



WHOLE SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (INCLUDING EARLY YEARS)

This procedure applies to all Schools within the Royal Russell Trust Group of Schools.

Schools within the Royal Russell Trust Group of Schools have long prided themselves on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to their 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 2020" \(updated 15 January 2021\)](#) gives further advice on general school complaints procedures.

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as '*an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought*'.

A complaint may be defined as '*an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action*'.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the

complaints procedure. Royal Russell School and St David's School take concerns seriously and we will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

How Should I Contact the School?

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

Royal Russell 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

Royal Russell 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 juniorheadmaster@royalrussell.co.uk
- Staff email addresses: first initial and surname followed by @royalrussell.co.uk

St David's Prep School

- Telephone messages can be left for members of staff and for the Head Teacher of St David's via the School Office on 020 8660 0723
- The Head Teacher of St David's can be contacted by email on office@stdavidsschool.co.uk
- Staff email addresses: first initial and surname followed by @stdavidsschool.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 Head 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 of 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.

Royal Russell Senior School

Issue:

Academic matters
Pastoral & Disciplinary matters
Sport matters
Music matters

Initial Contact:

Teacher concerned, Tutor or Head of Department
Housemaster or Housemistress
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.

Royal Russell Junior School

Issue:

Academic/Pastoral/Discipline
Sport matters
Music matters

Initial Contact:

Class Teacher or Phase Leader
Head of 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.

St David's Prep School

Issue:

Academic/Pastoral/Discipline
Sport matters
Music matters

Initial Contact:

Class Teacher
PE & Games Teacher
Music Leader

The Deputy Head or Head 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 Head will usually be referred to the relevant initial contact shown above unless the Head of Department, the Deputy Heads or the Head (Senior or Junior as appropriate) deem it appropriate for them 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 14 term time days or if, in the initial contact, the Member of Staff 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 Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

The Head will meet or speak to the parents concerned, within 14 term time days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If it is not possible to meet with parents within this time period an extension in time may be agreed by the Head and the parents. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

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

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

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

Once the Head is satisfied, so far as is practicable, that all the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made within 14 days of the 'Stage 2' meeting with parents and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for this 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 10 days of receiving 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 Head 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 Head.

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 working days.

All written complaints about the EYFS will be recorded and made available to Ofsted and ISI on request. Parents may wish to complain about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements directly to Ofsted or the ISI. Contact details are:

- Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. 0300 123 4666 or enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
- ISI, Cap House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA. 0207 600 0100 or concerns@isi.net

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.

Serial and unreasonable complaints

Royal Russell School and St David's School are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit

the contact complainants have with our schools. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

We define unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where our complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headmaster or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before categorising the complaint as '*unreasonable*'.

If the behaviour continues, the Headmaster will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact Royal Russell or St David's School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing.

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). The School will keep separate logs of those complaints which refer to EYFS, those that refer to boarding, and those for the day pupils.

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 Education and Skills 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 seven years.

Parents may also complain directly to Ofsted if they wish. Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 4666 or enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Where a complaint relates to boarding matters, parents can contact ISI directly concerning child welfare on 0207 600 0100 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 were 4 complaints received by the Royal Russell School, during the Academic Year 2023 – 2024, which reached stage 2 or stage 3 of this procedure.

There was 1 complaint received by St David's Preparatory School during the Academic Year 2023 – 2024, 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	May 2025
Reviewed and Approved	SARC	May 2025
Reviewed and Approved	Board	June 2025
Next Review		September 2026

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to their complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible, setting out the resolution that they seek
- co-operate with the school in seeking a resolution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
 - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
 - consideration of records and other relevant information
 - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond
- prepare a comprehensive report for the headteacher or complaints committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

The headteacher or complaints committee will then determine whether to uphold or dismiss the complaint and communicate that decision to the complainant, providing the appropriate escalation details.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible

- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 paperwork, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Committee Chair

The committee's chair, who is nominated in advance of the complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of the meeting
- the meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR.
If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting
- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself
- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so
No governor may sit on the committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant

We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.

- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting
Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting

Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.

The committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.

If the child/young person is the complainant, the committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.

However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.