



COMPLAINTS POLICY

School update	
Responsible for review of policy	Deputy Head Academic
Last school update	March 2021
Governor Sub-Committee review	
Sub Committee to review	Academic/Board
Review Period	3 years
Reviewed and referred to Board by Sub Committee – <i>meeting date</i>	Approved by Academic sub-committee 3 rd March 2021
Board Approval	
Approved by Board of Governors (Meeting date)	No amendments made by Academic committee. Board approval not required.
Version number	6
Next Sub-Committee/Board Review	<i>June 2024</i>
Related policies	Complaints procedure - Boarders
Uploaded to Staff Shared	March 2021
Uploaded to Website	March 2021



COMPLAINTS POLICY

1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 The Royal Masonic School for Girls 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 policy. This policy applies to all phases of education at RMS including EYFS.

1.2 RMS makes its complaints policy available to all parents of pupils on the School's website and in the School Office during the school day, and will ensure that parents of pupils who request it are given a copy. This policy can be made available in large print or other more accessible format. If a parent requires assistance in making a complaint, for example, because of disability, contact should be made with the Head's PA who will make appropriate arrangements.

1.3 Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is committed to acting in the best interests of each pupil and parents can be assured that no pupil will be penalised for a complaint raised in good faith. It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage.

1.4 In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, RMS will make available to parents of pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

2.0 AIMS

2.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure that a complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level and resolved as soon as possible. Prompt resolution is important for trust and confidence in the School to prevail.

2.2 The School will seek to resolve every complaint in a positive way and, after the event, will review systems and procedures as appropriate.

2.3 The School encourages parents to communicate as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction to assist the School in achieving a prompt resolution. Parents and pupils should never feel that a complaint made in good faith will adversely affect the pupil's opportunities at School.

2.4 This policy distinguishes between a complaint that can be resolved informally and a formal complaint that will require investigation and the implementation of a staged procedure.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

3.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about actions taken or lack of action concerning a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure.

3.2 A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly. A complaint may be made in person, by phone or in writing.

3.3 Parent/s include a current or legal guardian and may at the School's discretion include a parent whose child has recently left the School, as long as the complaint was initiated while the pupil was still registered at the School.

4.0 THREE STAGE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

4.1 Informal Stage

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. Complaints will be acknowledged within 48 hours in term time and as soon as practicable in the holidays.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's Form Tutor/Head of Year or Housemistress. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Tutor/Head of Year/Housemistress cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult a member of SLT. Parents of Pre-School children will contact the Head of Pre-School. Parents of girls in Cadogan House will contact the Head of Cadogan House.
- If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department/the Head of Year/ the Head of Cadogan House/Head of Pre-School will be discussed with the relevant Form Tutor/Housemistress/subject teacher/Room Leader unless the Head of Department/the Head of Year/ the Head of Cadogan House/Head of Pre-School deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

Members of staff will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days or in the event that the Form Tutor/Head of Year/Housemistress/Head of Department/Head of Pre-School/Head of Cadogan House 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

4.2 Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will acknowledge receipt within 48 hours and decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. The Head may choose to appoint a nominated representative to investigate on their behalf. (Nominated Representative).
- In most cases, the Head or their Nominated Representative will meet the parents concerned, normally within 7 days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head/ Nominated Representative to carry out further investigations.
- The Head/ Nominated Representative will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head/ Nominated Representative 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. The Head/ Nominated Representative will also give reasons for the decision. Every effort will be made to resolve the matter within fifteen working days of receipt of the Stage Two complaint. (Working days are defined as Monday-Friday in term time. Deadlines will necessarily be extended in holiday periods.)
- Notification of the outcome of an investigation into a complaint relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage will be given within twenty-eight days of the receipt of a written complaint.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for his/her decision.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they can proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure by setting out in writing their grounds for wishing to appeal and sending it within ten working days of receiving the Stage 2 decision, to the Clerk to the Governors (drobinson@rmsforgirls.com).

- Parents should note that while all complaints are investigated, the School reserves the right not to progress complaints that Governors consider vexatious.

4.3 Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- In their application, parents must state the grounds on which they are progressing the complaint and the outcome sought. A mere disagreement with the decision of the Head/ Nominated Representative will not of itself be sufficient grounds for reference to the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to a Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will review the decision taken by the Head/ Nominated Representative at Stage 2. The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaints procedure.
- 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 and two of whom will be Governors. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of Governors. The Clerk to the Board of Governors on behalf of the Chair will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 working days.
- 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 all parties not later than 7 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, tutor or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- 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 of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 7 working days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it within 14 working days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final.
- The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head, Nominated Representative, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of. All such documentation is available for inspection.

5.0 RECORDING COMPLAINTS

5.1 Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the informal stage, the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It is in

everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 20 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel hearing, will be completed within a further 20 working days. Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure 'working days' refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time.

5.2 The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year is posted on the website and will be supplied to parents on request. At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)

5.3 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 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them,

5.4 The record of complaint is kept for 3 years and the record of complaints notes the stage at which the complaint was resolved.

6.0 EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

6.1 RMS will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.

6.2 Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

Complaints regarding education in the Early Years Foundation Stage may be made to OFSTED at:

OFSTED
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

General helpline: 0300 123 1231
Textphone No: 0161 618 8524
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net