



Ruthin School

*focusing on the individual
since 1284*

Complaints Policy

2008-09

This policy concerns complaints from parents, pupils and others.

Types of Concerns and Complaints:

The majority of concerns/complaints received by the School fall into the following categories:

- financial and administrative (and breach of contract in independent schools)
- academic (course programme, unsatisfactory teaching, too much/too little homework, progress in a particular subject etc)
- pastoral care (discipline/indiscipline, inappropriate sanctions, bullying, overall progress of the child, unhappiness of child, accommodation etc)
- child protection (allegations against staff, handling of sensitive issues)

Responsibilities:

The Council of Management, for:

- formulating policy, procedures, and guidelines
- appointing where necessary an independent panel to hear complaints when complainants are not satisfied with the School's response
- receiving reports and findings from the panel
- receiving reports from the Head; advising the Head.

The CoM will monitor the level and nature of complaints and review the outcomes regularly. They will also monitor the School's response to complaints and any panel recommendations.

Chair of the CoM, for appointing a panel of at least three people independent of the management of the School to hear complaints from complainants not satisfied with the School's response.

Chair of the independent Panel, for ensuring that:

- the parties understand the procedure
- issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are established
- complainants are put at ease
- the hearing is conducted as informally as possible
- the panel is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the panel has a vested interest in the outcome, or has been involved in the issues previously
- all parties have the chance to be heard
- any written material is seen by all parties
- findings are communicated to the parent and the School within three days of the hearing

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk will act as the reference point for the complainant when the complainant has not been satisfied with the School's response.

The Clerk will:

- set convenient dates and times and venues for hearings
- collate any written material and forward it to the parties
- meet and welcome the parties
- record the proceedings
- notify the parties of the decision

Head (or his nominated Deputy), for:

- overall internal management of the procedures
- ensuring that there is both an informal and formal procedure
- ensuring that the written policy and procedures are available to parents, pupils and members of the public on request
- hearing complaints at the second stage
- ensuring that the procedures are monitored and reviewed and regular reports made to the CoM.

Bursar, for administrative, environmental and financial queries and complaints

Heads of Department/Subject, for dealing with and where possible resolving concerns/complaints about academic matters/programmes of study/teaching methods at stage 1 of the procedures.

Heads of House/Year Groups, for dealing with and where possible resolving complaints concerning pupil progress, discipline issues, pastoral care.

CPO, for receiving any child protection issues.

All staff, for hearing any concerns brought to them by parents and pupils and reassuring them that they will be dealt with as soon as possible by the appropriate member of staff, and for informing the relevant staff of the concerns. Also for passing any complaints received from people who are not parents or pupils to the Head or nominated Deputy.

Procedures:

General:

There are three stages:

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

Concerns expressed by parents or pupils to any member of staff should be dealt with by that member of staff if he/she is able to do so. If the member of staff considers the issue to be beyond his/her competence the concern should be passed to the relevant Head of Department/Housemaster etc.

Concerns/complaints which come to a member of staff from other sources should be passed immediately to the Head or his nominated Deputy who will inform the complainant of the action he/she proposes to take.

Stage 2 - Formal Procedure

Complaint will be heard by Head or his nominated Deputy

Stage 3 - Independent Panel Hearing

Complaint will be heard by the independent panel appointed by the governing body

Detailed Guidance

All staff and governors should be conversant with the procedures set out below:

Stage 1

All staff should listen carefully and patiently to parents' and pupils' complaints, recognising that however ill-founded the complaint might be it is a matter of real concern to the parent or pupil.

24-hour service

If the matter is within the competence of the member of staff to resolve quickly this should be done. Otherwise the complainant should be reassured that the complaint will be passed to the relevant member of staff, and the relevant person should be informed by the member of staff as soon as possible. The complainant should be told that it is the School's policy to respond to the verbal complaint within 24 hours, even if the issue cannot be entirely resolved in that time.

