



ROWDEFORD SCHOOL

POLICY ON COMPLAINTS

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Policy and Procedures for Dealing with Possible, Suspected or Alleged Child Abuse and its Policy on the Provision of an Independent Listener.

Rationale

All maintained schools are required under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002 to have a Governing Body Complaints Procedure to deal with general complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides. The law also requires the procedure to be publicised.

The procedure specifically excludes complaints about curriculum or collective worship issues, or staff grievance or disciplinary matters, for which separate dedicated procedures are established. Details of these procedures are available from the School Office, if required.

This general complaints procedure for Rowdeford School is based on DFE advice, contained in DFE Complaints Procedure Toolkit - LEA/0180/2003. Copies of the toolkit can be obtained from the DFE website www.governor.net.com.

Serious complaints against the school, or the staff of the school, will be notified to the Commission for Social Care Ofsted Inspection. This is in addition to any other notification requirements placed on the school by its own policies, the LA, the Department for Education, or any other official body. Children and their parents will be told how they can make a complaint directly to Ofsted.

It is not possible for the school to deal with anonymous or second hand complaints. If a parent or governor receives a complaint from someone else they must encourage them to contact the school directly, so that the complaint can be dealt with according to the school's policy.

Rowdeford governing body complaints policy statement

The Governors encourage anyone with any cause for concern about the school, or the services it provides, to speak at the earliest opportunity with any member of staff, who will inform the Headteacher and do their best to resolve the matter straight away. If preferred, a letter or email direct to the Headteacher would be equally welcome (head@rowdeford.wilts.sch.uk). However, if your concern is not resolved to your satisfaction, or if you feel it needs to be framed as a formal complaint from the outset, then please do not hesitate to follow the Complaints Procedure outlined below.

Rowdeford school formal complaints procedure

Anyone wishing to register a formal complaint about any aspect of this school or the services it provides (excluding curriculum, collective worship issues and staff grievance or disciplinary matters) should complete a Rowdeford School Complaints Form (Appendix 1 - copies available from the School Office) and either hand it to the Receptionist or send it in with a covering letter addressed to the Headteacher. If appropriate, please mark the envelope and letter 'CONFIDENTIAL', in which case the matter will be dealt with under strict confidentiality rules. The Headteacher will:

1. Clarify the precise nature of the complaint and what the complainant feels would put things right, meeting with the complainant or contacting them, as necessary

2. Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
3. Conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
4. Keep notes of all telephone calls and interviews
5. Aim to reach a decision as soon as reasonably possible, normally within 7 working days, and reply formally to the complainant. If, however, the complaint is made just before a holiday, the timescale will be waived and a response will be made as soon as possible in the new term.

At each stage in the above procedure, the Headteacher will keep in mind ways in which the complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part, and it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology
- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently, or better
- an assurance that the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response, s/he should write to the Chair of Governors. The Chair will then appoint a panel of three Governors to review the proceedings to date, hear all the evidence again, including any further evidence that may be available, and then decide whether to uphold or amend the findings of the Headteacher. The detailed procedure this panel will follow is attached (Appendix 5).

Vexatious Complaints:

There may be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Problems may arise where the complainants are unreasonable and are not seeking to have a situation remedied but instead are determined to extract retribution for some real or imagined wrong. Complainants will be advised in writing of the school policy for handling unreasonably persistent, harassing or abusive complainants.

If still not satisfied, the complainant may contact the DFE, but they will generally only take action where they believe that the school or governors have acted unlawfully.

Variations to the above procedure

Guidance on pupil-related complaints is set out in Appendix 2.

The Headteacher is responsible for the school's complaints procedures, but the Deputy Headteacher will generally deal with complaints relating to the school day, and the Head of Student Welfare with boarding complaints.

If the complaint involves the Headteacher or a Governor, the complainant should submit the Complaints Form direct to the Chair of Governors, who will either deal with it personally or refer it to a nominated governor.

If the complaint involves the Chair of Governors, the complainant should submit the Complaints Form direct to the Vice Chair of Governors.

Rowdeford complaints procedure monitoring

The Headteacher will maintain a central register of all complaints received and actions taken as a result. The Governing Body will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes on a regular basis to ensure the effectiveness of this procedure, and make changes where necessary.

This procedure is to be published for display in the following locations:

Parents' Handbook
Staff Handbook
Staff Notice Board
School Website

Pupil guidelines will be displayed in classrooms and boarding houses.

3. POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher on an annual basis, and by the Governing Body, in line with the school's Policy Review Schedule.

This policy was reviewed in January 2017 and endorsed by the Governing Body at their meeting of 6 February 2017

Signed
(Clerk to the Governors)

Date

APPENDIX 1

ROWDEFORD SCHOOL COMPLAINTS FORM

In the event of a complaint that you have been unable to resolve informally, please complete and return this form for the attention of the Headteacher, who will acknowledge receipt and keep you informed of the action taken to resolve the matter. If the complaint involves the Headteacher or a Governor, please address the form to the Chair of Governors; if it concerns the Chair of Governors, please address to the Vice Chair of Governors. Mark CONFIDENTIAL if appropriate.

Your name:

Pupil's name (if appropriate):

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Daytime telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint (*continue on reverse if necessary*)

What action, if any, have you already taken to try to resolve your complaint? Who did you speak to and what was the response? (*continue on reverse if necessary*)

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? Is so, please give details.

