



## Red Gates School

### Complaints Policy and Procedure

We value our relationship with parents and all members of the school and local community. We welcome any feedback that we receive from parents, pupils and third parties and we accept that not all of it will be positive. If you have a concern, we want to know about it so that it can be dealt with immediately. Your concerns will be listened to fairly, honestly, promptly and without prejudice. Most concerns can be dealt with easily and quickly but to ensure all concerns are handled effectively the Governing Body has adopted a complaints policy and procedure.

The school's Complaints Procedure is devised with the intention that it will:

- usually be possible to resolve problems by informal means;
- be simple to use and understand;
- treat complaints confidentially;
- allow problems to be handled swiftly;
- inform future practice so that the problem is less likely to recur;
- reaffirm the partnership between parents, staff and Governors as they work together for the good of the pupils in the school;
- ensure that the school's attitude to a pupil would never be affected by a parental complaint;
- discourage anonymous complaints;
- actively encourage strong home-school links;
- ensure that all staff have opportunities to discuss and understand the school's response to concerns and complaints made by parents;
- ensure that any person complained against has equal rights with the person making the complaint;
- regularly review its system for monitoring concerns and complaints received from parents.

#### **EXPRESSING A CONCERN: NOTES FOR PARENTS**

##### **If you have a concern**

We would like you to tell us about it so that we can talk with you and see how best to resolve your concern. Most of the concerns can usually be resolved informally by speaking to a member of staff. We welcome suggestions for improving our work in the school. Whatever your concern, unless it is of a safeguarding nature (see *Safeguarding section of this policy*), please know that we shall treat it as strictly confidential. Be assured that no matter what you wish to share with us, our support and respect for you and your child in the school will not be affected in any way; please do not delay telling us of your concern.

After hearing your concern, we will act as quickly as we can; we will let you know the timescale within which you may expect a response. Please allow time for any action we may take to be effective. Our procedure is in three stages outlined below:

### **What to do first (Stage 1 – informal)**

Please contact your child's class teacher or other appropriate member of staff and arrange a time when you can discuss your concern. It may be possible for you to see the member of staff straight away but normally it is better to make an appointment so that you can sit and talk things through. You may be given a response immediately, but where any investigation or further information is required, a response will be given within **five days**.

### **What to do next (Stage 2- Formal)**

If you are still unhappy, ask for an appointment with the Head Teacher **within 10 school days of receiving a response under Stage 1**. This will be acknowledged within 2 days. It is helpful if you can give a brief written outline of your concern on the school's complaints form when you make the appointment (*please see Annex A*). After your discussion with the Head Teacher every effort will be made to resolve the situation as quickly as possible and the Head Teacher will send you a written response **within 5 school days of your meeting**. If it is not possible to respond within this timescale, the Head Teacher will tell you when you can expect a response.

### **If you are still unhappy (Stage 3- Formal)**

If you feel the Head Teacher's response does not resolve your concerns, you may ask for your complaint to be considered by the complaints panel of the Governing Body by writing to the Chair of Governors\* c/o The School (*please see Annex B*) **within 10 school days of the outcome of Stage 2 from the school**. You will be invited to attend the complaints panel which will be formed of three Governors who have had no prior involvement in the complaint. They will listen to you, to the Head Teacher and, if appropriate, any others involved and come to a decision. You may bring a friend to the hearing if you wish.

### **Safeguarding**

Wherever a complaint indicates that a child's wellbeing or safety is at risk, the school is under a duty to report this immediately to the local authority. Any action taken will be in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy (a copy is available on the school website).

### **Social Media**

We expect all parties to observe confidentiality (including parents and staff) in order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible. Complaints should not be discussed publicly via social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

## **Complaints that result in staff capability or disciplinary procedures**

If at any formal stage of the complaint it is determined that staff disciplinary or capability procedures are necessary to resolve the issue, the details of this action will remain confidential to the Head Teacher and/or the individual's line manager. The complainant is entitled to be informed that action is being taken and the eventual outcome of any such action, but they are not entitled to participate in the proceedings or receive any detail about them.

## **Complaints about the Head Teacher or the Governors**

Where a complaint regards the Head Teacher, you should first directly approach the Head Teacher to try to resolve the issue informally. If you are not satisfied with this outcome you should notify the clerk to the Governors (see *contact details at the end of the document*). The Stage 2 process will then commence, but with the Chair of Governors as the person responsible for the investigation rather than the Head Teacher.

Where a complaint regards a governor, the same process applies as for the Head Teacher. Where a complaint concerns the Chair of Governors, you should contact the clerk to the Governors. Informal resolution will be sought, but where this fails, the complaints procedure at Stage 3 will take immediate effect. The vice chair or an independent investigator will mediate in any proceedings.

## **Unreasonable complaints**

Where a complainant raises an issue that has already been dealt with via the school's complaints procedure, and that procedure has been exhausted, the school will not reinvestigate the complaint except in exceptional circumstances, for example where new evidence has come to light.

If a complainant persists in raising the same issue, the Head Teacher will write to them explaining that the matter has been dealt with fully in line with the school complaints procedure, and therefore the case is now closed. The complainant will be provided with the contact details of the Department for Education if they wish to take the matter further.

Unreasonable complaints include the following scenarios:

- The complainant refuses to co-operate with the school's relevant procedures.
- The complainant changes the basis of the complaint as the complaint progresses.
- The complainant seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- The complainant continues to raise questions or make time consuming demands of staff and the school's Governors even when the full process has been exhausted.
- The complainant acts in a way that is abusive or offensive.

The Head Teacher will use their discretion to choose not to investigate unreasonable complaints. Where they decide to take this course of action, they must inform the Chair of Governors that they have done so, explaining the nature of the complaint and why they have chosen not to investigate. If the chair deems it appropriate, they can redirect the Head Teacher to investigate the complaint, in which case the full complaints procedure will commence from stage one.

If the Chair upholds the Head Teacher's decision not to investigate the complaint, the chair will inform the complainant. If the complainant deems this decision to be so unreasonable that no other rational body in the same position would have made that decision, then the complainant may write to the Department for Education).

The table below summarises the procedure for making a complaint:

Stage	Description	Timescale for receipt of complaint	Time-limit for school's response
Informal Stage 1	Informal discussions with a member of staff and/or the Head Teacher		As soon as possible but no later than 5 days
Formal Stage 2	Written complaint to the Head Teacher (or Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the Head Teacher)	Within 10 school days of receipt of the response to Stage 1	Acknowledge within 2 school days. Response normally within 5 school days
Formal Stage 3	Governors' Complaints Panel hearing	Within 10 school days of receipt of response to Stage 2	Hearing set up within 15 school days with 10 days notice of the meeting. Agenda and papers sent out 7 days in advance. Decision letter within 2 school days.

*In all cases if any stage in the procedure is likely to take longer than publicised, parents will be informed of new timescales and the reasons for delay.*

This policy was agreed by the Governing Body on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017 and will be reviewed annually.

Head Teacher: ..... Date: .....

Chair of Governors: ..... Date: .....