



HARRODIAN

Complaints Procedure Policy

Introduction

Since its founding, Harrodian has prided itself on the quality of its teaching and pastoral care. However, if anyone wishes to raise a concern or make a complaint, they can expect it to be dealt with in accordance with the policy and procedures set out in this document.

For the purpose of this policy, a “complaint” is an expression of dissatisfaction whether spoken or written, that requires a response. It can be about: an act, omission or decision the School has made and for the standards we have provided. This is different from every day concerns where issues are quickly resolved. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done, or acted unfairly.

All schools receive complaints from time to time. It is not the culture of the School to encourage complaints, but we are open to expressions of genuine dissatisfaction and believe that all complaints which we receive should be treated seriously and confidentially, and investigated fully and fairly.

All parents should be aware that regardless of the nature of the complaint and whether or not it is upheld, parents are not entitled to details of any related sanctions imposed on staff, pupils or parents.

The School will always try to resolve complaints informally, and in a timely and amicable fashion. The School’s Complaints Procedure is divided into Informal and Formal Stages and it is expected that the majority of complaints will be resolved at the Informal Stage.

Complaints will be dealt with on as confidential a basis as possible, but it may be necessary for the person who first receives a complaint to discuss it with those who can resolve it, so anonymity and total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. At all times the School is committed to protecting the personal information complainants share with the School. Details on how the School protects personal data are laid out in Harrodian’s Privacy Policy.

No one will receive adverse treatment as a result of having raised a complaint, or because someone else has raised a complaint on their behalf.

References to working days in this Complaints Procedure mean Monday to Friday, when the School is open during term time. 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.

Summary of Procedure for Parents

This policy is applicable for parents of current pupils only. A parent of a current pupil is one whose child is a current registered pupil attending Harroddian during the academic year 1 September to 31 August. It does not apply to prospective pupils and only applies to former pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered at the School. There is a separate procedure for parents of pupils who are excluded from School (*Exclusion Policy*).

It is important to note the distinction made between “complaints” and routine queries and expressions of concern. Many concerns arise from misunderstandings and can be resolved by simple clarification.

Public Examinations

In some subjects, teachers assess coursework or other pieces of work internally which contributes towards external examinations. In all cases, internally assessed work is subject to external moderation procedures, and it is the externally moderated mark which counts. The examination boards have their own procedures for re-marking work and dealing with complaints. Any person expressing concerns relating to this issue or to any matters regarding public examinations should contact the Examinations Officer in the first instance.

Management of Complaints

This Procedure describes a three stage procedure:

- a) Stage One – Informal resolution of a complaint notified orally or in writing to a member of staff
- b) Stage Two – A formal complaint in writing to the Headmaster
- c) Stage Three – Appeal Procedures

Stage One – Informal Complaint

We expect that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally, and entirely satisfactorily, through discussion with the appropriate member of staff.

If a parent wishes to express a concern or make a complaint, at this informal stage, they should contact (either in writing, via the telephone or in person):

- Subject Teacher - for matters relating to the classroom, the curriculum, homework
- Form Teacher - for complaints regarding issues outside the classroom and behaviour
- The member of staff who imposed any sanction (e.g. a detention)
- Head of Pre-Prep, Prep or Senior Sport for Sport provision
- Director of Music for Music provision
- Head of Drama for Drama provision
- Finance Manager – for queries relating to fees or extra charges
- Head of Operations – for operational aspects (to include food, security, hygiene)
- Trip Organiser – for any queries regarding school trips
- Head Designated Safeguarding Lead – for all queries regarding Safeguarding

Depending on the nature of the complaint, the member of staff who first receives the complaint may suggest that another member of School staff (academic or pastoral) might be better placed to deal with it. If this is the case, the member of staff will convey this in their initial response.

Whether the informal complaint is made in writing, in person or via the telephone, the member of staff will acknowledge the complaint within three working days of its receipt, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely timescales. Such action may include an investigation and/or a meeting with the parent.

