



Parental Complaints Policy & Procedures

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1. Introduction

- 1.1.** Repton aims to provide excellence in its academic and extra-curricular provision and in its pastoral care, within a caring and happy environment for its pupils and staff. There may, however, be occasions when parents are dissatisfied and wish to make a complaint.
- 1.2.** Repton's Parental Complaints Policy and Procedures (this Policy) is drafted in accordance with Part 7 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils on the School's website and in hard copy from the Headmaster/Head of Prep's office.
- 1.3.** The primary aim of this policy is to set out the means by which complaints may be resolved as fairly and quickly as possible. Complaints will be managed sympathetically and will be dealt with in an impartial and confidential manner. We believe that it is beneficial to deal with a complaint informally wherever possible and as speedily as is practicable.
- 1.4.** We recognise that a difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment and so we need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. Parents and pupils should never feel that making a complaint will adversely affect a pupil or his/ her opportunities at the School.
- 1.5.** This Policy applies to complaints from parents of current pupils and to parents of former pupils provided that the complaint was raised formally when the pupil was registered at the School.
- 1.6.** Separate procedures apply in the event of a child protection issue, or if the Headmaster/Head of Prep excludes or requires the removal of a pupil from the School and the parents seek a review of that decision. See policies on Child Protection and Staff Behaviour and Expulsion, Removal and Review.
- 1.7.** Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. When we refer to working days, we mean Monday to Friday, when School is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website.
- 1.8.** It is expected that the complaints procedure will progress in a timely manner. The School aims to resolve any complaint efficiently and promptly and parents are encouraged to bring any complaints to the School's attention as soon as possible after any incident causing concern. Please note that any complaint received within one month of the end of a term or half-term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to of school holidays and the lack of availability of key personnel required for the investigation to be undertaken properly.
- 1.9.** It should be noted that the timescales and management of any complaint can be significantly affected by the involvement of external agencies such as the police and child support services.

2. Management of Complaints

2.1. The stages of the School's Complaints Procedure

The School's complaints procedure has three stages:

Stage 1: informal raising of a complaint with a member of staff orally or in writing. Further details of this procedure are set out in Appendix 1.

Stage 2: a formal complaint in writing to the Headmaster/Head of Prep. Further details of this procedure are set out in Appendix 2.

Stage 3: reference to the Complaints Panel. Further details of this procedure are set out in Appendix 3.

2.2. Unreasonable Complaints

The Headmaster or Head of Prep may decide the complaint shall not proceed in accordance with this policy where the complaint is deemed 'unreasonable'. A complaint may be deemed 'unreasonable' for reasons including, but not necessarily limited to, the following:

- 2.2.1. Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages
- 2.2.2. Where there has been an unexplained delay between the incident in question and the making of the complaint
- 2.2.3. Where the complaint is demonstrably without foundation or merit
- 2.2.4. Where the complaint has been made in a way that includes aggressive, vexatious or abusive words or communications or seeks to apply undue pressure to a member(s) of staff involved in responding to the complaint.
- 2.2.5. Where the complaint is not adequately particularised or articulated so that a proper response may then be provided.

3. Record Keeping and Confidentiality

3.1. A written record will be kept of all formal complaints, and of whether they were resolved at Stage 2 or proceeded to a Complaints 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. The number of formal complaints registered during the preceding school year is posted on the School's website .

3.2. 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.

3.3. The School processes data in accordance with its Data Protection Policy. When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- 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 and contact details 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)
- Notes/minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy.

3.4. The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy. 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.

4. Complaints to Ofsted and the Independent Schools Inspectorate

- 4.1.** Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. Parents will be notified by ISI or Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received.
- 4.2.** Repton 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 in accordance with its Privacy Notice.
- 4.3.** Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the ISI.
- 4.4.** Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or at enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.
- 4.5.** ISI can be contacted at concerns@isi.net or on 020 7600 0100

Appendix 1

Stage 1 Dealing with concerns and difficulties informally

1. Informal resolution of a complaint?

We expect that most complaints can be resolved informally. For example, dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching, pastoral care or a billing error should be able to be resolved by the appropriate member of staff.

