



The Royal School

Wolverhampton

Complaints Policy

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Author | Mark Heywood |
| Job title | Principal |
| Signed | <i>Mark Heywood</i> |
| Date | September 2023 |
| Version no. | v.3 |
| Review frequency | Annually |
| Approving body/committee | Full Governors |
| Target audience | All Stakeholders |

Changes to version 3 of this policy

Annex B Serial and persistent complaints added.

Complaints Policy

This policy applies to children in the whole school, including those boarding, Learn to Swim enterprise and fits in with the school's ethos and values as follows:

- The Royal School is committed to provide for quality learning within a safe, caring environment achieved through a close partnership between Governors, staff, students, parents and the wider community
- We aim quickly to become a focal point of excellence for the community
- We will provide an excellent overall service to our stakeholders in developing the holistic development of each child
- Changes to Version 3 – incorporation of Persistent Complaints Annex B

1.1 Aims

This Policy document has been written to support all staff at The Royal School in their handling of concerns and complaints. It exists to ensure that all staff know the concern/complaint handling process and have guidance on the most effective way to manage people making complaints and the complaints that arise.

The majority of issues raised by parents, the community or students, are concerns rather than complaints. We are committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing formal procedures.

The prime aim of The Royal School's policy is to resolve the concern/complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. Malicious complaints may incur appropriate action by the school. Any complaints concerning the conduct of staff will be handled in accordance with the school's internal disciplinary procedures such as an investigation will remain confidential.

This policy is here to deal with concerns and complaints that are made from an external source. Procedures for dealing with internal incidents and complaints from within school are dealt with by existing policy or procedure. All external incidents and complaints must be dealt with following the instructions given in this document. The Principal/ Head of Primary School will oversee the policy and procedure. Any queries about this document should be referred to the Principal.

2.0 Procedures

The Principal will manage the school complaints log, in which all details of a complaint and the school's response are recorded. This log is to be made available to parents, external person as well as to Ofsted Inspectors. At the end of each month the complaints log will be analysed and root causes identified. The Principal and Head of Primary School will carry this out. The findings will be made into a termly report that will be discussed at Senior Leadership Team meetings to address issues, which occur frequently. Governors will review the policy on an annual basis unless there is an incident deemed by the Principal to be a critical incident; an example is a complaint to Ofsted/EFA copied to the school or serious safeguarding allegation, when an immediate review may take place.

As primary contacts for external concerns/complaints are Senior Leadership Team members, Learn-to-Swim coordinator and the Principal's PA, these personnel will be briefed

termly on the contents of this document. New staff will be made aware of this policy as part of their induction programme.

All formal complaints received at The Royal School will be submitted on the Formal Complaint Form (attached as Annex A).

2.1 Incident Definition

An incident or event involving our students or staff which is reported, for example, by a parent or a member of the local community. Such an incident can occur on or off the school premises.

2.2 Complaint Definition

A complaint is defined as an external body expressing dissatisfaction with any aspect of the school. It can be written or oral and should be logged as a concern or complaint regardless of whether or not it is considered to be justified.

For the school to investigate a concern/complaint, it needs to be raised within 3 months of the incident occurring. If a complaint is older than 3 months it will not be investigated, unless it relates to a safeguarding matter.

A complaint is not to be confused with an enquiry, i.e. can you tell me why some of your students are allowed off-site at lunchtime? This is not a complaint.

3.0 Complaint Handling Principles

Our aim is to ensure that an impartial view of the concern/complaint is reached and appropriate action is taken by the School which should result in any complainant being satisfied with the handling of their concern or complaint. This is achieved by following the principles listed below:

- Royal School staff will always respond with their name so that the caller knows whom they are talking to for future reference if required
- Listen carefully and check for understanding of the parent/customer's complaint, and request that the parent/customer submits the complaint on the Formal Complaints Form.
- The staff member should establish the full details of the complaint to ensure that our investigations address the key concern and concentrate on the right area
- Details of the complaint will be recorded in the Complaints log
- Once the Formal Complaint Form has been received, the school should confirm receipt as soon as possible and thank the complainant for bringing the concern/incident to our attention and give a date by when they will hear back usually within 10 working days during term time and 25 working days at all other times – record this
- A course of action will be discussed with the SLT
- Action/investigation will be taken to resolve the incident/complaint informally in the first instance
- The complainant will be contacted to either advise on the outcome of the investigation or to be kept informed of progress at the agreed date

- Timescales

The school will respond to formal written complaints within 10 working days during term times and 25 working days at all other times at most.

