



Complaints Procedure

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Legislation

This document meets the requirements set out in Part 7 of the schedule to [the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents/carers of pupils at the school, and specifies some of its objectives.

Scope

The School (Rowan Education) intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, and at the earliest possible stage. However, there may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally, or when they cannot be resolved informally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions,
- Safeguarding matters,
- Exclusion,
- Whistle-blowing,
- Staff grievances,
- Staff discipline.

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint (available on our website – www.rowaneducation.uk or on request in writing/by email).

Guidance

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”. The school will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible.
- A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”.

For the purposes of this policy, both concerns and complaints will be dealt with in the same way, and we be referred to collectively as 'complaints' from hereon.

The complaints procedure at Rowan Education comprises three stages, to be completed in a maximum timescale of 28 days (excluding school holidays and weekends) between the complaint being made and the final resolution. It is anticipated that the large majority of complaints will be resolved at the informal stage.

Stage 1: Informal Complaint (Resolution target within 5 working days)

Complaints may be made on an informal basis initially, either verbally or in writing. The following sections A-F deal with any informal complaints. In many instances the issue will be dealt with immediately. Where further information is required prior to addressing the complaint, every effort will be made to make an initial response within 24 hours of the issue being raised.

A. Complaints by parents/carers about a member of staff or a school matter will be dealt with in the following sequence:

1. Direct discussion with parents/carers and Head (or the Deputy Head in their absence).
2. Direct discussion with member of staff followed by conversation between member of staff and parents and aggrieved parties.
3. Action on points raised agreed.
4. Review situation.

B. Complaints by parents/carers about another child will be dealt with in the following sequence:

1. Class Teacher/Tutor/Behaviour and Learning Support Assistant (BALSA) involved immediately.
2. All staff informed at briefing for classroom awareness.
3. Concerned parents/carers telephoned; procedures explained; offered opportunity to talk further, and to meet with Head/Deputy if desired.
4. Conflict noted on CPOMS (or Arbor once active) and ensure, where possible, that Class Teacher/Tutor/BALSA mitigates conflicts.
5. In instances of bullying our [Anti-Bullying Policy](#) will be invoked.

6. Where necessary, steps will be taken in accordance with the Rowan Education [Behaviour Policy](#).

C. Complaints by a pupil about another pupil.

1. All parties will be seen separately by staff, as a fact-collecting exercise.
2. Staff informed of issue in staff briefing.
3. Parents/carers are informed.
4. In instances of bullying our Anti-Bullying Policy will be invoked.
5. Where necessary, steps will be taken in accordance with the Rowan Education Behaviour policy.

D. Complaint by a member of staff about a colleague. These should be made to the Head or, if absent or unavailable, to the Deputy Head.

1. Informally: The Head (or Deputy, in the Head's absence) will discuss matter with the member of staff and offer to intervene tactfully if desired. Usually the member of staff will choose to speak to the other staff member him/herself.
2. During appraisal: Procedures as above, though the complaint is noted. All staff are asked as a matter of routine during appraisal if they have any unresolved concerns.
3. If the complaint is regarding the Head, it should be made to the Chair of Governors (see website for contact details).
4. If the complaint is considered to be a potential safeguarding issue, the Rowan Education Safeguarding policy (Appendix 5 – Allegations against Staff) will be invoked.

E. Complaints by local residents/community.

1. If by telephone, the recipient of the call/email will collect as much information as possible and advise the complainant that the matter will be brought to the attention of the Head, investigated, and they will be contacted within 24 hours by the Head (or the Deputy in their absence).
2. Subsequent action will depend upon the circumstances and findings.

F. Complaints by former pupils

This policy does not apply to complaints made by former pupils unless the complaint was first raised whilst the pupil was still registered at the school.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

(Resolution normally within 10 working days)

Where the complainant is not satisfied with the response through the procedures outlined above, they may register a formal complaint. This should be done in writing to the *Head, to include:

- The nature of the complaint, and
- The reasons for their dissatisfaction with the School's response thus far.

The date of receipt of the letter will be recorded and taken as the start of this stage of the process. Where a complaint is received during a school holiday, it will be deemed to have reached the school on the first full school day following its arrival.

