



Complaints Policy and Procedure

1. Statement

- 1.1. Ripley Court School is proud of the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided for its pupils. However, if parents/guardians do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. This policy applies to all parents/guardians of pupils currently attending Ripley Court School, including EYFS, and is made available on the School website or on request from the School. This policy will only apply to past pupils if the complaint was initially raised whilst they were still a registered pupil at the School.

3. What Constitutes a Complaint

- 3.1. A complaint is a statement that something is unsatisfactory or unacceptable. Parents/guardians are likely to make complaints if they believe that the School has done something wrong, failed to take some action, or acted unfairly. A complaint 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 redress by the School is within the scope of this procedure.
- 3.2. Parents/guardians may also raise a 'concern' (an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought). In most cases concerns can be allayed by class teachers or a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), including the Headmaster; however in some circumstances parents/guardians may subsequently raise these as a complaint. Staff should therefore ensure that written records are kept of any concerns raised by parents /guardians and how these were resolved should these be later recorded as complaints.
- 3.3. Any matter about which a parent/guardian is unhappy and seeks redress by the School is within the scope of this procedure.

4. The Complaints Process

4.1. Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- 4.1.1. In the event of a parent/guardian having a complaint about any aspect of School life in relation to their own child, the normal procedure should be to bring the matter in the first instance to the attention of the pupil's Form Teacher. Complaints must be made as soon as possible after an incident or cause for complaint arises and, in any event, within 3 months. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally, to the parents'/guardians' satisfaction.
- 4.1.2. If there are further concerns, the relevant member of the SLT should be contacted by letter, email or by telephone – the Head of Upper Court or Little Court (as relevant) about pastoral matters, discipline, co-curricular activities, and any other matters, or if the parent does not know who should be contacted; the Director of Studies about academic matters. In limited circumstances it may be necessary for an alternative member of the SLT to be involved. This will be at the discretion of the Headmaster. Complaints about financial matters should be addressed initially to the Director of Operations & Bursar.
- 4.1.3. If the complaint is about a member of the SLT mentioned in paragraph 4.1.2, the parent/guardian should contact the Headmaster by letter, email, or telephone.
- 4.1.4. The relevant senior member of staff will co-ordinate an investigation. The Headmaster will be informed of any complaints received by the SLT and the manner of proposed resolution. Every effort will be made to resolve the issue quickly and the senior member of staff will normally respond within 2 working days of the receipt of a complaint although serious issues requiring detailed investigation may take longer. Normally, a full response will be sent to the parent/guardian, or a meeting date will be agreed within 5 working days.
- 4.1.5. If a satisfactory resolution is still not reached within 10 working days, then the parent/guardian will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure.
- 4.1.6. Please note if the concern is raised during a school holiday period or the time within which it is to be dealt with enters a school holiday period the times set out above may be delayed if it proves impossible to make contact with staff who are material to the investigation of the matter in questions.

4.2. Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- 4.2.1. If the complaint cannot be resolved in accordance with Stage 1 above, then the parent/guardian must put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster who will investigate the complaint at this stage.

4.2.2. In most cases, the Headmaster will arrange a date to meet with or speak to the parent/guardian concerned, normally within 7 working days of receiving the written letter of complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage, although it may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations. If that is the case, the Headmaster or someone appointed by them will carry out the further investigations necessary and complete them as soon as they can.

4.2.3. Once the Headmaster is satisfied that so far as is practicable, all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and the parent/guardian will be informed of the decision in writing together with brief reasons for that decision. The decision will be taken and communicated to the parent/guardian within 14 working days of the Headmaster receiving the complaint. If parents are still not satisfied with the Headmaster's decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure within 10 working days of the decision communication date.

4.2.4. Please note that if the complaint is made during a School holiday period or the time within which it is to be dealt with enters a School holiday period, the times set out above may be delayed if it proves impossible to contact staff who are material to the investigation or the matter in question.

4.2.5. A formal written record of all concerns and complaints which reach the SLT or the Headmaster at this stage, and the date on which they were received, will be made. Teachers who receive concerns or complaints will ensure that a note is placed on the pupil's file in CPOMS and the corresponding member of the SLT is informed.

4.2.6. If the complaint is about the Headmaster, the complaint must be made in writing and addressed to the Secretary to the Governors. This will be dealt with by the Governor nominated to deal with parental complaints (the Nominated Governor). The parent/guardian must set out in their complaint what they think might resolve the issue and the process will follow the steps set out in this clause 4.2.

4.3. Stage 3 – Governors' Involvement and Panel Hearing

4.3.1. If parents/guardians are not satisfied with the Headmaster's or the Nominated Governor's written decision, they may request that their complaint is heard by a Complaints Panel. They will need to make their request in writing addressed to the Secretary to the Governors within 14 working days of receipt of the written decision. The parents'/guardians' request must set out the reasons why they are not satisfied with the decision and what they think might resolve the issue. The Secretary 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 which will reconsider the complaint and the Headmaster's decision.

- 4.3.2. The Panel will consist of two School Governors who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and an independent member (see Appendix 1 as to who may be suitable to serve as an independent member of the Panel). The Secretary to the Governors will acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and arrange a hearing to take place at the School within 21 working days of receipt of the notice from the parents/guardians that they are not satisfied with the Headmaster's decision.
- 4.3.3. The Panel will decide on the procedure to be followed at the hearing and who will attend at the hearing. The parents/guardians may be accompanied at the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend provided they are not legally qualified. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- 4.4. The parents/guardians will be given every opportunity to state their case to the Panel. After due consideration of all the merits of the complaint and all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:
- dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
 - uphold the complaint in full or in part, and
 - make recommendations.
- 4.5. The Panel will write to the parents/guardians informing them of its decision and the reasons for it within 14 working days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel shall be final and there will be no further review or consideration of the complaint.
- 4.6. A copy of the Panel's findings and, if any, its recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents/guardian, the Headmaster, the Chair of Governors if he/she was not a member of the Panel, and the Governors. The Panel will recommend what action, if any, should be taken in relation to any member of staff about whom the complaint was made. This information will also be made available to the person complained about where appropriate.
- 4.7. Please note, if parents/guardians request a Panel hearing shortly before or during a School holiday period, the times set out above may be delayed if it proves impossible to contact staff who are material to the investigation or the matter in question.
- 4.8. In line with the Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information) Regulations 2015, the School will provide parents/guardians 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, upon conclusion of the final stage of the complaints procedure.

- 4.9. Parents/guardians may also complain to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The ISI can be contacted at CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, EC1A 9HA. Telephone 020 7600 0100 / Fax: 0207 776 8849.
- 4.10. Where a complaint has been considered at all 3 stages, repeated attempts to raise the same complaint will be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of the policy.

5. Records and Confidentiality

- 5.1. Parents/guardians can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously, confidentially and in line with the School's Privacy Notice for Pupils and Parents. Parents/guardians are also expected to keep matters confidential. 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; where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- 5.2. Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be made and retained for a period of 7 years, so long as there are no safeguarding implications, in line with DfE Guidance.
- 5.3. A written record of all formal complaints and their outcomes is kept by the Headmaster and is reviewed by the Governors annually. Each record indicates whether the complaint was resolved and at what stage in the process it was resolved.
- 5.4. Records concerning allegations of abuse will be preserved in accordance with the School's Data Retention Policy. This policy will be reviewed and updated in line with changing legislation and or recommendations from official bodies such as the Information Commissioner's Office.
- 5.5. The number of formal complaints dealt with in the previous school year is available on request to parents of current and prospective pupils. Please contact the Office Manager on 01483 225217 for this information.
- 5.6. This document is available on request to parents of current and prospective pupils and may also be obtained from the School website.
- 5.7. 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/guardian
 - Name of pupil
 - Description of the issue
 - Records of the investigations (if appropriate)

- Witness statement (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)

6. EYFS (Early Years Framework Setting)

- 6.1. Parents/guardians of pupils in EYFS can complain to the ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate) or to OFSTED if the complaint concerns the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements at Ripley Court School. In accordance with EYFS legislation, the school will notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within twenty-eight days of having received the complaint.

7. How to contact ISI or OFSTED

- 7.1. The ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate) can be contacted at CAP House, 9 -12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA Telephone: 020 7600 0100 / Fax: 020 7776 8849. OFSTED can be contacted via email at: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk or by telephone 0300 1234666.

APPENDIX 1

Complaints Procedure – Independent Member of the Panel

The DfE has given the following guidance on who may serve as an independent panel member:

Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are: serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered.

Compiled by: Headmaster	Revision Number: 7 (Spring Term 2026)
Approved by: Finance, Risks & Estates Committee	Next Revision date: Spring Term 2027

Revision History Table

Revision Number	Section/Paragraph number	Amendments
7 – Spring 2026	Whole document	Reference to Headmistress replaced with Headmaster
	3.1	Final sentence added
	3.2	Reference to SLT and Headmaster added
	4.1.2	Replace ‘Deputy Head’ with Head of Upper Court and Head of Lower Court. Add sentence beginning ‘In limited circumstances....’
	4.1.4	Replace ‘will investigate complaints’ with ‘will co-ordinate an investigation’
	4.1.5	Add ‘within 10 working days’
	4.1.6	New
	4.2.1	Replace ‘on an informal basis’ with ‘in accordance with Stage 1 above’
	Previous 4.2.3	Deleted – moved into paragraph 5.2
	4.2.3	Add ‘within 10 working days.....’
	4.2.6	Replace ‘steps indicated above’ with ‘steps set out in this clause 4.2’
	4.3 – 4.5	Replace ‘Chair of Governors’ with ‘Secretary to the Governors’. Various changes to the process and organisation of panel hearings.
	4.6	Final sentence added
	4.9	New
	Previous 4.4	Deleted
	5.1	Reference to Privacy Notice added
	5.2	New
	5.4	Reference to IICSA removed and replaced with referent to Data Retention Policy.
	5.6	Addition of reference to ‘guardian’.