil of the School.

2.4 This policy is available on the School website and can be made available upon request to the Head's PA. A copy of the policy is available for inspection from the School Office during a working day. This policy can also be made available in larger print or more accessible format if required. If parents require assistance raising their concern or complaint at any stage in the procedure, for example because of a disability, they should contact the Head's PA who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.

2.5 In this policy, all references to 'working days' means Monday to Friday excluding weekends and bank holidays.

2.6 The Procedures set out below may be adapted as appropriate to meet the policy aims and circumstances of each case.

3 What constitutes a concern and/or complaint?

3.1 A concern and/or a complaint is defined as any expression of dissatisfaction and includes any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the School.

3.2 A complaint may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department in the School, about the boarding provision at the School or about an individual member of staff, or about Safeguarding at the School. Further guidance for parents is in the notes at the end of this policy.

4 Dealing with Complaints

4.1 All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and confidentially in accordance with this Policy and Procedure.

5 Recording of Complaints

5.1 A written record of all concerns and complaints will be made (whether raised at the informal or formal stage of this Procedure) and, where applicable, will contain the following information:

(a) Date when the concern/complaint was raised

(b) Name of parent

(c) Name of pupil (where applicable)

(d) Brief statement of issue, including whether the complaint relates to the School's boarding provision

(e) Staff member handling the issue

(f) For complaints made under the formal part of the procedure, whether they are resolved at that stage or proceeded to a panel hearing

(g) Brief statement of outcome and any actions to be taken by the School.

PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS MADE BY PARENTS

6 STAGE 1 - Informal Resolution

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

6.2 All members of staff are encouraged to deal with a parental concern or complaint, particularly where it lies within their area of responsibility. However, parents should normally be advised to contact their daughter's Head of Year, Tutor, Housemistress (if the complaint relates to boarding) or an appropriate Head of Department in the first instance. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway to the parents' satisfaction.

6.3 All complaints under Stage 1 will normally be acknowledged as soon as practicable and within five working days of receiving the concern or complaint (or as soon as reasonably practicable but normally within ten working days during school holidays).

6.4 If the member of staff is unable to resolve the matter alone or considers the nature of the complaint is such that it lies outside their remit, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Deputy Head Pastoral or Deputy Head Academic.

6.5 Parents making a complaint should be aware that members of staff receiving a complaint are expected to deal with the complaint in accordance with this Procedure, which may entail escalating the complaint to a more senior member of staff.

6.6 Complaints made directly to the Head will usually be referred to the appropriate member of staff unless the Head deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

6.7 The appropriate member of staff will make written record of all complaints under Stage 1 and the date on which they were received. The written record will be passed to the Head's PA to be kept as part of the School's complaints file.

6.8 The Head may be informed of any concerns/complaints of a serious nature. The Head may consult the Chair of Council, as appropriate, as to the management of such a concern/complaint.

6.9 If a complaint is made against the Head, the matter will be directed to the Chair of Council to manage in accordance with this Procedure.

6.10 It is hoped that the matter will be resolved at this stage. However, should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days of having received the complaint (or as soon as reasonably practicable but normally complaints made outside of term time will be considered as having been received on the first school day after the holiday period) or in the event that the member of staff and parent(s) fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents will be advised that they may proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

7 STAGE 2 - Formal Resolution

7.1 It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved at the Informal Stage. However, if a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head.

7.2 Parents should give details of their complaint, such as dates and times of events and any relevant documents so that the complaint can be properly investigated. Parents should also indicate what they envisage as the desired outcome.

7.3 Complaints will normally be acknowledged within five working days of receipt of the written complaint (or as soon as reasonably practicable but normally within 10 working days during school

holidays). The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

7.4 Where the complaint concerns the Head, the complaint will be directed to the Chair of Council, who will manage the complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure. Where the Chair has been previously involved at Stage 1, the Chair may elect another member of Council as an appointed representative to manage the complaint at Stage 2.

7.5 On receipt of the written complaint the following procedure will be followed:

(a) If the Head has not been involved at the Informal Stage, the Head or his appointed representative will, in most cases, speak to the parents within 3-5 working days of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter (or as soon as reasonably practicable but normally complaints made outside of term time will be considered as having been received on the first school day after the holiday period) and, after considering the complaint, attempt to reach a resolution.

(b) If the Head has been involved at the Informal Stage, the Chair of Council (or his appointed representative) will, in most cases, speak to the parents within 3-5 working days of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter (or as soon as reasonably practicable but normally complaints made outside of term time will be considered as having been received on the first school day after the holiday period) and, after considering the complaint, attempt to reach a resolution.

7.6 It may be necessary for the Head/Chair of Council (or their appointed representatives), in their discretion, to appoint a senior member of staff to carry out further investigations in relation to all or part of the complaint and, if this is the case, they will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

7.7 Once the Head/Chair of Council (or their appointed representative) is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing as soon as reasonably practicable but normally within 21 working days of receipt of the written complaint. The Head/Chair of Council (or their appointed representative) will also give reasons for their decision. Only in exceptional circumstances or with complex cases will this take longer and parents will be informed of the likely timeframe for a response.

7.8 If parents are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, they may proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure as set out below.

8 STAGE 3 - Appeal Panel Hearing

8.1 If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Clerk to Council who has been appointed by the Council to call hearings of the Appeal Panel. Parents should write to the Clerk to Council giving full details of the complaint including their grounds for appeal and the outcome they desire and enclosing all relevant supporting documents. Parents should note that the Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaints' procedure.

8.2 The Clerk to Council will acknowledge the complaint within four working days (or as soon as reasonably practicable but normally complaints made outside of term time will be considered as having been received on the first school day after the holiday period) and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 working days of receipt of the parents request for a panel hearing.