If a trivial/simple verbal concern/complaint is made it might be possible to resolve it immediately. In more serious cases, or where a member of staff is uncertain, parents should always be asked to put their complaint in writing (and move to Stage 2 – Formal Procedure). This is to ensure that there is no uncertainty over what the complaint consists of or the action taken by the members of staff.

Serious complaint by a pupil

If a serious complaint is made by a pupil, the member of staff should immediately inform the Head/nominated Deputy, who will discuss the issue with the relevant members of staff in order to determine what the course of action should be.

Members of staff receiving a concern/complaint must use the School's 'Complaints Form' (attached) to inform the relevant senior member of staff. This does not prevent the member of staff also speaking to the relevant senior colleague about the matter at the earliest opportunity.

If the senior member of staff considers the issue to be serious, he/she should inform the (Head/nominated Deputy) via the School's 'Complaints Form', and inform the complainant of the action taken.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the informal response, he/she should be informed that they must make a formal complaint in writing to the (Head/nominated Deputy).

In any cases of doubt members of staff should seek the advice of the SMT who has the responsibility for mentoring colleagues.

Informal resolution should normally take no more than **three** working days. If a longer period is necessary to complete investigations the complainant should be informed, within three days, of the reasons, and the new date for resolution.

Stage 2

Formal Procedure

When a written formal complaint is received, the Head/nominated Deputy must consult the relevant staff, make appropriate investigations, and attempt to resolve the issue within **three** working days. If a resolution cannot be found the Head/nominated Deputy should inform the complainant of their right of appeal to an independent panel.

If the complaint concerns a child protection issue or involves an allegation of abuse by a member of the staff the CPO – Julie Higham – must be informed.

No complaint should normally be left unresolved at this stage for more than **THREE** days after receipt of the complaint. Where more time is necessary to complete the investigations the complainant should be informed and another date set.

Stage 3

Hearings by an Independent Panel

Complainants who are not satisfied by the School's decision can request a hearing by a panel of three members independent of the school management.

The complainant must be advised by the (Head/nominated Deputy) to write to the Chair of the CoM (Mr J P Williams) via the Clerk, giving details of the complaint. The Chair will nominate the panel.

The hearing must be held within 10 days of the Chair receiving notice of the complaint.

The complainant must be told of their right to be accompanied by a friend.

The independent panel will draw up its own procedures, and will agree these with the Chair, who will report them to the next governing body meeting.

The panel will ensure that the complainant is heard in private, is welcomed, and is as far as possible put at ease.

Careful consideration will obviously be taken when the complainant is a pupil.

The panel will hear the appeal(s), consider all the views expressed and decide the outcome.

The panel can make such findings and recommendations to the CoM as it wishes. It must send its report to the CoM, the Head and (where appropriate) the complainant, within three working days of the hearing.

Council of Management Action

The CoM, after consultation with the Head, will consider the panel's findings and recommendations and make such decisions as it feels are necessary.

In general the CoM will take one or more of the following courses of action:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- decide on appropriate action to resolve the complaint
- recommend changes to the School's systems or procedures.

The CoM's decision is binding.

Reporting and Recording:

In all cases it is important for staff to use the School's 'Complaints Form' so that records of the complaint and the action taken can be recorded and traced. Supporting documents should be attached to the form.

The Clerk to the CoM will ensure that all correspondence, statements and records pertaining to the complaint are kept confidential and secure.

The Head/nominated Deputy will consider the handling of complaints from time to time, and will discuss issues with staff as necessary.

The Head will report to staff from time to time, and to the CoM as requested, on the number and type of complaints received and their outcomes.

Richard N E Raven
Chair of the Education Committee

PARENTAL COMPLAINT FORM

Member of Staff receiving the complaint: _____

From (Name of Parent): _____

Name of Pupil and Class: _____

Date/Time of complaint: _____

Complaint: _____

Action Taken: _____

Outcome: _____

Issue Passed to: _____ Date/Time: _____

Seen: Senior Member of Staff (Name): _____ Date/Time: _____

Deputy Head:

Head: