



WHOLE SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (INCLUDING EARLY YEARS)

Royal Russell School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a concern or complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure. The Complaints Procedure is published on the School's website for easy access by parents.

This document gives you guidance in how to draw our attention to any issues you would like addressed. The School is here for you and your child, and we want to hear your views and ideas. Each year you will have Parents' Evenings when you can discuss your child's progress with their teachers; you are also encouraged to speak to staff with concerns at any other time.

We wish to ensure that:

- Parents wishing to contact the School know how to do so
- We respond to parents in a courteous and efficient way
- Parents realise that we listen and respond to their comments in a positive fashion
- We take action where appropriate

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure applies to parents of current pupils enrolled at the School.

It does not apply to parents of pupils who have left the School, except in circumstances where the complaints process was started when the pupils was still being educated at the School.

This procedure does not apply to parents of prospective pupils.

This procedure does not apply to pupils, even those who are adults.

Guidance

This procedure follows that set out in Part 7 of [The Independent School Standards Guidance for independent schools \(April 2019\)](#)

The Department for Education document "[Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2021](#)" gives further advice on general school complaints procedures.

How Should I Contact The School?

You can arrange to talk to the appropriate member of staff, write a letter, telephone or email the School.

Senior School

- Telephone messages can be left with:
- the main Reception Desk 020 8657 4433, reception@royalrussell.co.uk
- or with Senior School Office absence@royalrussell.co.uk
- Alternatively you may be able to be put through to a specific extension to leave a message for the relevant member of staff.
- The Headmaster's telephone number is 020 8657 3669
- The Headmaster's email address is headmaster@royalrussell.co.uk
- Staff email addresses: first initial and surname followed by @royalrussell.co.uk

Junior School

- Telephone messages can be left with the Junior School Secretary who may be able to arrange appointments to meet staff. Tel: 020 8651 5884 or email juniorschool@royalrussell.co.uk
- The Junior School Headmaster's telephone number is 020 8651 5884
- The Junior School Headmaster's email address is juniorschool@royalrussell.co.uk
- Staff email addresses: first initial and surname followed by @royalrussell.co.uk

Governors

- The Chair of Governors, Mr Andrew Merriman, can be contacted by writing to the School address or clerktogovernors@royalrussell.co.uk
- The Clerk to the Governors, Mr Neil Cufley, can be contacted via the School address or clerktogovernors@royalrussell.co.uk
- The Clerk to the Governors' telephone number is 020 8657 4433 extension 203.

What Will Happen?

We will always try to resolve concerns or complaints to your satisfaction. If you raise something face-to-face or by telephone, it may be possible to resolve the matter immediately and to your satisfaction. In some circumstances, we may need time to discuss the issues with others before informing you of an outcome.

Anonymous Complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headmaster or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation. Where a complaint relates to a 'whistle blowing' matter, it will be investigated in line with Whistle Blowing Policy.

Time Scales

Parents must raise the complaint within three calendar months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three calendar months of the last of these incidents. The School will consider complaints made outside of this time frame, if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints Received Outside Term Time

The School will consider Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints received outside of term time to have been received on the first day of the next School term after the holiday period.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, the School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an apology
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact the person most closely associated with the issue.

Senior School

Issue:

Academic
Pastoral & Disciplinary Matter
Sport Concerns
Music Concerns

Initial Contact:

Teacher concerned, Tutor or Head of Year
Housemaster/Housemistress or Head of Year
Director of Sport
Director of Music

The Senior School Deputy Heads will be more than happy to meet with you if you feel this is more appropriate.

Junior School

Issue:

Academic/Pastoral/Discipline
Sport Concerns
Music Concerns

Initial Contact:

Class Teacher or Phase Leader
Head of Boys Sport, Head of Girls Sport
Head of Music

The Junior School Deputy Heads or Junior School Headmaster will be more than happy to meet with you if you feel this is more appropriate.

Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, the Deputy Heads or the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant initial contact shown above unless the Head of Department, the Deputy Heads or the Headmaster (Senior or Junior as appropriate) deem it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

The initial contact 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 2 weeks or in the event that the initial contact, the Head of Department, Deputy Head and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the relevant Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

The Headmaster will meet or speak to the parents concerned, within 14 days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter.

If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

If it is necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations, the parents will be informed of the timescale for this process.

The Headmaster may consult with an appropriate member of the Governing Board to assist with the resolution of the complaint at this stage.

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

Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made within 14 days of the receipt of the 'Stage 2' complaint and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should make this request within 14 days of the outcome of 'Stage 2' to the Clerk to the Governors at the School address. They will be referred to the Chair of Governors who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration.

The Complaints Panel will consist of three persons. Two of these will be Governors of the School not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One of these two Governors will be appointed by the Chair of Governors to act as Chair of the Panel. The third person shall be an independent person, who is not involved in the management or running of the School. The Chair of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place within 28 term time days. If the complaint is received in a period leading into or during the School holidays, the Complaints Panel will be convened at the beginning of the following term.

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 normally not later than 7 days prior to the hearing.

The parent(s) may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person, if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation is not permitted.

If, after confirming the date and time of the Panel hearing, the parent is unable to attend the hearing, an alternative date will be sought. If a suitable new date cannot be found, The Chair of the Panel may decide to convene the panel and review the complaint in the absence of the parent.

A written record of the meeting will be taken by a representative of the School and this will form the 'notes' of the meeting which will be shared with the parent(s). The parent(s) may request amendments on points of factual accuracy; other comments on the notes may be appended if they are not incorporated.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint 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 facts they consider relevant, the Chair of the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.

The Chair of the Panel will write to the parent(s) informing them of the decision and the reasons for it, normally within 14 days of the hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings, recommendations (if any) and notes from the meeting will be sent in writing, by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parent(s), and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Headmaster and Chair of Governors.

A copy of the Panel findings and any recommendations will be kept in the School for review and inspection by the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome within 28 days.

All written complaints about the EYFS will be recorded and made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

Exclusions

This complaints procedure can also be used by parents to express their concerns or to complain about the exclusion of a pupil from the school.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are 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 parent
- 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 relating to individual complaints (including emails and records of phone conversations, statements and records) will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

The School will provide Ofsted or ISI, 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 also complain directly to Ofsted if they wish. Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 4666. Where a complaint relates to boarding matters, parents can contact ISI directly concerning child welfare on 020 7710 9900 or concerns@isi.net

Complaints at Stage 2 and Stage 3 are reviewed by Governors at the termly meeting of the Strategy and Remuneration Committee (SARC).

There was one complaint received by the School, during the Academic Year 2020 – 2021, which reached stage 2 or stage 3 of this procedure.



A J Merriman
Chair of Governors



C J Hutchinson
Headmaster

Reviewed by Chair and Headmaster	September 2021
Reviewed and approved by EWC	October 2021
Reviewed and Approved by Board	December 2021
Next Review	October 2022