
RUPERT HOUSE SCHOOL



WHOLE SCHOOL, INCLUDING EYFS, COMPLAINTS POLICY

Policy Owner - Head

Management Committee responsible: Senior Management Team

Governor oversight: Health & Safety Governor

Approval: Risk and Governance Committee

Last review/approval date: October 2023

Next review/approval date: October 2024

INTRODUCTION

RUPERT HOUSE 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 WITH CARE AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS POLICY.

RUPERT HOUSE MAKES ITS COMPLAINTS POLICY AVAILABLE TO ALL CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE PARENTS OF PUPILS AND THE WIDER PUBLIC ON THE SCHOOL'S WEBSITE.

Rupert House will ensure that parents of current pupils (and of prospective pupils who request it) are made aware where this document is published and/or given a hard copy.

Rupert House School will make available to current and prospective parents 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.

DEFINITION

What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint refers to any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school. It is an expression of dissatisfaction with 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, and any matter about which someone is unhappy and seeks action by the school is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if someone believes that the school has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Parents may not complain on behalf of others, and groups who wish to raise a matter are required to do so separately, as individual families.

This policy applies to parents of current pupils at the school but not previous parents unless the complaint was raised while a parent was a current parent.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

'Parents' are all natural parents; any person with parental responsibilities; any person who has care of a child, including grandparents, guardians and foster carers.

RECEIVING COMPLAINTS

Any member of staff approached by a parent with a complaint should deal with the concerns as long as the complaint lies within their area of responsibility. If, however, a member of staff is approached about a matter which lies outside their remit, it should be referred to the appropriate person or to the

Head. Parents may wish to go straight to the Head but, where appropriate, the Head will redirect such enquiries.

The Head will share any serious complaint with the Chair of Governors. If there are complaints concerning the Head, parents will be advised to write directly to the Chair of Governors, who can be contacted via the DFO.

The Head should always be notified straight away of all serious concerns and complaints, whether made verbally, by email or in writing. The Head will keep a record using the proforma below.

HANDLING COMPLAINTS

All complaints need to be handled seriously. A gentle expression of concern, or a simple query, may grow into a much larger matter if parents feel that they have been brushed aside. Equally, issues with potential to become acutely difficult may dwindle and fade if they are handled well at the initial stage.

Complaints against members of staff require particularly sensitive handling and will always be handled by the Head.

RECORDING PROCEDURES WHEN DEALING WITH A COMPLAINT

- When a complaint is received the Head should be notified.
- Any letter or communication must be shown to the Head.
- Any additional papers may be kept with the complaints form or placed in the pupil file kept in the secretary's office or it may be necessary to start a file. In any event, the location of the papers must be logged on the complaints form.
- The member of staff dealing with the complaint should write simple clear notes of all conversations about any source of dissatisfaction
- This applies to informal conversations and to telephone conversations as misunderstandings easily arise and recall can be inaccurate.
- There must be a clear statement of what is concerning the complainant and if necessary the complainant should be asked to put their complaint in writing.
- The notes can be agreed with the complainant if appropriate.

ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

Anonymous complaints will be recorded. However, the credence given to the complaint will depend on the nature of the complaint and whether it can be substantiated.

GENERAL POINTERS TO HELP AMELIORATE THE SITUATION

- Information about the complaints procedure should be clear to the complainant. Information on how to complain is sent to all parents
- Complaints should be acknowledged immediately and the complainant should be kept informed about the likely timescale of any investigation that has to be undertaken. If a more detailed response is necessary, the complainant should be notified of the date by which it will be received

- The nature of the complaint and what is concerning the complainant should be clear. If it is not immediately obvious the complainant may need more time to explain or the complainant could be asked to put their complaint in writing.
- It may be helpful to discuss possible outcomes.
- Complainants must feel that their view matters.
- An instant decision is not always the best response. The complainant can feel more reassured by a more considered approach.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection requests access to them.
- All complaints are treated confidentially but this does not mean that information can be kept secret. Always acknowledge that information may be divulged for health and safety, safeguarding, legal or administrative reasons or to verify the information.
- In order to investigate the veracity of an allegation it is usually necessary to discuss the nature of the complaint with the particular member of staff concerned.
- Any complaint made by a parent, pupil, member of staff or member of the public is treated with respect and in a professional manner.
- No complaint made by a parent should rebound adversely on his/her child/children.
- Staff will normally be told straight away if a complaint has been received against them but such complaints will be known only to themselves and to those who have to be consulted.
- It may be necessary to invoke our child protection procedures.

