

REDHILL

PREP SCHOOL & MONTESSORI NURSERY

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction

This policy is in place as per the requirements of the *Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024* for the school to have a procedure for the handling of complaints. This policy is available on our website or printed copy from the office upon request. The policy and procedure can be used by parents/guardians of existing pupils only, i.e. those currently enrolled at the school and under a current admissions' contract).

We believe that Redhill provides an excellent education and that the Headteacher and School personnel work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents and others. We welcome constructive feedback warmly. Complaints are kept to a minimum by forging strong positive relations with everyone connected with the School and by having in place very good lines of communication, strengthened by operating an effective 'Open Door Policy'. This enables us to deal with minor issues immediately and to ensure more serious matters are dealt with promptly and professionally.

We are committed to ensuring that any concerns or complaints are dealt with promptly, fairly and are resolved as quickly as possible. Our aim is always to handle complaints in a constructive way, seeking to put right anything that may have gone wrong. Where necessary, we will also review our systems and procedures considering the matter raised.

We understand that concerns which are not addressed quickly and fairly can lead to frustration or resentment. It is therefore important that parents and pupils let us know straight away if they are dissatisfied. Raising a complaint will never disadvantage a pupil or affect the opportunities available to them at Redhill Prep. This policy applies to complaints from parents of current pupils, and to parents of former pupils provided the complaint was first raised while their child was still enrolled at the school.

This policy does not cover matters relating to suspension or the withdrawal of a school place due to non-payment or late payment of fees or actions taken in relation to recovering fees. These matters are set out in the school's Admissions Terms and Conditions, agreed to on enrolment.

We aim to resolve complaints within clear and reasonable timescales, outlined in the sections that follow. For the purposes of this policy, "working days" are defined as Monday to Friday during term time, when the school is open. Term dates are published on our school website. Please note that during school holidays, staff availability is more limited and this may affect response times. In such cases, timescales should be considered advisory, and any proceedings may be paused until they can be properly and fairly addressed.

Aims

- To achieve a fair, effective and timely resolution of parental concerns about the education and/or welfare of individual children in the care of the School.
- To ensure all concerns and complaints will be taken seriously and treated confidentially, and that no pupil will ever be penalised for any complaint raised by a parent.
- To create a strong working 'Open Door Policy' to alleviate concerns escalating to complaints by resolving minor issues promptly

- To encourage Parents to speak up on all issues as they arise
- To deal with any complaint against Redhill or any individual connected with it by following the correct procedures.
- All correspondence and statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential

Responsibility for the Policy and Procedure

The Proprietor has:

- A duty to have in place a complaint procedure.
- Delegated powers and responsibilities to the Headteacher to ensure all School personnel and visitors to the School are aware of and comply with this policy.
- Responsibility for ensuring that the School complies with all equality's legislation.
- Responsibility for ensuring this policy and all policies are maintained and updated regularly.
- Responsibility for ensuring all policies are made available to parents.
- Responsibility for the effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this policy.
- Procedures should be as speedy as possible - consistent and fair to all concerned.

The Headteacher will:

- Ensure all School personnel, pupils and parents are aware of and comply with this policy.
- Provide guidance, support and training to all staff.
- Monitor the effectiveness of this policy.
- Annually report to the Proprietor on the success and development of this policy.

Complaint Procedure

General

The aim of the Procedure is to produce a resolution that everyone involved can accept. It should be used as a mechanism for resolving issues in good faith and in a courteous manner.

It should not be used for:

- Complaints related to suspensions or exclusions.
- Allegations concerning child protection, which will be managed according to the School's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- Complaints directed against the decisions made by an external agency or third party.
- Complaints intended to delay or evade payment of any amount (including fees or fees in lieu) owed under the School's Admissions Contract, agreed upon by parents during their child's enrolment (the "Admissions Contract").
- Concerns raised by pupils, which should first be addressed with their class teacher or Headteacher. If a pupil is dissatisfied with the outcome, their parent(s) can then submit a complaint following this Procedure.
- Complaints made in an abusive or threatening manner, or those deemed vexatious.
- Attempts to re-open a complaint regarding matters that have already gone through the established process outlined in this Procedure.
- Complaints about services offered by other providers utilising the School's premises or facilities, which should follow the complaints procedure of the external provider.

