

REDHILL

PREP SCHOOL & MONTESSORI NURSERY

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction

This policy is in place in accordance with the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024, which require the School to have and effectively implement a written procedure for handling complaints. The procedure is published on the School's website and a paper copy is available free of charge from the School Office on request.

At Redhill, we work hard to provide an excellent education and to build positive, trusting relationships with pupils, parents and everyone connected with the School. We welcome constructive feedback and operate an effective open door policy, supported by clear and accessible lines of communication.

Our aim is always to resolve concerns at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be addressed quickly and informally through open discussion with the appropriate member of staff, without the need for a formal complaint. We believe that taking concerns seriously, listening carefully and responding promptly helps to prevent minor issues from escalating and enables more serious matters to be dealt with fairly, professionally and constructively.

Where a concern does develop into a complaint, we are committed to ensuring that it is dealt with promptly, fairly and impartially. Our aim is to reach an appropriate resolution wherever possible, to put right anything that may have gone wrong and, where necessary, to review and improve our systems, policies or practice considering the matters raised.

We recognise that concerns which are not addressed promptly and fairly can lead to frustration or loss of confidence. It is therefore important that pupils, parents and carers feel able to raise concerns when they arise.

This procedure may be used by the parents or carers of current pupils. Parents or carers of former pupils may continue to use the procedure where the complaint was first raised while the pupil was enrolled at the School.

The procedure is also made available to parents or carers of prospective pupils in accordance with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

Redhill recognises that pupils themselves have the right to raise concerns and make complaints. As a primary school, we understand that the level of support a pupil may need will vary according to their age, understanding and individual needs. The School will therefore ensure that the complaints process is accessible and age-appropriate and that pupils are given appropriate support to express and pursue a concern or complaint where this is required.

Raising a concern or complaint in good faith will never disadvantage a pupil, affect the education or opportunities available to them at Redhill, or result in retaliation or victimisation.

This procedure does not cover matters relating to suspension or the withdrawal of a School place due to non-payment or late payment of fees, or action taken by the School to recover unpaid fees. These matters are governed by the School's Admissions Terms and Conditions, agreed upon enrolment. Other matters which are subject to separate statutory or School procedures, including safeguarding concerns, are addressed later in this policy.

For the purposes of this procedure, a School Day means Monday to Friday during the School's published term dates when the School is open to pupils, excluding Bank Holidays.

The School will make every reasonable effort to meet the timescales set out in this procedure. Where exceptional circumstances make this impossible, including where a complaint is received close to or during a School holiday, the complainant will be informed promptly of the reason for the delay and given a revised date by which the relevant stage will be completed.

Different statutory timescales may apply to matters governed by separate legislation, including data-protection complaints.

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.
- Where a complaint raises a safeguarding or child-protection concern, the School's Safeguarding Policy and the Wales Safeguarding Procedures will take precedence. The matter will be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Person and, where required, to the appropriate statutory agencies. This does not prevent a complainant subsequently raising concerns about the School's handling of a safeguarding matter through this Complaints Procedure where it is appropriate to do so and where consideration of the complaint would not prejudice an ongoing safeguarding, police or other statutory process.
- 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 may be used by:

- a pupil currently registered at the School; or
- a parent or carer of a pupil currently registered at the School.
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A parent or carer of a former pupil may continue a complaint under this procedure where that complaint was first raised while the child was registered at the School.

For the purposes of this procedure, the term “complainant” means a pupil, parent or carer who is pursuing a complaint.

The School will also consider concerns raised by other individuals where appropriate, although such concerns do not necessarily fall within the statutory complaints procedure.

A prospective parent or carer may obtain a copy of this procedure but complaints relating solely to admissions or a prospective pupil will ordinarily be considered under the School's admissions arrangements rather than this procedure.

Complaints made by pupils

Redhill recognises the right of all pupils, including primary-aged pupils, to raise concerns and make complaints. A pupil does not need a parent or carer to make a complaint on their behalf and a parent's agreement is not required before a pupil's complaint can be considered. The School will take account of the pupil's age, understanding, communication needs and any additional learning needs when supporting them through the complaints process.

A pupil may raise an informal concern with any adult in School whom they trust. This may include their Class Teacher, another teacher, a member of the Senior Leadership Team, the Headteacher or another trusted member of staff.

Where a pupil wishes to make a formal complaint but is unable, because of their age, ability or communication needs, to put the complaint into writing themselves, an appropriate adult may help them to do so. The adult should record the complaint as accurately as possible using the pupil's own words where appropriate. The complaint should then be read or explained back to the pupil in an age-appropriate way so that, as far as reasonably possible, the pupil can confirm that it accurately reflects the concern they wish to raise.