Signature:

Name:

Date:

Official use:Date received:

Acknowledgement sent:

Referred to:

Date of response:

APPENDIX 2

GUIDANCE ON PUPIL-RELATED COMPLAINTS

1. Most concerns and complaints can be dealt with by talking to your child's class teacher/tutor or personal carer. Talking to them early on can often prevent misunderstandings and concerns from escalating.
2. We hope that you will not need to complain, but we would rather know about any problem so that we can sort it out
3. We recognise that, on occasion, you may feel that the matter is unresolved and that you need to make a formal complaint. The school has a written policy and guidelines on how to complain, a copy of which is available from the school office, on request.
4. Anyone with parental responsibility, or an interest in a pupil's welfare, has the right to complain. The school will take all complaints seriously and will deal with them quickly and confidentially. We will also inform you of the progress and outcome of your complaint within seven working days.
5. At any stage, you can direct your complaint to
 - the local Social Services Department (01380 730055)
 - Ofsted (08456 404040)

The DFE is responsible for ensuring that the complaints procedure adopted by the school meets their guidance, and that the governors have carried out a full and fair investigation.

6. Finally, if you are still not happy, you have the right to refer your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education.

APPENDIX 3

PUPIL GUIDANCE ON COMPLAINTS

1. If you feel that you have been unfairly treated you should complain.
2. You have the right to complain about:
 - Racist or sexist remarks
 - Anyone touching, pushing, hitting or hurting you in any way
 - Being unreasonably denied food, drink, sleep, clothing or medical attention
 - An unfair or unreasonable punishment or sanction
 - Being denied reasonable access or phone calls to parents, guardians or social workers
3. You may tell:
 - Your parents or carers, or social worker
 - Your Personal Carer
 - Your class teacher
 - The Head of Student Welfare
 - The Headteacher
 - The Deputy Headteacher
 - The school's Independent Listener.

If you wish, you can phone 'Childline' on the freephone number
0800 11 11

4. Any of these people will explain how you can do this and can help you to make the complaint, if you wish.
5. Nobody will ever be angry with you for making a complaint and you will never be made to feel bad about it.
6. We will make sure that any complaint you make is sorted out as quickly as possible.

APPENDIX 4

PUPIL COMPLAINTS FORM

This form must be used in the event of a pupil complaint within school. All entries must be dated, timed and initialled.

Name of pupil:

Date of complaint:

Time of complaint:

Nature of initial complaint:

Informal

Formal

Log of events: *(continue on a separate sheet if necessary)*

Outcome of complaint: *(how resolved, date of resolution, etc)*

Complaint dealt with by _____ (Signed)

Pupil _____ (Signed)

Copied to:

APPENDIX 5

COMPLAINTS HEARD BY THE GOVERNING BODY COMPLAINTS APPEAL PANEL

Rowdeford Appeal Panel will consist of three Governors with no prior knowledge of, or interest in, the subject of the complaint. All of them should be fully up to date with Rowdeford's detailed complaints procedure. They will elect their own Chair. All Panels will be clerked, by the Clerk to the Governors. The Headteacher will attend to present the school's case.

Individual complaints will not be heard by the whole governing body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

The remit of the Panel is to review all relevant paperwork and other information available concerned with the complaint; clarify or hear any new evidence; and then decide whether to:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Recommend any changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur

GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR PANELS

It is important that the appeal hearing is independent and impartial and that it is seen to be so. No governor may sit on the panel if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint, or in the circumstances surrounding it. In deciding the make-up of the panel, governors need to try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.

The aim of the hearing, which needs to be held in private, will always be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it has to be recognised that the complainant may not be satisfied with the outcome if the hearing does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations that will satisfy the complainant that his or her complaint has been taken seriously.

An effective panel will acknowledge that many complainants feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child. The panel chair will ensure that the proceedings are as welcoming as possible. The layout of the room will set the tone and care is needed to ensure the setting is informal and not adversarial.

Extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child, who should normally be accompanied by a parent or guardian, or other adult of their choice. Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings will ensure that the child does not feel intimidated. The panel needs to be aware of the views of the child and give them equal consideration to those of adults. Where the child's parent is the complainant, it would be helpful to give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the hearing, if any, the child needs to attend.

THE ROLE OF THE CLERK

The Clerk to the Governors will:

1. Set the date, time and venue of the hearing, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible

2. Collate any written material and send it to the parties in advance of the hearing
3. Meet and welcome the parties as they arrive at the hearing
4. Record the proceedings
5. Notify all parties of the Panel's decision

CHECKLIST FOR AN APPEAL PANEL CHAIR

1. Parents/Carers are permitted to bring a supporter who may represent the case on their behalf.
2. The meeting will be clerked.
3. The hearing should be as informal as possible. Parents and others who may not be used to speaking at such a hearing must be put at ease. Neither party may tape record the meeting without prior agreement.
4. The remit of the panel should be explained to all those attending
5. All parties must treat each other with respect and courtesy throughout the hearing
6. Any written material must be seen by all parties. If a new issue arises, all parties should be given an opportunity to consider and comment on it
7. After the introductions, the complainant should be invited to explain their complaint, followed by any witnesses they wish to call (witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence)
8. The Headteacher may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken
9. The Headteacher is then invited to explain the school's actions, followed by any school witnesses
10. The complainant may question both the Headteacher and the witnesses after each has spoken
11. The panel may ask questions at any point
12. The complainant should then be invited to sum up their complaint
13. The Headteacher should then be invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint
14. The chair should then thank both parties and explain that they will be notified in writing of the panel's decision, normally within 48 hours
15. Both parties then leave together before the panel decides on the issues
16. Finally, the Chair of the Panel should ensure that the complainant is notified of the panel's decision in writing, normally within 48 hours