Parents should also be aware that:

- If multiple complaints from parents at the School are received regarding the same issue, the School may opt to send a standardised response to all complaints or publish a consolidated response on its website.
- Requests for financial awards, including claims for compensation, damages, or fee refunds, fall outside the boundaries of this Procedure.

- If a complaint includes an allegation against a staff member or another student, parents will not have access to information regarding any sanctions imposed on the staff member or student involved.
- When a complaint questions the judgment of a staff member, the individual reviewing that complaint will assess whether the staff member's judgment was applied fairly and reasonably, in accordance with the School's policies and procedures. It is important to note that there may be multiple fair and reasonable responses to a situation, and a decision-maker will typically not override the original decision made by the staff member.
- If a complaint is raised on behalf of a parent through an unfamiliar communication method (such as an unrecognised email address), the School may reach out to the appropriate parent using known contact information to verify the legitimacy of the complaint.

Who may complain?

This Procedure is applicable only to parents of pupils who are currently on the School's roll (and not to parents of prospective pupils). The only exception to this is that complaints made by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Procedure if the complaint was initially raised when the relevant pupil was still registered as a pupil at the School.

The expression "parent" is used for all those having parental responsibility for a child. There is no formal procedure governing the making of a complaint to the School by any person who is not a parent. Any non-parent who wishes to make a complaint should do so by putting it in writing to the Headteacher, who will consider how best to respond.

Timeframes

An effective and fair resolution of concerns typically requires that they are reported to the School promptly. While we do not specify what "promptly" means, we recommend that this generally occurs within three months of the relevant incident(s) being raised.

Complaints may still be considered after this period if the School's Proprietor, the Headteacher or the Complaints Panel (as applicable) determines that the delay has not hindered a fair resolution.

Resolving a complaint may take longer when statutory agencies are involved (such as the Local Authority or the Police), during significant disruptions to School operations, or due to unavoidable staff absences.

Consequently, the timeframes outlined in this procedure may vary based on individual circumstances. Any exceptions will be rare, and parents will be informed if changes to the timeframe are necessary. For the purpose of this Procedure, a "school day" refers to any day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, or Bank Holiday, and falls within the published terms on our website. When calculating School days, the day of receipt and the day of response will not be included.

The School follows a three-stage process for dealing with complaints, which operates as follows:

Stage 1- The First Contact

There needs to be clarity as to the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at an early stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. It may be unclear at first whether a parent is asking a question or expressing an opinion rather than making a complaint. A parent may want or be offered a preliminary discussion about an issue to help decide whether he or she wishes to take it further.

There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straight away through the Class Teacher, Headteacher, or administrative staff, depending on who is approached first. Parents must feel able to raise concerns with members of staff without any formality, either in person, over the telephone or in writing.

If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's class teacher or Deputy Head (Juniors) / Head of Foundation Phase (FP), as appropriate. In many cases the matter will be resolved straight away to the parent's satisfaction. If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult with other staff within the School. The teacher will acknowledge the complaint to the parent(s) and then make a written record of the complaint, the date on which it was received, and any action taken by the School as a result.

Action taken by the School in response to a complaint at this stage may include reassurance and advice, reference to relevant policies and procedures, an apology for an oversight or mistake and/or a change in practice. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 School days of receipt of the complaint then the parent(s) will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2 – Referral to the Headteacher

If a complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis at Stage 1, then the parent(s) should put their complaint in writing (by email is fine) to the Headteacher and include in their letter, what action they would like the School to take. In some cases, the Headteacher may already have been involved in looking at the matter; in other cases, it may be the Headteacher's first involvement.

The Head teacher will acknowledge the complaint in writing, within five School days of receiving a written complaint *to see* if a resolution can be reached at this stage by means of an informal conversation or meeting. If resolution cannot be reached in this way, the Headteacher will confirm that the matter will be treated as a formal complaint and proceed to investigate it. The Headteacher should ordinarily provide a written response to the parent(s) within 15 School days of the parent's(s') correspondence.