The fact that an adult assists a pupil to record their complaint does not make it the adult's complaint. The pupil remains the complainant. A pupil may be supported by a parent, carer, trusted adult or other appropriate person throughout the process.

Where a primary-aged pupil makes a formal complaint, the School will normally inform their parent or carer and seek to involve them in supporting the child. However, this will not be done automatically where there is a safeguarding, welfare or other compelling reason why doing so would be inappropriate. The School will take account of the child's age, understanding, wishes and best interests when making this decision.

No pupil will be disadvantaged, disciplined or treated adversely because they have raised a concern or made a complaint in good faith.

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 should be clarity between a concern and a formal complaint. Taking concerns seriously at an early stage can prevent matters escalating and the School hopes that most concerns can be resolved quickly and informally. A concern may initially be raised in person, by telephone, by email or in writing. A pupil may also raise a concern verbally with any trusted member of staff.

Parents and carers will normally be encouraged to approach their child's Class Teacher, Deputy Head, Head of Foundation Phase or another appropriate member of staff in the first instance.

Where a pupil raises the concern, the member of staff should listen carefully, establish what the pupil would like to happen and provide age-appropriate reassurance and support. Where the matter raises a safeguarding concern, safeguarding procedures must be followed immediately.

The member of staff dealing with the concern will make an appropriate written record of the concern, the date it was received and any action taken.

Action at this stage may include clarification or explanation, reassurance and advice, reference to relevant policies and procedures, an apology where something has gone wrong or appropriate changes to practice.

The School will aim to resolve a Stage 1 concern within 10 School Days. Where the complainant remains dissatisfied, or where they wish to make a formal complaint without first pursuing informal resolution, they may proceed to Stage 2.

Stage 2 – Referral to the Headteacher

A complainant who remains dissatisfied following Stage 1, or who wishes to pursue a formal complaint, may make a formal written complaint to the Headteacher.

The complaint should explain, as clearly as possible:

- what has happened;
- why the complainant is dissatisfied; and
- what outcome or action they would like the School to consider.

Where the complainant is a pupil who cannot reasonably put their complaint into writing without assistance, an appropriate member of staff or another trusted adult may record it for them in accordance with the section Complaints made by pupils above.

The Headteacher will acknowledge receipt of the formal complaint within five School Days.

The Headteacher may first consider whether the matter can be resolved through discussion or a meeting. Where it cannot, the Headteacher will investigate the formal complaint.

The investigation may include reviewing relevant records, interviewing relevant staff or witnesses and, where appropriate, speaking with pupils involved. Any discussion with a pupil will be conducted in an age-appropriate and supportive manner. A pupil may be accompanied by a parent, carer or another appropriate trusted adult.

Any person complained about will be given a fair opportunity to respond to the allegations relevant to them.

The Headteacher will ordinarily provide a written response within 15 School Days of receiving the formal complaint. The response will set out the decision, the reasons for it and, where appropriate, any action the School proposes to take.

Where the complainant is a young pupil, the outcome will also be explained to them in language appropriate to their age and understanding.

The complainant will be advised of their right to proceed to Stage 3 if they remain dissatisfied.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or the Headteacher has been directly involved in the matters complained about to an extent that would compromise impartiality, the Proprietor will carry out Stage 2.

If the complaint is about the Proprietor, or the Proprietor is otherwise unable to deal with it impartially, Stage 2 will be undertaken by a suitably independent person who has had no previous involvement in the matters complained about.

Stage 3 – Review by Panel

Where a complainant remains dissatisfied following the Stage 2 response, they may request that their complaint is considered by a Complaints Panel.

The request should normally be made within 14 days of receiving the Stage 2 response and should explain the respects in which the complainant remains dissatisfied.

A pupil may make this request personally. Where a pupil requires assistance because of their age, ability or communication needs, an appropriate adult may help them put the request into writing.

The Proprietor will convene the Panel. The Panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. At least one member of the Panel will be independent of the management and running of Redhill. 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.

A person who investigated or determined the complaint at Stage 2, or who is the subject of the complaint, will not sit on the Panel.

The Proprietor will not sit on or chair the Panel where they have dealt with the complaint at an earlier stage, are the subject of the complaint or have otherwise been directly involved in the matters complained about.

The hearing will be arranged as soon as reasonably practicable and normally within 25 School Days of receipt of the request for a panel hearing. If this is not possible, the complainant will be informed of the reason and given a revised timescale. 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.

Attendance at the Panel

The complainant has the right to attend the Panel hearing and may be accompanied by one other person over the age of 18, such as a relative, friend, supporter, advocate or other appropriate companion. The name and role of the person accompanying the complainant must normally be provided to the Clerk at least five School Days before the hearing. Any companion must respect the confidentiality of the process.

