COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE
THIS APPLIES TO THE WHOLE SCHOOL INCLUDING EYFS

Introduction

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, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure.

This policy applies to parents of current Rookwood School pupils and to parents of ex-pupils provided that the complaint was originally raised whilst the pupil was on roll. The term parent includes any person who has parental responsibility or care of the pupil.

This policy relates to parental complaints or concerns regarding the school's educational provision and/or the day to day running of the school.

For the purpose of this policy, a concern is 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought' and a complaint is 'an expression or statement of dissatisfaction about actions taken or a lack of action'.

Where a parent has a safeguarding concern, such as an allegation against a member of staff where it is believed that a member of staff has: behaved in a way that has or may have harmed a child; possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; and/or behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, they should refer to the school's safeguarding policy (available on the school website and in person from the main office).

All complaints should be investigated within the timescales outlined in this policy. A working day is defined as Monday to Friday at a time when the school is open to pupils. Therefore, due to staff availability, an investigation may be extended where a complaint is received during the school holidays, or during term time but when the investigation is unlikely to be concluded before the end of term. In such an instance, parents will be informed of the revised timescales, as appropriate.

Complaints should be lodged within three months of the parent becoming aware of the particular situation which gives rise to the complaint. Complaints lodged after this period will be reviewed on their merit and seriousness by the Headmaster and Chair of Governors. In exceptional circumstances, such complaints will be investigated as per this policy.

Where the school receives multiple complaints which are materially identical in nature, the school reserves the right to combine such complaints into a single investigation and consider them as a single complaint. This includes when complaints are received at different times (for

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example, where the same incident has already been investigated). In such events, each parent will still be treated as an individual complainant and retains the individual right to accept the findings of the investigation or escalate the complaint to the next stage as they feel necessary.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most concerns and complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Form Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the relevant Head of School. If the Head of School feels unable to resolve the matter, it will be referred to the Deputy Head or the Headmaster.
- Complaints made directly to the Heads of School, Deputy Head or Headmaster may be delegated to the relevant Form Tutor or an appropriate member of staff.
- Should the matter not be resolved within ten working days of receipt of the complaint or in the event that the person investigating the complaint and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing stating that they wish to make a formal complaint.
- If the matter concerns the day-to-day running of the school, the interpretation of school policies or the actions/inactions of a member of staff at the school then the parents should write to the Headmaster.
- If the matter concerns school policies as determined by the Board of Governors, the action/inactions of the Board of Governors or the actions/inactions of the Headmaster, then the parents should write to the Chairman of the Governors.
- The Headmaster/Chairman will write to the parents acknowledging receipt of the formal complaint by the following working day after receipt.
- The Headmaster/Chairman will appoint an appropriate person to investigate the complaint. This should either be a member of the Senior Leadership Team (which may be the Headmaster) or Board of Governors (which may be the Chairman).
- The person investigating the complaint will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take in conducting the investigation.
- The person investigating the complaint will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the person investigating the complaint 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. Reasons will be given for the decision.
- If the parents are not satisfied with the decision, or if a resolution cannot be found within fifteen working days of acknowledgement of the formal complaint, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.
- When it is necessary to interview a pupil identified as either an alleged victim or perpetrator during the investigation, a parent or an appropriate adult nominated by the parent (such as a form tutor or boarding parent) may be present. Legal representation is not permitted.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they must do so within five working days of completion of Stage 2. They will be referred to the Chairman of the Governors or to another nominated member of the Board of Governors (if the Chairman investigated Stage 2).
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of two members of the Board of Governors plus a third person not directly involved in the management and running of the School. Neither of the Governors will have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The Clerk to the Governors or another nominated person, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and arrange a hearing to take place within fifteen working days of receipt of the request for Stage 3.
- If necessary, the Panel may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter are supplied to all parties not later than three working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, parent or friend. Legal representation is not permitted.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- After due consideration, the Panel will make findings and recommendations, which it shall complete within ten working days of the hearing. The Panel will provide a copy of these findings and recommendations to the parents and, where relevant, to the person(s) complained about. The Panel's findings and recommendations will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the Headmaster and members of the Board of Governors.

Where a complaint relates to the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements

Where a written complaint relates to the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements then the above complaints process will be followed and the complainants notified of the outcome of the investigation within 28 calendar days of receipt of the complaint. The record of such complaints must be available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

If a parent believes that the School is not fulfilling the EYFS requirements then they may contact Ofsted and/or ISI as follows:

Ofsted	Independent Schools Inspectorate
Piccadilly Gate	Cap House
Store Street	9-12 Long Lane
Manchester	London
M1 2WD	EC1A 9HA
0300 123 1231	0207 600 0100

Should the School become aware that it is to be inspected, it will notify parents and, after the inspection, will supply a copy of the report to parents of children attending on a regular basis.

Recording, monitoring and confidentiality

The Headmaster is responsible for keeping and maintaining a written record of all complaints which reach Stage 2 or Stage 3. This record includes whether the complaint was resolved following a formal procedure (Stage 2) or proceeded to a panel hearing (Stage 3), and the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. The record of any formal complaint will be kept at least until the next inspection and then as required by the data protection policies in force at the time.

Parents are also expected to respect the confidential nature of the complaints procedure and any ongoing investigation, as failure to do so may jeopardise the integrity of the process. In the event that a parent knowingly breaches such confidentiality then the school is discharged of any reciprocal duties of confidentiality, as outlined in the paragraph above.

The school received one formal complaint during the 2020-21 Academic Year. It did not go to Stage 3.