Wherever appropriate, the School will ask the parent at the earliest stage what they think might resolve the issue.

In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to everyone's satisfaction. If the member of staff cannot resolve the matter alone, they may need to consult the Head of Year, Head of Department or relevant senior member of staff.

If a Head of Department/Head of Year receives a complaint about a member of their department/pastoral team from a parent, they will always inform the teacher concerned. Should the concern be about the conduct of a member of staff (and have Safeguarding implications), the Headmaster must be informed. They may also inform the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team of the complaint and of how they will be dealing with the matter and will ask for assistance if they do not feel able to deal with it personally.

The member of staff/Head of Department/Head of Year will keep a written record of all complaints and expressions of concern (including a note of the contents of any discussions for those complaints made verbally,) and the date on which they are received.

The parent will usually receive a response to a complaint within fifteen working days. Should the matter not be resolved within fifteen working days or in the event that the member of staff or Head of Department or Head of Year and the person making the complaint fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then a parent will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with the formal stage of this procedure.

Stage Two – Formal Complaint

Complaints will only progress to Stage Two after first being considered at Stage One and only if the parent indicates that they intend to escalate the matter to the Formal Complaint stage.

Complaints which have not been possible to resolve informally, despite the best endeavours of both sides, should then be addressed in writing to the pupil's Head of Year and copied to the Headmaster. Staff should always inform the Headmaster of any formal complaint received which has not been directed to him in the first instance. It is expected that a formal complaint will be made within 10 working days of receipt of the School's response to any informal complaint.

The formal complaint will be set out in writing with full details and sent with any relevant documents and contact details not held by the parents. After considering the complaint the Headmaster will acknowledge receipt of the formal complaint within five working days and decide the appropriate course of action to take. If necessary, further investigation of the complaint may be required.

In most cases the Headmaster, or the person delegated by the Headmaster to investigate the complaint, will meet or speak to the parents and/or other persons concerned, normally within ten

working days of the formal complaint having been received, to discuss the matter, including what the parents think might resolve the issue (if not already requested under the informal stage). If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

Complaints against members of teaching staff will normally be investigated by their Head of Department or by a member of the School's Senior Leadership Team. Investigations will be undertaken as quickly as possible, so that matters can be resolved as soon as possible, and where possible, within the time framework of this policy.

If necessary, the Headmaster will arrange for further investigation of the complaint which might extend beyond the ten working day period. The School will keep records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to complaints.

The School will aim to communicate the outcome of a Stage Two investigation to parents in writing by the Headmaster within fifteen working days of receiving the formal complaint. The School will also communicate the rationale behind their decision and action. In the event that it is not possible for the School to complete its investigation or establish all the facts and so cannot make a decision within this period then parents will be advised as to why this is the case and informed of any revised timescale.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage setting, the School will aim to notify the outcome of the investigation within 20 calendar days of the complaint being received.

The Headmaster will, if necessary, seek advice and assistance from the Chairman (or his adviser) when dealing with a complaint but this would exclude the Chairman (or his adviser) from taking part in any further formal procedure which may result from the complaint.

If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the Chairman (and/or his representative) will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman (and/or his representative) may also call for a briefing from members of staff and/or the School's Safeguarding Governor, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chairman (and/or his representative) is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed in writing and the reasons for the decisions given.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they may proceed to an Appeal.

Stage Three - Appeal

Whilst it is hoped that all complaints will be resolved internally, parents who make complaints and who feel that they have not been adequately dealt with by the School in the two former stages may appeal. The School would expect to receive the appeal from parents within ten working days of them receiving communication concluding the Stage Two Formal Complaint. The School reserves the right to elevate any complaint to Appeal where there is no agreed resolution with parents in Stage Two.

Parents wishing to invoke this stage of the Formal procedure following a failure to reach an earlier resolution will be referred to the Chairman, or a person nominated by him, who has been appointed to call Appeal meetings. Access to the Chairman is through the Head of Admin who will inform him that a complaint has been raised.