Where the complainant is a pupil, the School will make arrangements appropriate to the pupil's age, understanding and individual needs. The pupil may be accompanied by a parent, carer, trusted adult, advocate or other appropriate person and will not be required to address or present their complaint to the Panel alone.

Where appropriate, the Panel Chair may agree arrangements that enable a pupil to give their views in a less formal manner, or to attend only part of the hearing, provided that the procedure remains fair to all parties.

The School's complaints procedure is intended to be an internal, accessible and non-adversarial process. Formal legal representation is therefore not normally permitted or considered necessary at a Panel hearing.

A legally qualified person may attend as the complainant's companion. However, unless the Panel Chair agrees otherwise in exceptional circumstances, they will attend in the capacity of a companion rather than as a legal representative and will not conduct the hearing, question witnesses or make legal submissions on the complainant's behalf.

If a complainant wishes to be accompanied by a legally qualified person, they must inform the Clerk in advance. The Panel Chair may permit different arrangements where this is considered necessary to ensure fairness, make a reasonable adjustment or reflect the particular complexity or circumstances of the complaint.

The Headteacher may also be accompanied by the Chair or another suitable member of the School Leadership Team. That person will attend solely as a companion and will have no decision-making role in the Panel's consideration of the complaint.

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.

Panel Decision

After considering the complaint and the available evidence, the Panel will determine whether the complaint is upheld in whole, upheld in part or not upheld. Decisions will be made by majority vote using the civil standard of proof, i.e. on the balance of probabilities.

The Panel may make findings and recommendations, including recommendations for changes to School policies, procedures or practice.

The Panel's findings and recommendations will be provided in writing to:

- the complainant;
- the Proprietor;
- the Headteacher; and
- where relevant, the person complained about.

The outcome will normally be issued within 10 School Days of the hearing.

Where the complainant is a pupil, the School will also ensure that the outcome is explained to them in a way appropriate to their age and understanding.

The Panel's determination concludes the School's internal complaints procedure.

Records and recording of the Panel Hearing

An official written record of the Panel hearing will be made by the Clerk. Audio or video recording of a hearing will not normally be permitted. Notes, correspondence, evidence, findings and recommendations relating to the complaint will be retained in accordance with the School's Records Retention Policy. They will not be routinely destroyed immediately following issue of the outcome letter.

External bodies

The Welsh Government is the registration authority for independent schools in Wales. A person who believes that the School may not be meeting the Independent School Standards may bring relevant information to the attention of the Welsh Government's Independent Schools Team.

Independent Schools Team

Welsh Government

Email: IndependentSchools@gov.wales

The Welsh Government is not an additional stage of Redhill's internal complaints procedure and does not ordinarily act as an appeal body simply to reconsider the merits of an individual complaint.

Estyn is His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. Estyn may receive information relevant to its inspection functions but does not investigate individual complaints about schools as an alternative complaints appeal process.

Estyn

Anchor Court

Keen Road

Cardiff
CF24 5JW
Telephone: 029 2044 6446
Email: enquiries@estyn.gov.wales

Nothing in this Complaints Procedure removes any statutory right a complainant may have to approach another regulator, statutory body, tribunal or court where that body has jurisdiction.

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. Reasonable adjustments will be made where required to ensure that a disabled pupil or complainant is not placed at a substantial disadvantage when accessing or participating in the complaints process.

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

The School will maintain a written record of all complaints made under this procedure.

The record will include:

- the nature of the complaint;
- whether it was resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a Panel hearing;
- whether the complaint was upheld in whole or in part;
- the outcome of the complaint; and
- any action taken by the School as a result.

Correspondence, statements and other records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where disclosure is required or permitted by law, including where access is requested by the Welsh Ministers or by a body conducting an inspection under section 163 of the Education Act 2002.

Complaint information will be processed in accordance with UK data-protection legislation, the School's Privacy Notice and its Records Retention Policy.

Safeguarding records associated with a complaint will be retained and managed in accordance with the School's safeguarding procedures and applicable record-retention requirements.

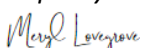
The School will make available details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding School year. This information will also be provided on request to the Chief Inspector, the Welsh Ministers or a body approved under section 163(1)(b) 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.

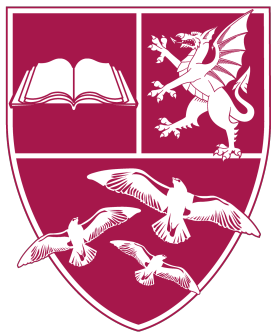
Date reviewed: September 2026

Date for next review: September 2027

Person responsible for this policy: Headteacher

Proprietor Signature: 

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>