- Escalation

The majority of complaints will be resolved at the first point of contact. However, there may be circumstances when a customer is unhappy with the response provided and will decide to take the matter further.

- Complaints against the Principal will be first dealt with by the Chair of Governors. Complaints against the Chair of Governors or any individual governor should be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

4.0 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution stage – Raising a concern

It is hoped that most concerns and complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. The school requests that complainants make their first contact with the student's tutor or subject teacher. Alternatively, the concern should be raised with the Principal or Head of Primary School (for Primary School matters).

It is important for parents / complainants to recognise that the school is a busy organisation and that whilst we will do our best, it may not be possible to offer an appointment immediately.

On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case the complainant will receive an informal but informed response within a day or two. If the staff member contacted cannot resolve the matter alone, then it may be necessary for him/her to consult with other members of staff for resolution.

The form/subject teacher or nominated members of staff will make a written record of all concerns and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 school days during term time, or within 25 school days at other times, or in the event that the staff member and the complainant fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the complainants will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure within 10 school days.

The vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if the complainant is not satisfied with the result at the Informal Stage, they should write to or call the school within 10 school days and state what you would like the school to do. The school will then look at the complaint at the next stage and complaints should be made in writing on the Formal Complaint Form to the Principal.

4.1 Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the concern/complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis or in the Stage 1 process, then the complainant should put their complaint in writing to the Principal within 3 working days of the outcome of the informal resolution process. The Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Principal will use reasonable endeavours to speak to or meet with the complainant concerned, normally within 10 school days of receiving the written complaint (during term time) or within 25 working days at other times or sooner if possible, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Principal or nominated member of SLT to carry out further investigation.

The Principal/ nominated member of the SLT will keep written records of all meetings and interviews in relation to the complaint.

Once the Principal is satisfied that, so far as is practical, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing within 10 school days (or 25 working days outside of term time) of having received the complaint. The Principal will also give reasons for his/her decision.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure and must notify the Clerk to the Governors within 10 school days.

Additionally Ofsted/EFA may be contacted for serious concerns on 0300 123 1231 or in writing at Ofsted, National Business Unit, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

4.2 Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If complainants seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should write to the Clerk to the Governors who has been appointed by the Board of Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors. The Clerk to the Governors will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practical and normally within 15 school days.

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 not later than 5 school days prior to the hearing.

The complainants may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher, or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If possible the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately 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 the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall notify within 7 days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the complainants informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the complainants, the Principal, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.

The complainants can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be retained for at least three years and kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school as set out in the standards in the Education (Independent School Standards (England) Regulations 2014, Schedule 1, Part 7; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails. If parents are unhappy with the way the complaint has been handled they can contact the EFA/Department for Education at (<https://form.education.gov.uk>) The School must provide 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.

Additionally Ofsted/EFA may be contacted for serious concerns on 0300 123 1231 or in writing at Ofsted, National Business Unit, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD.

5.0 Root Cause Analysis

Root cause analysis for parent/customer complaints is about determining the real issues that cause parents/customers to complain and looking at how to address them.

At the end of each term the Principal or nominated SLT member will carry out the root cause analysis. The complaints log will be checked and main areas of dissatisfaction that are within the school's control examined. The details of these complaints will be recorded and discussed at the next Senior Leadership Team meeting and reported to Governors termly.

6.0 Review

The Governing Body will review this policy annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school and related enterprises.