The matter will then be referred to the Appeal Panel. This Panel will consist of no less than two people appointed by the Chairman. The Chairman may be one of these or he might choose a representative.

None of these persons will have been previously involved in the complaint; one will be a person totally independent of the School or its management. The Chairman, on behalf of the Appeal Panel, will acknowledge the complaint within five working days of receipt and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable, normally within twenty working days of receipt of the Appeal.

At least ten working days before the Hearing, the Head of Admin (or nominated member of admin) will send written notification to each party of the date, time and place of the Appeal meeting together with brief details of the panel members who will hear it.

Evidence collected at any previous stages of the complaint will be made available to the Panel on a confidential basis. If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require further amplifications of the evidence or any related matter supplied, by either party, in advance of the meeting. Copies of such amplifications shall be supplied to all parties prior to the meeting.

The Headmaster will be provided with copies of all relevant documents given to the Panel and will be invited to give written and/or oral evidence to the Panel.

The person making the complaint will be asked to attend the hearing and may be accompanied to the Appeal meeting by one other person. This will normally be a relative, colleague or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate as the Appeal meeting is an internal School proceeding, not a legal proceeding.

The Panel and parents will be entitled, should they wish, to write their own notes for reference purposes. The Head of Admin (or nominated member of Admin) will be asked to take minutes of the Appeal meeting. All those attending the Appeal meeting should show courtesy, restraint and good manners.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

The Panel may adjourn the meeting if it considers it appropriate to do so. This may include an adjournment for further investigation of any relevant issue or for the parties to take legal advice on a specific issue arising.

The Appeal meeting should proceed even if the parent(s) may subsequently decide not to attend yet has not withdrawn the complaint. The Panel should consider the parent's complaint in their absence and issue findings on the substance of the parent's complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion.

Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out and advise the parent of the revised timescale. After due consideration of all the facts it considers relevant, the panel will reach a decision and make recommendations.

The Appeal meeting is a private meeting. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in or arising from the meeting are to be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media.

The Panel's decision will be communicated in writing to the parent by the Head of Admin (or nominated member of Admin), usually within ten working days of the completion of the Appeal's meeting. At the same time, a copy of the Panel's findings and any recommendations will be given to the Headmaster for dissemination and action as appropriate. The decision of the Panel will be final in that there will be no further right to appeal or further hearing within the School's procedures.

The School will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to Appeal, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with the School's *Privacy Policy* and *Retention Policy*.

The Head of Admin will record all complaints (including whether they were resolved at Stage Two or proceeded to an Appeal) and keep this log available for scrutiny by other authorities. The personal data in this record will be retained in accordance with the School's *Privacy Policy* and *Retention Policy*.

Parents can be assured that all complaints and expressions of concern will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will remain confidential except insofar as is required by the Education Regulations (Independent Schools Standards) 2014, where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

DfE

Parents can seek advice from or take their complaint to the registration authority DfE (Department for Education) online or by telephone on the public enquiries number (0370 000 2288).

Other Complaints and Allegations

Other procedures are already in place which are designed to deal with specific types of very serious complaints.

Any complaint which makes allegations of abuse will be investigated under Child Protection/Safeguarding procedures.

Serious complaints about the professional competence of staff will be investigated by the Headmaster and/or the Chairman (or his representative).

Where a member of staff wishes to make a complaint against another member of staff, the matter will be investigated by the Headmaster and/or the Chairman (or his representative). In matters regarding Safeguarding, the matter will be investigated with reference to our Whistle-Blowing and Low-Level Concerns Policy.

If the Appeal Panel shall determine that the complaint was without merit and/or vexatious, they may recommend that the complainant should defray the whole or such proportion as they may determine of all costs and expenditure incurred in the organisation and hearing of the appeal.

Approved by:	Senior Leadership Team
Last reviewed:	January 2025