Complaints Policy including EYFS

(PG 10, ISI A14 B16 E7, WS)

The School aims to ensure that the whole community feels happy and secure when at school. There is an awareness, however, that things can go wrong and therefore welcomes suggestions and comments from parents, staff and pupils and takes seriously any complaints and concerns that may arise. Many concerns that pupils and parents have do not necessarily call for complaint, but should still be brought to the school's attention. Help can only be given about issues that are known. This policy is made available to the parents of pupils and of prospective pupils through the school website or a hard copy if requested. It is applicable to all pupils, staff and parents in the school including those in the EYFS and Boarding pupils.

Concern - Defined

A concern is likely to require discussion, perhaps involving a teacher, pupil and parent, and it is hoped that it can be resolved quickly by such a discussion and appropriate action. A concern is dealt with through the normal daily structures of the School. If this does not resolve the concern then it could become a complaint.

Complaint - Defined

A complaint will be treated as an expression of genuine dissatisfaction, which needs a response and is likely to arise when there are issues related to physical or emotional well-being, or over security, or when the School's stated aims or values are being ignored.

A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint.

Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school is now a complaint.

Complaints levelled at the Headmaster are to be made in writing to the CEO of Radley Schools Group via the School Office. The CEO will utilise the panel process described below and liaise with the Deputy Headmaster where necessary.

The Headmaster will be informed of all complaints and their outcome.

A written record is kept of all formal complaints, and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stages or proceed to the Governing Board.

Application: This policy applies to any expression of dissatisfaction however made about actions taken, or a lack of action, by the School where a parent seeks action by the School.

This policy applies to complaints from a parent or parents of current pupils and to a parent or parents of former pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was registered at the School. The School will not normally investigate anonymous complaints.

A parent, in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

If appropriate, the School will acknowledge that a complaint is upheld, wholly or in part. In addition, it may offer:

- An explanation;
- An admission that it could have been handled differently or better;
- An assurance that the School will try to ensure that the event complained of will not happen again and an explanation of the steps taken in this respect;
- An undertaking to review policies and/or procedures;
- An apology.

Requests for financial awards, such as claims for compensation, damages or fee refunds, are beyond the scope of the School's complaints procedures. All parents should be aware that regardless of the nature of a complaint and whether or not it is upheld, parents are not entitled to details of any related sanctions imposed on staff, pupils or parents for reasons of data protection and confidentiality.

Timescales: Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. When we refer to Working Days, we mean Monday to Friday, when the School is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website. In the event that the application of this definition is likely to introduce excessive delays, due to intervening School holidays, the School's approach is to take sensible and reasonable steps so as to minimise any hardship or unfairness arising from such delays.

- It is expected that the management of every complaint will progress in a timely manner.
- The School aims to resolve all complaints efficiently and promptly and parents are encouraged to bring any matter causing concern to the School's attention as soon as possible.
- Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay to the timescales for a stage of the complaints procedure, the School will notify the parents and inform them of the new timescales as soon as possible.

Whenever possible, a complaint should be raised within three months of the incident or where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. The School will however consider complaints made outside of this time-frame if exceptional circumstances apply. A complaint raised outside this timescale should therefore include details of the issues which led to the delay.

Complaints which are raised in the School holidays will usually be deemed to have been received on the first working day after receipt.

Complaints Procedure

The school will endeavour to deal with complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way, and where appropriate, will take action.

It is the school's policy that complaints should not ever rebound on children or the person making the complaint.

Stage 1 – Informal

1. Wherever possible it is best to raise an issue face to face with the person most closely concerned with the matter. Please make an appointment with the person concerned to allow for a suitable period of time to be available to discuss the issues fully. This normally results in the matter being resolved immediately and often to your satisfaction.

2. You may ask for a meeting with a senior member of staff to raise your concern and again the matter will normally be resolved quickly to both parties' satisfaction. In this instance the time frame to manage the complaint will be immediate and feedback will be verbal providing that a satisfactory outcome has been achieved.

Stage 2 – Formal

3. If your complaint cannot be satisfactorily dealt with on an informal basis, you may make a more formal complaint in writing and the school will;
    a. Acknowledge your complaint in writing within 5 working days.
    b. Inform you how the matter will be dealt with and how matters will proceed.
    c. Carry out any necessary investigations.
    d. Send a letter to explain the conclusion to you, along with reasons for it and any action being taken or proposed.

4. Your complaint or concern will remain confidential and all information treated with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Headmaster and those directly involved. The CEO may have to be informed.

5. We cannot rule out the possibility of the need to make third parties outside the school aware of the complaint and possibly the identities of those involved. This would only be likely to be necessary where a child's safety is involved or an illegal act has occurred. You will be kept fully informed.

