

# ROEDEAN

## COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

### Introduction

Roedean 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 not involving a decision to permanently exclude or remove a pupil, they can expect it to be dealt with by the School in accordance with this Procedure.

### What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. A complaint may be made if a parent thinks that the School has, for example,

- Done something wrong
- Failed to do something it should have done
- Acted unfairly

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

### Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively.

**If you are in any doubt about whether a complaint should be passed on, please do contact your daughter's Senior Housemistress or, if in Keswick, Housemistress.**

### Recording of Complaints

A written record of all concerns and complaints will be made and, where applicable, will contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Brief statement of issue
- Location of detailed file
- Staff member handling the issue
- Brief statement of outcome

## PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS MADE BY PARENTS STAGE 1 – STAGE 1 -

### Informal Resolution

#### Making a Complaint

1. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
2. All members of staff are encouraged to deal with a parental concern that lies within their area of responsibility. However, if parents have a complaint they should normally contact their daughter's Housemistress or an appropriate Head of Department in the first instance. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway to the parents' satisfaction.

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3. If the initial person contacted is unable to resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/ her to consult the most appropriate member of the School Leadership Team.
4. In the case of a complaint being made to a member of staff that lies outside the remit of the Housemistress or Head of Department, he/she will refer it to the appropriate person having informed the parents that he/she will be doing so.
5. Parents making a complaint should be aware that they cannot be guaranteed confidentiality as members of staff receiving a complaint are expected to notify the Headmistress prior to, wherever possible, taking action.
6. The Headmistress will inform, and discuss with, the Chairman of Council in cases when the complaint is of a serious nature.
7. If, however, the complaint is against the Headmistress, parents should make their complaint direct to the Chairman of Council.

## **Procedures for Handling Complaints**

1. Complaints will normally be acknowledged as soon as practicable and within at least five working days. Parents will be told what is happening to their concern or complaint and, if a more detailed response is needed, by what date it will be received.
2. Once a complaint has been lodged, it will be investigated and the relevant department or member of staff against which the complaint has been lodged given the opportunity to respond.
3. Once the complaint has been investigated, the action plan, which may include an apology, if one has been found to be appropriate, will be explained to the parents and implemented. The results should be reviewed after an appropriate interval.
4. Should the matter not be resolved totally, or with a satisfactory action plan in place within two working weeks, or in the event that the Housemistress, or another member of staff who is dealing with the complaint, fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

## **STAGE 2 - Formal Resolution**

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 Headmistress.
2. Complaints will normally be acknowledged within five working days of receipt of the written complaint.
3. On receipt of the written complaint the following procedure will be followed:
  - a. If she has not been involved at the Informal Stage, the Headmistress or her appointed representative will, in most cases, speak to the parents within 3-5

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working days of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter and, after considering the complaint, attempt to reach a resolution.

- b. If the Headmistress has been involved at the Informal Stage, the procedure will be that she refers the matter to the Chairman of Council (and informs the parents that this stage has been reached), in which case the Chairman of Council or his/ her appointed representative will, in most cases, speak to the parents within 3-5 working days of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter and, after considering the complaint, attempt to reach a resolution.
  - c. If the complaint seems to the parents to have been mishandled by the Headmistress, the parents will be able to write directly to the Chairman of Council, who will follow the same steps set out at 3(b) above.
4. It may be necessary for the Headmistress/Chairman of Council (or their representatives) to carry out further investigations and, if this is the case she/he will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
  5. Once the Headmistress/Chairman of Council 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. The Headmistress/ Chairman of Council will also give reasons for his/her decision.
  6. If the complaint is against the Headmistress, the Chairman of Council will call for a full report from the Headmistress, and for all relevant documents. On the basis of these, the Chairman may decide to call a briefing from individual members of staff and will, in most cases, speak to the parents to discuss the matter.
  7. Once the Chairman of Council 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, with reasons given for his/her decision.
  8. If, following receipt of the Headmistress's or the Chairman's decision, the parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they may request a meeting with the Headmistress or the Chairman at a mutually convenient time.
  9. If, after the meeting with the Headmistress or Chairman of Council, parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

## **STAGE 3 - Appeal Panel Hearing**

1. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to an appropriate member of the School's Council, who has been appointed by the Council to call hearings of the Appeal Panel. The same Council member will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within two working weeks.
2. The matter will then be referred to the Appeal Panel for consideration. The Panel will normally consist of: a Council member, other than the Chairman, who is the Convenor; and two other members of the Council, excluding the Chairman, all of whom will not have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and

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one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the School. Each of the Panel members will be appointed by the School's Council.

3. The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or friend. Legal representation is not appropriate.
4. The parents and the Headmistress/ Chairman of Council will be asked in advance of the meeting whether there are any papers they would like to have considered at the meeting, bearing in mind the need for all to keep the proceeding confidential. The papers will be copied and distributed before the meeting.
5. 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.
6. 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 five working days of the Hearing.
7. The Panel will write to the parents 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 Headmistress, the members of Council and, where relevant, the person against whom the complaint has been made.
8. The decision of the Panel will be final.

**Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.**

**Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.**

## **GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS**

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

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

We wish to ensure that:

- Parents wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
- We respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way;
- Parents are reassured that we listen to and take complaints seriously;
- We take action where appropriate.

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## **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 the Headmistress and those directly involved. In some cases (as referred to above), the Chairman of Council may also need to be informed. It is the School's policy that complaints made by parents should not adversely affect on their children.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the School aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would only be likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk or it became necessary to refer matters to the police, in which case you would be fully informed.

While information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, we would point out that anonymous complaints may not be pursued.

Action which needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures as a result of complaints would be handled confidentially within the school.

## **Is there anyone I can talk to outside of Roedean?**

If you have a complaint or concern which you feel cannot be addressed directly with the School you can contact OfSTED directly on **08456 014772** and they will advise you how to proceed.

**The School recognizes and acknowledges your entitlement to complain and we hope to work with you in the best interests of the children and young people in our care.**