



Complaints Procedure

This policy is available on request and is published on the school's website.

I. Introduction

- (i) The Rowans, as part of The Shrewsbury House Schools Trust, ("the school") is committed to providing a high level of teaching and pastoral care for 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 procedure.
- (ii) If a parent (which term includes a guardian and may at the school's sole discretion include a parent of a former pupil and parents of prospective pupils) of a pupil has a complaint or a significant concern in relation to that pupil, the school will seek to resolve that complaint promptly, fairly and, if possible, informally. This procedure will be used for that purpose.
- (iii) Separate procedures apply if a pupil has been expelled or asked to leave or if a child protection issue has arisen.
- (iv) A concern about the safety of your child should be notified immediately to the person who you believe is best placed to take urgent action and should be confirmed in writing to the head.
- (v) This policy has been approved by the head and the Education Committee of the governing body of the school and provides guidelines for handling concerns and complaints. It takes account of paragraph 7 of the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014. The procedures below may be adapted as necessary to meet the policy aims and circumstances of each case. Certain of the procedures can only be carried out during term time.

2. Stage I – Informal Resolution

- (i) A parent with a complaint shall wherever possible, in the first instance, contact the pupil's tutor in the case of the senior school or form teacher (in the case of the other schools), who shall do everything possible to resolve the matter straightaway to the parent's satisfaction.
- (ii) If the tutor or form teacher is not able to resolve the matter alone, he or she may seek assistance from the head of the department or from the deputy head or the head.
- (iii) Where a parent initially contacts a head of department, the deputy head or the head, he or she will refer the complaint to the pupil's tutor or form teacher unless, in the circumstances of the particular case, he or she decides that it is not appropriate to do so.
- (iv) A written record of the all complaints and the date on which they were received will be kept. If after 10 working days of a complaint being made a parent is not satisfied that the matter has been resolved, he or she may proceed to stage 2 of this procedure.

3. Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- (i) A parent may complain to the head.
- (ii) Any such complaint must be in writing, stating that it is made under stage 2 of the school's complaints procedure.
- (iii) Wherever possible the head will contact the parent within 10 working days of receiving the complaint in order to discuss the matter and achieve an acceptable resolution.
- (iv) Where a resolution has not been reached the head may ask a senior member of staff, who has not been involved in the matters the subject of the complaint, to act as 'investigator'. The investigator may request additional information from the parents and may wish to speak to them and others who have knowledge of the circumstances. The outcome of the investigation will be reported to the head.
- (v) The head's decision and his or her reasons for it, shall be given in writing and sent to the parent within 10 working days of the last interview. Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to your complaint.
- (vi) Where a parent is still not satisfied that the matter has been resolved he or she may proceed to stage 3 of this procedure.

4. Stage 3- Panel Hearing

- (i) A parent may request a panel hearing by sending details of a complaint which has not been resolved at stage 2 to the secretary to the governors within seven days of the date of the decision complained of. Your letter should give full details of the complaint and state the outcome which is sought. Your letter will be acknowledged by the secretary within five working days indicating whether any further information is required, the action that will be taken and the likely timescale.
- (ii) The secretary shall then convene a panel as soon as is reasonably practicable to deal with the complaint but the panel will not normally sit during half-terms or school holidays. The panel shall be made up of at least three persons each of whom is not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member of the panel shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The other two members of the panel shall be drawn from the governing body.
- (iii) The secretary shall then acknowledge the complaint, inform the parent of the composition of the panel and schedule a hearing date which will be as soon as possible and within 28 days from his receipt of the complaint, though this may not be possible if the complaint is received outside term time.
- (iv) The panel may decide to require additional material or further particulars of the complaint, or any related matter, in advance of the hearing. Any such additional material or further particulars shall be supplied to all parties at least 7 days before any hearing to consider the complaint and, if necessary, the hearing date shall be deferred.
- (v) A parent may attend the hearing of the panel and be accompanied by a friend or relative. Legal representation is neither necessary nor appropriate but if the parent wishes to be accompanied by a legally qualified person, acting in their professional capacity, the school must be notified at least 7 days before the hearing.

- (vi) The hearing will be a private proceeding chaired by one member of the panel (chosen by themselves) and will be conducted in an informal manner. 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. 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. If termination, the original decision will stand. 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 or her comment will be minuted. The role of the panel is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints by considering the documents provided by both parties and any representations made by the parties at the hearing. The panel is not empowered to make any financial award nor impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents. At the hearing the panel will attempt to achieve a resolution.
- (vii) Where a resolution has not been reached and where the panel is satisfied that it has established all the relevant facts (if necessary having carried out further investigations) and has duly considered all that the parent has said, the panel shall make its findings and recommendations (if any). If the panel consider that the complaint is made out, they will uphold the complaint. If the panel consider that the complaint is not made out, they will dismiss the complaint. These decisions will be made on the balance of probabilities.
- (viii) The panel's findings and any recommendations (which shall be made not later than fourteen days from the date of the final hearing) and its reasons for them, shall be recorded in writing and sent to the parent, the head, the secretary to the governors and, where relevant, the person complained about. The decision, findings and any recommendations will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the governing body and the head.

5. Confidentiality and Records

- (i) Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints are treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records are kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School by paragraph 33 of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014; where disclosure is required by the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008; or where any other legal obligation prevails.
- (ii) No complaints were registered under the formal procedure in the last academic year

6. Record Retention and Data Protection

- (i) The Rowans ensures that all records relating to formal complaints are securely stored.
- (ii) Please do refer to the Parent and Pupil Privacy Notices on the School Website: <http://www.rowans.org.uk/policies/policies>
- (iii) Records of such complaints would routinely be kept for a minimum of 7 years after the pupil they relate to has left the School.
- (iv) Subject to the circumstances around the concern or complaint, it is possible for the records to be retained for longer, e.g. for 25 years from the date of birth of the pupil involved.

- (v) If there are any safeguarding considerations in relation to the concern or complaint, it is possible that these records will be retained for longer in line with the School's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.