

Complaints policy

This policy applies to the whole school and is published to parents and students

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Number of formal complaints received in the academic year 2015-16: 1

If a parent is worried about something or wants to express a concern or complaint, the **first stage** is normally to start by going to the person most closely connected with it, such as the student's form supervisor or tutor. If it's a problem with a subject, the starting-point is the subject teacher or Head of department. Teachers are busy and can be hard to reach by phone, but parents can leave a phone message asking the tutor/form supervisor to call them back. See also **RGS Confidentiality guidance for students**.

No one at the RGS will tell a parent (or, indeed, a student) that *it's nothing to do with them*: **anyone** should be able to talk about what's worrying them to **anyone** - form supervisor, tutor, subject teacher, Head of Year, any senior staff member including the Headmaster or Deputy Head - whoever seems the right person.

The member of staff who parents decide to approach will respond promptly and, if they cannot solve the difficulty straight away, will say how long they need. Although it is often easiest for parents to write, the School's preferred style is to sort things out rapidly (within seven days where possible) and informally, either face-to-face or by phone, rather than writing lots of letters or emails. Concerns or complaints dealt in this informal manner are not regarded as formal complaints and are not necessarily logged or records kept.

Second Stage

However, if parents feel that the methods above have not worked or are not suitable, or if they feel it is a matter of sufficient seriousness (this may include safeguarding issues), they may choose to make a formal complaint. If so, they should write to the Headmaster. They should make it clear that it is a formal complaint and it will then be logged as such.

Safeguarding matters are always logged and a record kept, whether or not they are taken to the level of a formal complaint.

In response to a formal complaint the Headmaster will make a written reply within fifteen school (term-time) days: if a stage two or three complaint is received within or close to school holidays the School will furnish a date by which it will provide its response.

Third Stage

If parents are not satisfied with the Headmaster's response to a formal complaint, they are invited to appeal to the Governors. Such appeals should be lodged as soon as is reasonable following the Headmaster's response by writing to the Bursar as Clerk to the Governors, setting out the matter which is subject to the appeal and the grounds of such appeal. The letter of appeal should indicate when, in the following four weeks, parents would be available to attend a Governors' Review Panel.

The Governors entrust the management of the appeal to the Chairman of the Governors, or such other Governor as he/she may nominate.

The parents will be notified by the Bursar within five school (term-time) days and offered a time and date for them to attend the Panel within twenty school (term-time) working days. If it is not possible for the parents to meet with the Panel within that time, he will seek to arrange a meeting as soon as practical thereafter.

The Review Panel will be made up of at least three people nominated by the Chairman of the Governors, and may include the Chairman. No-one who has had any involvement in the subject of the complaint can sit on the Panel. There will be one person on the panel who is independent of the governance, management and running of the school and of its parent and teaching bodies.

Before the Panel hearing, the Headmaster will provide a statement to the Panel and the parents setting out the circumstances of the complaint and the reasons for his response. The Headmaster will not discuss the case with the Panel beforehand.

Parents may bring a friend to the meeting with the Panel, who may speak on their behalf if they feel unable to express themselves as they would like. The student concerned may attend, but the parent, not the student, is regarded as the complainant.

The parents, friend if attending (and the student If attending), will come before the Panel at the same time as the Headmaster. The procedure to be followed will be fair and flexible at the discretion of the Panel. In the ordinary course, however, the Headmaster will present his statement first and, subject to any questions from the Panel, will be followed by the parents' statement, identifying the factors which are relied upon as the basis for the complaint. There will be an opportunity for clarification and discussion of the points raised by all present.

At the conclusion of the hearing the Panel will discuss with the parents whether it is able to give a decision that day. If it is, all those present will leave the Panel to consider its decision alone. When the Panel is ready, all parties will return to the room and the decision will be announced, together with the reasons for it.

It may be that it is not possible for the Panel to reach a concluded decision on the day in which event it will reserve its decision and provide it in writing. In either event, a written copy of the decision, findings and any recommendations, with reasons, will be provided to the parents, Headmaster, Chairman of Governors (if he/she was not on the Panel) and, where relevant, any person who was the subject of the complaint, within ten school (term-time) working days.

Unless otherwise indicated, the hearing will take the form of a review of the Headmaster's response to the parental complaint. The Panel will decide whether, on the information placed before him, the Headmaster could reasonably have come to the decision he reached. If, however, information is placed before the Panel which was not placed before the Headmaster or the Panel considers ought to have been before the Headmaster, the Panel will consider whether such information would or should have affected his response and may take this into account in determining the appeal. The Panel will have the power to affirm, reverse or vary the decision of the Headmaster and may make recommendations.

The school will maintain a written record of all formal complaints, of whether they are resolved at the second stage or the third and of action taken by the School as a result of these complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld. The correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints and appeals will be kept confidential, except where disclosure is required by law (such as where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them) or for legal proceedings. The findings and recommendations will be kept on the school premises and will be available for inspection only by the Chairman of Governors and Headmaster.

Additional note: appeal against permanent exclusion

In the event of a parental appeal against a decision by the Headmaster to permanently exclude (expel) a student, the Governors will adopt the third stage procedure outlined above: for *complaint* the word *appeal* may be substituted.