2. Whom to contact

2.1. Complaints should be initially raised as follows:

| | Repton | Repton Prep |
|--|---|---|
| Academic Issues | Subject-specific matters or those relating to special education needs should be addressed to the relevant Head of Department. Issues relating to the curriculum provision should be directed to the Deputy Head Academic. The complaint may be passed to a more senior member of staff if appropriate | Subject-specific matters or those relating to special educational needs should be addressed to either the Form Tutor or Year Group Head. Issues relating to the curriculum provision should be directed to the relevant Head of Department. The complaint may be passed to a more senior member of staff if appropriate |
| Pastoral care and educational matters | For complaints relating to general educational matters, including welfare issues, extracurricular provision and individual progress,, please speak or write to the relevant Housemaster or mistress. The complaint may be passed to a more senior member of staff if appropriate | For complaints relating to other educational matters, including welfare issues, extracurricular provision and individual progress, please speak or write to the relevant Form Tutor, Year Group Head or Houseparent for boarders. The complaint may be passed to a more senior member of staff if appropriate |

| | | |
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| Disciplinary matters | A problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised first of all with the member of staff who imposed it and then the Housemaster or mistress. The complaint may be passed to a more senior member of staff if appropriate | A problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised first of all with the member of staff who imposed it and then the Form Tutor/ Year Group Head. The complaint may be passed to a more senior member of staff if appropriate. |
| Financial matters | A query relating to fees or extras should be addressed in writing to the Finance Director. | A query relating to fees or extras should be addressed in writing to the Finance Director. |

- 2.2.** A complaint against the Headmaster or Head of Prep should be put in writing to the Chairman of Governors who will follow the procedure set out in Stage 2.
- 2.3.** An informal complaint provided in writing will be acknowledged by telephone, email or letter within two working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during the holidays. A matter raised orally will not necessarily be acknowledged in writing, but a record of the matter will be made.
- 2.4.** A complaint which has not been resolved by informal means to the parent's satisfaction within 15 working days should be notified in writing as a formal Stage 2 complaint using the procedure set out in Appendix 2.

Appendix 2

Stage 2 Formal Complaint

1. How to make a formal complaint

- 1.1. If a parent is dissatisfied with the response to the complaint under Stage 1, or the complaint requires investigation or involves dissatisfaction with some aspect of the School's policies or management, the complaint should be made under Stage 2.
- 1.2. The full details of the complaint should be set out in writing and sent with all relevant documents and full contact details to the Headmaster (for Repton) or the Head of Prep (for Repton Prep).
- 1.3. The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone, email or letter within three working days during term time, and as soon as practicable during the holidays, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely time scale.

2. Investigation

- 2.1. The Headmaster/Head of Prep will ask a senior member of staff to act as Investigator and may involve one or more Governors. The investigator(s) may request additional information from parents and may wish to speak to parents personally and to others who have knowledge of the circumstances. Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. The investigator(s) will prepare a report on the investigation which will be considered by the Headmaster/Head of Prep.

3. Decision

- 3.1. The Headmaster/Head of Prep will then notify the complainant by email or letter of their Stage 2 decision and the reasons for it within 10 working days from the receipt of the formal complaint. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay, the parents will be notified of this and informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.
- 3.2. If a parent is dissatisfied with the decision, the parent can request that the complaint be referred to the Complaints Panel under Stage 3 using the procedure set out in Appendix 3.

Appendix 3

Stage 3 Complaints Panel

1. What is a Complaints Panel Hearing?

1.1. A Complaints Panel Hearing (Hearing) is a review of the decisions taken at Stage 2 by the Headmaster/Head of Prep (or in circumstances where the formal complaint concerns the Headmaster/Head of Prep, the Chairman of Governors appointed to act in their place).

1.2. The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaints procedure.

1.3. The role of the Complaints Panel is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering:

- the documents provided by both parties and
- any representations made by the parents and School staff

and to reach a decision, on the balance of probabilities, as to whether each complaint is made out in whole or in part.