A copy of this policy and other related policies can be obtained from the School Office or downloaded from the school website in the School Policies section.

| Exceptions | Who to contact |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Admissions to schools <input type="checkbox"/> Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN) <input type="checkbox"/> Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation <input type="checkbox"/> Safeguarding policy | <p>Concerns should be raised direct with the school and/or local authorities (LA).</p> <p>For school admissions, it will depend on who is the admission authority which is the school and/or the LA).</p> <p>Safeguarding issues can be addressed to Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children Board</p> <p>School safeguarding policy</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Exclusion of children from school | <p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Whistleblowing | <p>The School has an internal whistleblowing procedure for the employees and voluntary staff. Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk or by writing to:</p> <p>WBHL, Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD.</p> <p>The Department for Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.</p> |

The Royal School, Wolverhampton – Complaint Form – (Annex A)

| | | |
|--|--------------|----------------|
| Your name: | | |
| Pupil's/Person's name: | | |
| Your relationship to the pupil/person: | | |
| Address: | | |
| Postcode: | | |
| Day time telephone number: | | |
| Evening telephone number/mobile: | | |
| Please give details of your complaint. <i>(continue on a separate page if necessary)</i> | | |
| | | |
| What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (e.g. Who did you speak to and what was the response? | | |
| | | |
| What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage? | | |
| | | |
| Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details. | | |
| | | |
| Signature: | Date: | |
| Official use: | | |
| Date acknowledgement sent: | | |
| By who: | | |
| Complaint referred to: | | |
| Date: | | |
| Complaint process completed: | Date: | Signed: |

Annex B Serial and persistent complaints

- 1 Serial and persistent complaints are taken seriously by The Royal School as they put a strain on valuable resources and hinder the progress of proper investigations.
- 2 If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, The Royal School will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.
- 3 If the complainant contacts The Royal School again on the same issue, the correspondence may be viewed as "serial" or "persistent" and The Royal School may choose not to respond.
- 4 The Royal School will not mark a complaint as "serial" before the complainant has completed all stages of the complaints procedure.
- 5 Under no circumstances will a complainant be marked as "serial" for exercising their right to refer their complaint to their MP, regardless of which stage the complaint has reached.
- 6 The Royal School may consider a complaint to be "frivolous" or "vexatious" if:
 - 6.1 complaints are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious.
 - 6.2 there is insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and / or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason.
 - 6.3 there is insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner.
 - 6.4 complaints are designed to cause disruption or annoyance; or
 - 6.5 demands for redress lack any serious purpose or value.
- 7 Complainants should try to limit their communication with The Royal School about the complaint while it is being progressed, as it is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) which is likely to delay an outcome being reached.
- 8 For complainants who excessively contact The Royal School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify particular methods of communication, provide a single point of contact and / or limit the number of communications which may be made with The Royal School in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after three months.
- 9 The Royal School will stop responding to a complainant where:
 - 9.1 The Royal School has taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns.
 - 9.2 the complainant has been given a clear statement of The Royal School position and their options; and
 - 9.3 the complainant contacts The Royal School repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time.
- 10 The Royal School's case to stop responding will be stronger if it agrees with any of the following statements:
 - 10.1 the complainant's letters, emails, or telephone calls are often or always abusive or aggressive.
 - 10.2 the complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff; and / or
 - 10.3 The Royal School has reason to believe the individual is contacting The Royal School with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience.

- 11 In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, The Royal School will immediately report this to the police for criminal investigation. The Royal School may also withdraw the complainant's implied permission to enter or be on The Royal School site(s).
- 12 If the complainant's behaviour is a cause for concern, the Principal can ask them to leave the school premises and bar individuals from entering. If The Royal School makes the decision to bar a complainant from the school premises, it will provide the complainant the opportunity to express formally their views on a decision to bar.
- 13 The Principal's decision to bar will be reviewed by the Chair of Governors or a Governor appointed by the Chair for this purpose. If the decision is confirmed, the complainant will be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place and when the decision will be reviewed.