RESOLUTION

THE THREE-STAGE COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

THE FIRST STAGE – INFORMAL RESOLUTION

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and **informally**.
- The person receiving the complaint will establish whether it is a concern-based enquiry or a complaint and also who the appropriate person is to receive the complaint.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Form Teacher **within 15 days of the event taking place, or of the matter first coming to the attention of the complainant**. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult a senior member of staff.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, the Director of Studies, the Deputy Head or Head will usually be referred to the relevant member of staff unless the Head of Department, the Deputy Heads or Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally as a Stage One complaint.

- The **MEMBER 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 **7** days or in the event that the **MEMBER OF STAFF** and the parent **fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage Two** of this procedure.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors.

THE SECOND STAGE – FORMAL RESOLUTION

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the complainants should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The complainants should state both the nature of the complaint and the remedy sought and should include all relevant information. Complainants should note that the **complaint at this stage should not change in scope from that presented at Stage One**. Should any new matters be presented, complainants will be advised that they will be dealt with as a Stage One complaint. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action.
- In most cases, the Head will meet/speak to the complainants 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 to carry out further investigations.
- The Head will **keep written records** of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. It may be necessary for the Head to choose to involve another member of staff in the meeting and in the determination.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and complainants will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the Chair of Governors or an Independent Investigating Governor appointed by the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair, or the Investigating Governor, may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the complainants 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 complainants will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for his/her decision. The timescales referred to earlier in Stage Two will apply.
- A formal complaint will normally be dealt with within 28 days of receipt.
- If complainants are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage Three of this procedure.

THE THIRD STAGE – THE PANEL HEARING

- If complainants seek to invoke Stage Three (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to the DFO, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- A Complaints Panel hearing is a review of the decisions taken by the Head or the Chair at Stage Two. The notice of appeal must be in writing setting out the reasons for the appeal and including any documentation the complainant wishes the Panel to consider. The appeal notice and documentation must be received by the DFO **within 15 working days of the date of receipt** of the decision at Stage Two.
- The DFO, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable given the timescales set out below. On receipt of the appellant's documentation the Head or the Chair **will have 10 working days** to submit the case for the action taken.
- The Panel will consist of three persons, not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. This will be two Governors and a person who shall be independent of the management and running of the school. *The DfE has given the following guidance on the identity of an independent panel member: examples of people likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads and senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police.*

Notification of the date and nature of and personnel dealing with the appeal will normally be sent out within 10 working days of receipt of the documentation from both parties and the case will normally be dealt with within further 5 working days, although availability of the chosen Panel who are not conversant with the case may mean that this is not possible. This must be respected by both parties.

- The Chair of the Complaints Panel will decide upon the form of the appeal. This will usually be by review of the written evidence and findings, though he/she may request personal representation by both parties.
- If invited by the Chair of the Complaints Panel, complainants should attend the hearing and may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- Further complaints or documentation not already submitted cannot be produced at the appeal hearing.
- After due consideration of all facts considered relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.

The Panel will write to the complainants informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally **within 5 working days** of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about. The findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head. The Chair of the Complaints Panel's decision is final.

There have been no Stage Three complaints registered under this procedure in the previous academic year (September 2022-August 2023).

TIME FRAME FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

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 28 days** if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

The School's target is to complete Stage Three, the Complaints Panel Hearing, within a further 30 working days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

RECORDING COMPLAINTS

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. A record will also be kept of any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether it is upheld. At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of complainant
- 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)

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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them, to the extent required by paragraph 33(k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014.

All complaints will be reviewed and signed-off by another member of the SMT on a termly basis.

UNDER THE STATUTORY FRAMEWORK FOR THE EYFS: Rupert House 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.

Parents may complain directly to ISI (or to OFSTED if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements). Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or ISI:

- Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 1234 234 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk]

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

Reviewed October 2023 – by Governors' Risk & Governance Committee

Reviewed October 2023 - NA

Complaints form

Date complaint received:

Name of parent/complainant:

Name of pupil:	Form:
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Brief statement of issue:

Brief statement of outcome:

Staff member handling the issue:

Location of papers:

Complaint signed off by: _____ Date: _____