1.4. It is not within the powers of the Complaints Panel to directly or indirectly adjudicate on any matters of law; this means that a Panel shall not be convened in order to consider any contention that the School has failed to interpret or apply any legal provision correctly.

1.5. It is not within the powers of the Complaints Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents; this means that a Panel shall not be convened solely to consider whether the School ought to pay sums of money.

2. How to request a Hearing

2.1. 2.1 If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution at Stage 2) they should do so in writing to the Clerk to the Governors (clerk@repton.org.uk) within 15 working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.

2.2. 2.2 If assistance with the request is required, for example because of a disability, please inform the Clerk to the Governors of this who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.

- 2.3.** 2.3 The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the request for a Hearing in writing within three working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during the holidays.

3. Planning the Hearing

The Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration, unless either paragraphs 1.2, 1.4 or 1.5 applies. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Clerk to the Governors will appoint one Panel member to act as Chair of the Panel. Every effort will be made to enable the Hearing to take place within 20 working days of receipt of the request. However, parents should note that the Complaints Panel will not normally sit during Half-Terms or school holidays.

- 3.1.** As soon as reasonably practicable, and in any event at least ten working days before the Hearing, the Clerk to the Governors will send written notification to each party of the date, time and place of the hearing and the names of the three Panel members.
- 3.2.** Copies of any additional documents you wish the Complaints Panel to consider should be sent to the Clerk to the Governors to be received at least five working days prior to the Hearing.
- 3.3.** Parents may be accompanied to the Hearing by another person, for example a relative or friend. The Hearing is not legal proceedings and so legal representation is not necessary. This person will not be permitted to act as an advocate or to address the Hearing unless invited to do so by the Chair of the Panel.
- 3.4.** The Clerk to the Governors will circulate a copy of the bundle of documents to be considered by the Complaints Panel to all parties at least three working days prior to the Hearing.

4. The Hearing

- 4.1.** The manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- 4.2.** All statements made at the Hearing will be unsworn. All present will be entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes for reference purposes. The Clerk to the Governors (or their assistant) will take minutes of the proceedings.
- 4.3.** All those attending the Hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the Hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chair. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the Hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and his / her comment will be minuted.

- 4.4. The Chair may, at his/ her discretion, adjourn the Hearing for further investigation of any relevant issue. This may include an adjournment to take legal advice.
- 4.5. A Hearing before the Complaints Panel is a private proceeding. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in or arising from the proceeding shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media.
- 4.6. When the Chair of the Panel considers that all the issues have been sufficiently discussed, he/ she will conclude the Hearing.

5. The Decision

- 5.1. After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Complaints Panel will reach a decision on the balance of probabilities as to whether the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and accordingly decide whether to:
- Dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
 - Uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
 - may make recommendations
- 5.2. The decision, findings and any recommendations will be confirmed in writing to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, within five working days of the Hearing. The decisions, findings and any recommendations will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Governing Body and the Headmaster/Head of Prep.
- 5.3. The completion of Stage 3 represents the conclusion of the School's Complaints Procedure.
- 5.4. The Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information) Regulations 2015 require the School to provide you on conclusion of the final stage of the School's Complaints Procedure with the name and address of an alternative dispute resolution provider who has been certified by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute as competent to resolve consumer disputes. These details are set out below. However, please note that the School is not obliged to enter into alternative dispute resolution.
- 5.5. ADR provider certified by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute: Centre for Effective Resolution (CEDR): www.cedr.com/consumer/.

| Version History/Amendments | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|--|-------------------|
| Date | Author | Comment/Amendment | Version No |
| January 2021 | JGG | Fully revised in tandem with Foot Anstey LLP | 1.0 |
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| Links to Other School Policies |
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| The Parental Complaints Policy & Procedures links to all school policies. |

| Links to External Policies, Legislation or Guidance |
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| NMS 2023, DfE |
| ISI Framework 2023 |