The Head (or the Deputy in their absence) will meet with the complainant as soon as is practicable to discuss the matter and, if possible, reach a resolution at this stage. However, it may be necessary to carry out further investigations. The Head will keep written records of all complaints and of meetings held in relation to them.

Once the Head is satisfied that all the relevant facts have been established, a response to the complaint will be made in writing, within ten school days. The complainant will be advised whether and to what extent it is felt the complaint is justified, and reasons for the decision. If the complaint is (partially or fully) upheld, the response will include proposed actions to remedy the situation, along with timescales.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, they should proceed to the Stage 3.

** In the event **the complaint relates to the Head** themselves, the formal stage will be dealt with by the Chair of Governors. The complaint can be submitted to the Head for forwarding, or addressed directly to the Chair of Governors, at the address provided on the School's website.*

Stage 3: Independent Resolution - Panel Hearing (Resolution target within 13 working days)

If resolution has not been achieved the complainant should write, within five school days of receipt of the Stage 2 response, to the Head, requesting a hearing before the Complaints Panel. The Head will acknowledge the letter of complaint. The date of the receipt of the letter will be taken as the start of this stage of the process.

The Head will then:

- Liaise with the Chair of Governors to convene a panel of the Directors, either one or two Governors and another individual who is independent of the management and running of the school (this may be someone who has experience of scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments, such as a serving or retired businessperson or a head or senior member of staff at another school). It is possible that there may be a delay in recruiting a suitable panel and agreeing a mutually convenient date for the hearing. In this case, the timescale may need to be extended, but the complainant must be kept fully informed.

NB. If the school has made a reasonable attempt to arrange a date for a hearing and the complainant/s have been unable to agree with this, or do not co-operate, the panel hearing will proceed within a reasonable timescale.

- Send a letter to the complainant/s, providing contact details of the Chair of the panel, inviting the complainant/s to attend the panel hearing and advising them they may be accompanied if they wish.

At the meeting

The complainant and representatives from the school will have an opportunity to set out written or oral submissions prior to the meeting. Witnesses will be called as appropriate to present their evidence.

The Panel, the complainant and the school representative will be given the chance to ask and reply to questions.

Once the complainant and school representatives have completed presenting their cases, they will be asked to leave and evidence will then be considered.

The Panel will then compile its findings and address the issues with recommendations from the meeting. The Panel will also provide copies of the findings and recommendations to the complainant, the Head and, where relevant, the subject of the complaint.

The outcome

The Complaints Panel can:

- Uphold the complaint, in whole or in part;
- Dismiss the complaint.

If the complaint is upheld (in whole or partially), the committee will:

- Decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint, and
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the School's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues arising in the future.

The school will inform all those involved of the decision in writing within 5 school days.

Unreasonably persistent or vexatious complaints

Whilst it is acknowledged that most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore will be treated accordingly until demonstrated otherwise, a complaint may be considered unreasonable if the complainant:

- Has made the same complaint before, and it has already been resolved by following this complaints procedure, or
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive, or
- Knowingly provides false information, or
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is demonstrably unfounded, or out of scope of this complaints procedure, or
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refused to co-operate with this complaints procedure, acts in an aggressive or unreasonable manner or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out, or
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds, or

- Makes a complaint intended to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time, or
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value.

Steps we will take under the circumstances outlined above:

We will take all reasonable steps to address the complainant's concerns, and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will strive to maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with complainants. We will continue to follow this complaints procedure (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact the school in such a way as to be disruptive to the School's running, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- Provide the complainant with a single point of contact via an email address and request that they only use this method of communication with the School from thereon.
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term.
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#).
- Put any other strategy in place considered reasonable and necessary.

Stopping responding

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of the following criteria are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns,
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options,
- The complainant continues to contact us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience.

Under such circumstances, we will inform the complainant that we intend to cease communication with them. We will also explain that we will still consider any new, unrelated complaints they bring to the School's notice.

In the event of any serious incident of aggression or (threatened or actual) violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from our school site.

Record Keeping

The School will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or those on the review panel. This is except where the Secretary Of State (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a Freedom Of Information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and record retention schedule.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole governing board in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Contact details

School Head/Deputy and Chair of Governors' contact details can be found on the School's website (www.rowaneducation.uk)

OFSTED

By email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

By telephone: The following helplines are open from 8.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday: general helpline **0300 123 1231**

By post Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD