



Shrewsbury School

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction

This policy document should be read in conjunction with the following other school policy documents:

- 'Pupil Behaviour Policy'
- 'Anti-bullying Policy'
- 'Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy'

...all of which are published on the school website and thus made available to all staff, parents and pupils, including the parents of prospective pupils, at the school.

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If parents or pupils have concerns, they are encouraged to contact the school and to express them. Shrewsbury School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and pupils and it takes seriously any complaints raised by parents and pupils.

This Complaints Procedure explains how to express a complaint and how complaints will be addressed.

We wish to ensure that:

- parents and pupils wishing to make a complaint know how to do so;
- we respond to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient way;
- parents and pupils know that we will always listen and take complaints seriously;
- we take action where it is deemed appropriate to do so.

Defining key terms

A complaint is understood to be a serious expression of dissatisfaction, which merits, and therefore must receive, a response.

Informal Complaints Procedure

This procedure offers a way for parents and/or pupils to resolve concerns and complaints informally and, hopefully, quickly by discussing a concern or complaint with an appropriate person at school, usually a member of staff, and, through such discussion and any resultant outcome, being reassured that the matter has been, or is being, satisfactorily dealt with and need not be taken further.

Pupils – how to use the informal complaints procedure

In many instances a concern or complaint may be articulated during conversation with friends or others whom the complainant already trusts and with whom he or she is happy to discuss the complaint.

In such instances, it is recommended that a pupil gets in touch with one or more of the following: his or her parents, a senior pupil, any member of staff, a House Tutor, the House Matron, his or her Housemaster or Housemistress, the Second Master, the Chaplain, the School Doctor or his staff, Dr Christopher Minns (the Children Act Liaison Officer) or the Headmaster.

It may be that, through discussion with one or more of these individuals, matters can be resolved quickly, informally and with the minimum of fuss, and that the complainant feels that there is no need to take things further.

If, however, matters appear not to have been satisfactorily resolved through informal consultation, or if the issue is not suitable for informal resolution, it is appropriate to consider making a formal complaint, the procedure for which is explained below.

Parents – how to use the informal complaints procedure

Any member of staff will be happy to assist parents. Parents, who wish to express a concern or voice a complaint, should feel welcome to talk directly to a member of staff, or write a letter, send an e-mail, or telephone.

They should be as clear as possible about the nature of their concern and they are probably best advised to communicate, in the first place, with a member of staff most closely involved. Thus, it makes sense to raise House matters with the Housemaster or Housemistress; sports issues with the member of staff in charge, and so forth.

This said, parents may prefer to take the matter to a more senior member of staff, such as the Second Master, Senior Master or Headmaster.

In this way, it may be possible to resolve matters quickly through informal consultation and with the minimum of fuss.

If, however, matters appear not to have been satisfactorily resolved through such informal consultation, or if it is felt that, given the nature of the concern or complaint, the informal complaints procedure is inappropriate, parents may wish to consider making a formal complaint, the procedure for which is explained below.

Formal Complaints Procedure

This procedure is designed to enable pupils or parents formally to express a complaint in writing and to receive a formal response, within a reasonable and clear time scale, from the school.

Pupils – how to use the formal complaints procedure

If a pupil is dissatisfied with the results of the Informal Complaints Procedure, or feels that informal discussion is inappropriate to his or her concern, he or she may hand a formal written complaint to the Housemaster/Housemistress, the Second Master, or Dr Christopher Minns (the Children Act Liaison Officer).

Such a complaint will receive a written reply within 48 hours of having been received within term-time.

If necessary, the complaint may be referred to the **Internal Review Panel**, which may ask to hear the case. This Panel will consist of the Second Master, Dr Christopher Minns, the School Chaplain and a Governor.

If the Review Panel asks to hear the case, the procedure for doing so, which will be clear and simple, will be explained carefully and supportively and the complainant will be welcome, at any stage, to be accompanied by a friend.

In the case of a formal written complaint having been referred to the Internal Review Panel, a response will be communicated by the Panel to the complainant within 5 working days of having received the written complaint within term-time.

