



# HARRODIAN

## **Complaints 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.

### **Statement of Policy on Dealing with Concerns and Complaints**

In any school, pupils, parents and others will have queries and concerns from time to time. These are not the subject of “complaint” in any meaningful sense but are part of the everyday dialogue of school life. It is our expectation that queries and concerns of this kind will be resolved quickly by raising matters in question with a pupil’s subject teachers or Form Tutor.

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 investigated fully and fairly.

The School will always try to resolve complaints informally and in an 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 within a few days.

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.

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.

### **Summary of Procedure for Parents and Pupils**

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

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 remarking 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.

### **Informal Stage of Complaints Procedure**

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents wish to express a concern or make a complaint, they should contact the pupil's Form Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to everyone's satisfaction. If the Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, he or she may need to consult the Head of Year or relevant senior member of staff.

If a Head of Department receives a complaint about a member of their department, they will always inform the teacher concerned. They will also inform the Form Tutor and the relevant member of the Senior Management 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 Form Tutor or Head of Department will keep a written record of all complaints and expressions of concern and the date on which they are received. Should the matter not be resolved within seven working days or in the event that the Form Tutor or Head of Department and the person making the complaint fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with the formal stage of this procedure.

### **Formal Stage of Complaints Procedure**

Complaints which have not been possible to resolve informally should be addressed in writing to the pupil's Head of Year and copied to the Headmaster. The Headmaster must always be informed of any serious complaints which staff receive which have not been directed to him in the first instance.

Complaints against members of the 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.

In most cases the Headmaster or the person delegated by the Headmaster to investigate the complaint will meet or speak to the parents or other persons concerned, normally within seven working days of the complaint having been received, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

If necessary, the Headmaster will arrange for further investigation of the complaint.

The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to complaints.

The School's general culture discourages anonymous complaints and upholds the view that those who wish to make a complaint should be prepared to put their name to it. However, it has to be recognised that some complaints which are made anonymously (for example, those raising possible Child Protection issues) do have to be taken seriously. Where an anonymous complaint is received, the Headmaster will make a judgement on whether it is appropriate to investigate or not.

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 formal procedure which may result from the complaint.

Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of the decision within 3 working days. However, details of any action which may result in the use of disciplinary or other formal procedures, will normally remain confidential.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to a panel hearing.

### **Panel Hearings**

Whilst it is hoped that all complaints will be resolved internally, people who make complaints and who feel that they have not been adequately dealt with by the school may appeal to a complaints panel.

Parents wishing to evoke this stage of the 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 hearings of the complaints panel.

The matter will then be referred to the complaints panel. This panel will consist of a total of three persons appointed by the Chairman, and possibly including himself, or his representative, who have not previously been involved in the complaint, and one of whom will be a person totally independent of the School or its management. The Chairman, on behalf of the complaints panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable, normally within fourteen working days.

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 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 no later than seven working days prior to the hearing.

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 may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This will normally be a relative, colleague or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If possible, the panel will resolve the 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 the facts it considers relevant, the panel will reach a decision and make recommendations. This will normally be completed within seven working days of the hearing.

The panel will write to the person making the complaint informing them of their decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the panel will be final. The Headmaster will be informed in writing of the outcome of the appeal as soon as it is known. The panel's findings and recommendations will be sent to the person complained of.

The School will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to complaints panel hearings.

*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 paragraph 6 (2) (j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003, where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.*

#### **Additional Information about the Complaints Procedure for Staff at Harrodian**

Where a complaint is made against an individual but not directly to that individual, the school recognises the principle that the individual has the right to know the details of the complaint which has been made against them, as soon as possible after the complaint has been received, and, usually, to see any letters of complaint received about them.

It may not always be appropriate for an individual to know the identity of a complainant, or to see the whole of a letter which has been sent. In such circumstances the person complained against will be given verbatim extracts from the letter of complaint received.

The person who has been asked to investigate a formal complaint will report their findings to the Headmaster, who will decide on the best steps to be taken to resolve the matter.

People against whom formal complaints are made always have the right to time to consider their response and to take advice if necessary. In addition to any initial discussion, they will be allowed a maximum of five working days to respond in writing to the complaint made against them.

If the response which has been received does not resolve the complaint, the person against whom the formal complaint has been made may be asked to attend a meeting with the Headmaster. This meeting will normally take place within five working days of the Headmaster having received their written response to the complaint.

If a person against whom a formal complaint has been made is asked to attend a meeting with the Headmaster to discuss the complaint, a member of the School's Senior Leadership Team may be present. The person against whom the complaint has been made may be accompanied by a friend or by a representative of their association if they so wish.

A confidential file will be kept on each individual formal complaint whilst it is investigated.

Records of complaints made against members of staff will be removed from their personal file if the complaint is shown to be unfounded after investigation.

Members of staff against whom a complaint has been received will be fully informed of the investigation being made and will be given full written feedback on the conclusion of the investigation once it has been reached.

### **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 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).

Person responsible: Head of Seniors

Last updated: September 2020

Next update: September 2021