6. Whilst information relating to specific complaints will be kept confidentially on file, we may not be able to pursue anonymous complaints.

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

8. A complaint of this nature will be managed within 10 working days (Monday-Friday). (Occasionally school holiday periods or exceptional circumstances, such as the Covid 19 pandemic, may lead to a longer period being required, not longer than 28 days)

If You Are Not Satisfied with the Outcome, you may take your concern to stage 3. A stage 3 appeal will always be the final stage of this procedure)

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If you are not satisfied and notify the Headmaster within 5 days, the Headmaster will advise that you refer the matter to the CEO. Alternatively, you may wish to write direct to the CEO. The matter will then be referred to a Complaints Panel for consideration by the CEO. 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. The remaining panel members will be made up from the Radley Schools Group Local Advisory Group (LAG) or Executive. The CEO, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint within two working days and will schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 15 working days (Monday-Friday). You will be asked to present any papers you may have for circulation before the meeting. You may wish to be supported by a friend, teacher or relative. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate and if the parents intend to bring a legal representative they should inform the School at least three working days prior to the hearing.

Decision:
The Complaints Panel will make findings about each complaint on the balance of probabilities and may make recommendations. It is not within the powers of the Complaints Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils, or parents, although the Complaints Panel may make recommendations. The Complaints Panel's findings and any recommendations will usually be provided in writing to the parent and, where relevant, any person complained about within 5 working days of the Hearing. The decisions, findings and any recommendations including any actions taken to implement them will be made available for inspection on the School premises by the CEO and the Headmaster. Reasons for the Decision will be given.

The decision of the Complaints Panel is final. There will be no further opportunity within the School for consideration of the complaint. The completion of Stage 3 represents the conclusion of the School's Complaints Procedure.

The CEO/Panel will:

a. Acknowledge your complaint in writing within 5 working days.
b. Inform you how the matter will be dealt with and how matters will proceed.
c. Organise and lead the panel hearing.

d. Send a letter to explain the findings and recommendations to you and, where appropriate, any other involved party, along with reasons for it and any action being taken or proposed. This will also be made available within school for inspection by the Headmaster or CEO of Radley Schools Group.
e. This will be managed within a period of 10 working days (Monday-Friday) from acknowledging your letter but will be dependent on both parties being available to meet within this period.
f. Ofsted and/or ISI will, on request, be provided with a written record of all complaints made during a specific period and the action taken as a result of those complaints.
g. The record of any such complaint will be kept for at least three years.

4. If your concern has still not been satisfied you may wish to seek independent legal advice. You may also contact, Ofsted 0300 123 666 or ISI 020 7600 0100. Parents may contact these bodies at any stage through the complaints process. Ofsted should also be contacted if it appears that there seems to be a possible breach of the EYFS requirements.

5. If a child appears to be at risk, the School's Safeguarding Policy and guidelines will be followed, as will, the guidelines of the appropriate local authority safeguarding board. In these cases both the parent and relevant staff will work with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead, Mr John Boddington or, the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads, Miss Sarah Whitty or Mr Chris Ward, and also with Ofsted/ISI to ensure a proper investigation of the complaint, followed by appropriate action.

Record Keeping and Confidentiality

All records created in accordance with this policy are managed in accordance with the School's policies that apply to the retention and destruction of records.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or proceed to a Panel Hearing, including the action taken by the School as a result of the complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld) and whether the complaint relates to the School's boarding provision.

In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances. Complaints which do not have safeguarding implications will be retained for a minimum of seven years (a period determined by the six year inspection cycle with allowance for unforeseen circumstances).

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 108 or 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them or under other legal authority or court order.

In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will be kept only for as

long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

The records created in accordance with this policy may contain personal data. The School has a number of privacy notices which explain how the School will use personal data about pupils and parents. The privacy notices are published on the School's website. In addition, staff must 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 data protection policy.

Please find the Complaints Procedure for Prep Schools in the Radley Schools Group here.

In addition to the procedures above:

- If Parents and/or carers of children in the EYFS do not think that the school meet the EYFS requirements they can contact ISI on 020 7600 0100 or Ofsted 0300 1234 666

- This policy is made available to all parents, staff and boarding pupils

- Boarders and their parents are informed how to contact Ofsted or ISI regarding boarding welfare and this information is displayed prominently around the school.
  Ofsted 0300 1234 666; ISI 020 7600 0100

- All written records of complaints are reviewed annually by both the Headmaster and the CEO.

  In the year 2025/26 there were 2 formal complaints (Stage 2) under this procedure with (0) panel hearing (Stage 3).

- Complaints are resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome, which balances the rights and duties of pupils, staff and parents.

- The CEO may be contacted at any time c/o the School Office.