If necessary, the Headteacher will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres on a pupil, the pupil should also be interviewed (if age appropriate). Wherever possible pupils can have support from a parent or identified member of staff. If the complaint is made against a member of staff they must have the opportunity to present their case.

Once all the relevant facts have been established as far as possible, a decision will be reached and communicated by the Headteacher through a written response to the complainant, including a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this will include what action the School will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant will be advised that should they wish to take the complaint further they should notify the Proprietor. The Headteacher will keep written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.

If the parent(s) are still dissatisfied with the resolution, they may advance to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

If the complaint is against the Headteacher, or if either has been closely involved at Stage 1, the Proprietor will carry out all the Stage 2 procedures.

Stage 3 – Review by Panel

If the parent(s) are dissatisfied with a Stage 2 response and wish to have their complaint considered at a complaints panel hearing they should write, within 14 days of the Stage 2 response, to the Proprietor by email at meryl@redhillprepSchool.co.uk. They should set out the grounds for appealing the decision at Stage 2 and the action that the parent(s) would like the complaints panel (the "Panel") to take. The Panel is not obliged to consider any new complaints that have not been previously raised.

If a request for a Panel is made without the matter having previously been investigated by the School, then the matter will be referred for investigation at Stage 2 as appropriate.

The Proprietor will convene the Panel. 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 Redhill and they shall normally include people who have had no previous involvement with the matter complained of. The Proprietor will appoint one of the Panel members to act as the chair of the Panel (the "Panel Chair"). The Panel Chair may or may not also be the Proprietor.

The Proprietor will consider whether any perspective or expertise will be helpful amongst Panel members and will, to the extent practically possible, take this into account when appointing Panel members. If the parent(s) feel that a particular perspective or expertise would be beneficial, they should raise this in their initial request for a panel hearing.

A hearing will be scheduled to take place as soon as practical and normally within 25 School days of receipt of the parent's(s') letter. If, despite the best efforts of the School, a hearing cannot be arranged within this period, the Chair of the Panel will write to the parent(s) before the expiry of the 25-School day period setting out the likely timeframe for the hearing.

The hearing will normally be held at the School Office, but in cases where it is not reasonable to do so, efforts will be made to hold the hearing at premises near the School. Alternatively, the Panel Chair will consider whether it may be appropriate for the hearing to be held remotely by video conference.

The parent(s) should supply copies of their previous written complaints to the Headteacher at Stage 2 and any other documentation they may wish to rely on to the Chair for circulation to all parties not more than 7 days after the date of notification of the hearing. Documentation must be relevant to those matters set out in the complaint.

The Panel will request copies of statements and supporting/background documentation from the School, and this will be provided to parent(s) not less than 10 School days before the hearing. 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 the Panel not less than 5 School days prior to the hearing, for circulation to all parties.

It is important that this review is not only independent and impartial but that it is seen to be so. The Panel will appoint a Clerk to minute the meeting. The Panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint. Then it will decide upon the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint and where appropriate, suggest recommended changes to the School's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

The aim of the meeting will be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the School and complainant. However, it must be recognised that sometimes it may only be possible to establish facts and make recommendations that will satisfy the complainant that their complaint has at least been taken seriously. All findings will be concluded in writing for all parties and the decision of the Panel is final.

Conduct of the Panel

The Panel's responsibility is to review the evidence presented and determine whether to fully or partially uphold the parent's grounds for appeal. Additionally, it may offer recommendations to the School, such as issuing an apology or implementing new policies or procedures.

The Panel does not possess the authority to waive any fees or payments due under the Admissions Contract, to grant any monetary awards or compensations, or to impose sanctions on students or staff.

If the parent(s) raise matters during the hearing that were not mentioned when the hearing was initially requested, the Panel may choose not to consider those issues.

All participants in the hearing are expected to behave courteously and respectfully. If someone acts inappropriately after receiving a warning from the Panel Chair, the hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the Chair's discretion.

If the parent(s) decide to withdraw their request for a panel hearing after it has been initiated, the hearing will generally continue in their absence to allow the Panel to review the case and provide findings on the matter.

The parent(s) may bring one additional person aged over 18 to the hearing, who may be a relative, companion, or friend. Their name and role must be communicated to the Clerk at least five School days prior to the hearing. This companion must agree to uphold the confidentiality of the process.

Legal representation, whether formal or informal, is typically not allowed and will only be permitted by the Panel Chair under exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher may be accompanied by the chair or another suitable member of the School Leadership Team, who will serve as a companion and will not have a decision-making role during the panel hearing.

After the hearing concludes and all relevant facts have been considered, the Panel will make a decision and may issue recommendations. The Panel will notify the parent(s) of its decision and reasoning within ten School days. The findings and recommendations, if any, will also be sent in writing to the Headteacher and, if applicable, to the individual(s) against whom the complaint was lodged. Decisions will be made by majority vote using the civil standard of proof, i.e. on the balance of probabilities.

No recordings of the panel hearing are allowed. The Clerk or a colleague will take notes solely for the benefit of the Panel, aiding in the preparation of the outcome letter. These notes will be securely stored and destroyed after the Panel's outcome letter is delivered.

Complainants not satisfied, may feel they want to take the matter further by contacting the Welsh Government or Estyn.

Contact Details:

Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ or by telephone: 030 0060 4400 or via customerhelp@gov.wales

Estyn, Anchor Court, Keen Road, Cardiff, CF24 5JW or by telephone: 029 2044 6446 or via enquiries@estyn.gov.wales Anchor Court, Keen Road, Cardiff, S. Glam, CF24 5JW

Equality Impact

Under the Equality Act 2010 we have a duty not to discriminate against people based on their age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil and promotes equality.

Monitoring and Review

- The Headteacher logs all complaints received by the School any complaints received whilst recording how they were resolved.
- A continuous process of self-evaluation by the Head teacher/Proprietor will monitor the process of dealing with complaints.

- The Proprietor will consider any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process and make any modifications necessary to this policy.

Record-Keeping

A comprehensive written record of all complaints will be maintained at every stage of this Procedure. This record may encompass notes, correspondence, interviews, and statements, and will document whether individual complaints were resolved or escalated to the next stage. It will also detail any actions taken by the School in response to a complaint, regardless of the outcome.

Records will be managed in accordance with the School's policies on record retention and destruction and following data protection principles. Individual complaint details will be retained only for as long as reasonably necessary. Complaints involving safeguarding issues will be held in line with current government guidance.

In handling complaints, the School and the GDST may process various personal data, including special category personal data. This data will be handled in accordance with the GDST's privacy notice, which can be found at: <https://www.gdst.net/privacy-notice/>. Records pertaining to individual complaints will remain confidential, except when access is requested by the National Assembly or a body conducting an inspection under s163 of the Education Act 2002, or as required by other legal obligations. The record of complaints will be available to Estyn upon request.

The School will also provide, upon request, details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints formally registered during the previous School year to any pupil, parent of a pupil or prospective pupil, the Chief Inspector (Estyn), the National Assembly, or a body authorised under s163(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002. Any independent panel member attending a Stage 3 panel hearing will be asked to confirm their duty to keep confidential any information they receive during the hearing and to dispose of that information once it is no longer needed.

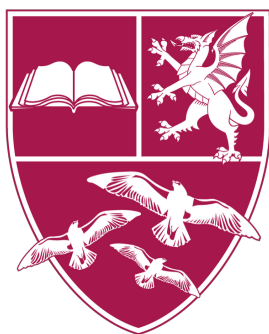
Date reviewed: September 2025

Date for next review: September 2026

Person responsible for this policy: Headteacher

Proprietor Signature: Meryl Lovegrove

Appendix 1



REDHILL

PREP SCHOOL & MONTESSORI NURSERY

Complaints Form

Please complete and return to Head teacher
Your Name
Pupil's/child's Name
Your relationship to the Pupil/child
Address
Daytime Tel Number
Evening Tel Number
Please give details of your complaint here (please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)
What actions, if any have you taken to try and resolve your complaint (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem?
Are you attaching any paperwork?
Signature
Date
<i>For Office Use only</i>
<i>Date acknowledgement sent By Whom Complaint referred to: Date:</i>