8.3 The matter will then be referred to the Appeal Panel for consideration.

8.4 The Panel shall be appointed by the Clerk to Council and 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. The Panel will normally consist of: a Council member, other than the Chair, who is the Convenor; one other member of the Council, excluding the Chair, and one other member who will be independent of the management and running of the School.

8.5 If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than two working days prior to the hearing.

8.6 The Chair of the Council will usually appoint one of the panel members to be the Chair of the Panel throughout the proceedings.

8.7 The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or friend. The hearing is an internal proceeding, not legal proceedings, and so legal representation will not normally be not appropriate. The parent should note that the Panel will wish to speak to him / her directly. If they are accompanied by a legally qualified person, that person will not be permitted to act as an advocate or to address the hearing unless invited to do so by the Chair of the Complaints Panel. The accompanying person must state their full name in the meeting.

8.8 The parents and the Head/Chair of Council/their appointed representative will be asked in advance of the hearing whether there are any additional papers they would like to have considered at the meeting, bearing in mind the need for all to keep the proceeding confidential. Any additional papers should be sent to the Head's PA at least five working days prior to the hearing and these papers will be copied and distributed before the meeting.

8.9 A sufficient amount of time will be committed to the meeting and, if possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

8.10 If the Hearing is online, each person must have their camera on.

8.11 Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how and by whom it should be carried out.

8.12 The Panel's task is to establish the facts surrounding the complaint(s) that remain in issue by considering the documents provided by both parties and any representations made by parents and the School, in order to review the process and the decision reached at Stage 2. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision on the balance of probabilities as to whether or not the complaint is substantiated (in whole or in part). If the complaint is not substantiated, the Panel will dismiss the complaint. If the complaint is substantiated (in whole or in part), the Panel will uphold the complaint (in whole or in part) and may make recommendations if they deem it appropriate.

8.13 Unless prior to the commencement of the hearing, a parent confirms that they are satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, the hearing will proceed notwithstanding that the parent may decide not to attend. In these circumstances, the complaints panel will consider the parent's complaint in his / her absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint.

8.14 The Panel will, within seven working days of the hearing, write and/or send by electronic mail to all participants informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, the members of Council and, where relevant, the person against whom the complaint has been made within two weeks. The Panel's findings and any recommendations will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Head and School Council.

8.15 The decision of the Panel will conclude the School's complaints procedure.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially in accordance with the School's Confidentiality Policy.

9 Records

9.1 The School keeps a written record of all complaints including the date, the circumstances of the complaint, whether these concerns were resolved at the preliminary stage, followed a formal procedure or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing and the action taken by the School as a result of the complaints. The School's written record of complaints will also identify those complaints relating to boarding provision, and the action taken by the School as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether or not they are upheld).

9.2 The records created in accordance with this policy may contain personal data. The School has a privacy policy which explains how it will use personal data about pupils and parents. The privacy policy is published on the School's website https://www.roedean.co.uk/privacy-policy

9.3 School staff will ensure that they follow the School's data protection policies and procedures when handling personal data created in connection with this policy. This includes the School's ICT Acceptable Use and Data Protection Policies.

9.4 All records of complaints will be retained by the School in accordance with the School's obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018.

9.5 All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where access is requested by the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

10 Guidance for Parents

10.1 The School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents, and takes seriously complaints and concerns they may raise.

10.2 A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction which needs a response.

10.3 The School wishes to ensure that:

(a) Parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;

(b) The School responds to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way *(note: the School will always aim to respond to parents within a shorter time period than those stated above);*

(c) Parents are reassured that the School listens to and takes complaints seriously;

(d) The School takes action where appropriate.

10.4 However, parents should be aware that in the event of a complaint being received during a school holiday period, it will be dealt with as soon as reasonably practicable and normally within the timescales set out throughout this policy. Where there are delays in collecting information, for example, caused by staff absence, parents will be informed of the reasons why and a likely timeframe for a response.

10.5 Parents should also be aware that the School may regard repeated attempts by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has already been considered at all three stages, as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy.

How should I complain?

Please follow the procedure set out above.

I don't want to complain as such, but there is something bothering me.

The School is here for you and your child, and we want to hear your views and your ideas. Please contact a member of staff as stipulated above.

I am not sure whether to complain or not.

If as parents you have concerns, you are entitled to raise them. If in doubt, you should contact the School in accordance with the above procedure to discuss your concerns. This will hopefully help you to decide if you wish to make a formal complaint.

What will happen next?

If parents have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with the above procedure.

What happens about confidentiality?

Your complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to those persons directly involved and those managing the complaint in accordance with this Procedure. In some cases (as referred to above), the Chair of Council may also need to be informed. Please see the School's Confidentiality Policy for more information.

Is there anyone I can talk to outside of Roedean?

If parents remain dissatisfied with the School's response and/or feel that intervention at a higher level is appropriate, they may lodge a complaint to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) as follows:

Independent Schools Inspectorate
CAP House
9-12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA
Tel: 020 7600 0100
Email: **complaints@isi.net**

ISI will usually expect the parents to have completed all stages of the School's Complaints procedure before contacting them.

11 Alternative Dispute Resolution

11.1 In the event that the School is unable to resolve a complaint with a parent and the internal procedure has been exhausted, the School will write to parents to let them know that they cannot settle the complaint but that parents may, if they wish, contact the Ombudsman Service as a means of alternative dispute resolution. The School is under no obligation to submit to alternative dispute resolution.

The number of formal complaints registered at the School during the academic year 2025/2026 was 2.