If the pupil is not satisfied with the results of either of the above procedures, or if he or she feels that to approach a current member of staff or the Internal Review Panel would be inappropriate to his or her concern, then he or she has the right to telephone any of the following **Independent Adults**, who are ‘appropriately distanced from the school’ and who have agreed to hear complaints:

Mrs Daphne Capps Tel. 01743 354540
Prof. John Patrick Tel. 01743 249303
Mrs Linda Perks Tel. 01743 232028

The Compliance Investigation and Enforcement Team of Ofsted can be contacted at National Business Unit, Ofsted, 3rd Floor, Royal Exchange, St Ann’s Square, Manchester, M2 7LA (Tel. 08546 40 40 40)

or

Liz Nicholson, Chair of Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board
Shropshire County Council, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury SY2 6ND
(Tel: 01743 254301 or e-mail: liz.nicholson@shropshire.gov.uk)

or

Child Line 0800 1111

Parents – how to use the formal complaints procedure

If a parent is dissatisfied with the results of the Informal Complaints Procedure, or feels that informal discussion is inappropriate to his or her concern, he or she may send a formal written complaint to the Headmaster. If the complaint concerns the Headmaster directly, the parent may wish to write to the Chairman of Governors.

Any concern or complaint formally expressed in writing by a parent will receive a reply from the school within 5 working days of the school having received the parental letter. The school's reply will explain the proposed course of action in response to the expressed concern or complaint.

In some instances, it may be necessary to discuss with a colleague at school the issue in question before reaching a satisfactory proposal by way of response. In such a circumstance, the parent will receive a reply from the school within 5 working days of the school having received the letter of complaint, and be given a date by which to expect a more considered response.

In any event, the school will reply within 28 working days from the day when a formal complaint is received, explaining the outcome of the complaint and the conclusion to which the school has come in response to it, including any proposed action.

If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the procedure so far described, the Headmaster will offer formally to refer the matter to the Chairman of Governors. Alternatively, the parent himself or herself may prefer to write to the Chairman of Governors.

The Chairman will call for a full report from the Headmaster and will examine matters thoroughly before responding. The Chairman's response will be made to the parent within 10 working days of having received the formal referral.

This procedure may result in a satisfactory solution, but, if it does not, the Chairman will invite the parent(s) to a meeting as soon as is practicably possible. At this meeting the parent(s) may be accompanied by a friend, although legal representation would not be appropriate.

If the meeting with the Chairman does not bring about a resolution, the matter will be referred to a hearing by the school's Appeal Committee. The hearing will take place as soon as is practicably possible and, in any case, within 21 working days of the date of the meeting with the Chairman of Governors.

The Appeal Committee is appointed by or on behalf of the Chairman of Governors and consists of at least three people, who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, and one of whom is independent of the management and running of the school.

It is the task of the Appeal Committee to assess the complaint in an impartial and confidential manner and to consider all relevant evidence. The complainant will be welcome to attend the hearing by the Appeal Committee and may be accompanied by a friend, although legal representation would not be appropriate.

The decision of the Appeal Committee will be final, and a copy of its findings, together with any recommendations, will be despatched within 48 hours of the hearing by electronic mail or otherwise to the complainant and, where relevant, to the person complained about. Also, a copy of the findings of the Appeal Committee, together with any recommendations, will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chairman of Governors and the Headmaster.

Written record of complaints

A written record of all complaints, including a record of whether or not they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing, is kept by the school in the Headmaster's office for regular review by the Headmaster or his senior staff.

Confidentiality

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them.

Wider Considerations

It is the school's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children. Similarly, pupils at the school should be reassured that they will not be penalised if they or their parents lodge a complaint in good faith.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the school aware of a complaint or of the identity of those involved. This would happen where, for example, a pupil's safety is at risk or where matters need to be referred to the police. In such a circumstance, parents would be kept fully informed.

Complaints will be resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the rights and duties of pupils.

In respect of the time-scales, in the Formal Complaints Procedure, for responses by the school to formal complaints, it is understood that, if a formal written complaint is sent during a holiday period when the school offices may be closed, those time-scales may need to be extended accordingly.

As a school we recognise and acknowledge the entitlement of parents and pupils to complain and wish always to work in the best interests of the pupils under our care, bearing in mind their rights and duties.