RYDE SCHOOL
WITH UPPER CHINE

Complaints Policy

Policy date:	September 2026	
Date of next review:	Summer Term 2026-27	
Owner(s):	WT	
Approval body:	Head Master	
Intended audience:	Pupils, parents and staff	
ISI Regulatory Paragraph No:	Paras. 33 and 32(3)(f)	
Location (tick as appropriate):	Website	✓
	Parent Portal	✓
	Staff Portal	✓
	Inspection folder	✓

Introduction

Ryde School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. Ryde School makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School's website and in the Head Master's PA's office during the school day. Ryde School will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year. In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Ryde School will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. There may also be other circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School will also ensure that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

What constitutes a parent of a current pupil?

A parent of a current pupil is one whose child is a current registered pupil attending the School. This procedure does not cover matters relating to admissions, and therefore pupils who have not yet joined the School. Once a child has left the School, the child is no longer a current pupil, so again the procedure would not apply. A parent whose child has left the School may escalate a complaint that they have already registered informally, or at any formal stage, but cannot initiate a new complaint.

The only exception to this is if the complaint is a review of a decision taken by the Head Master to expel or require the removal of a pupil under clause 8 of the School's Terms and Conditions as outlined in the Parent Contract. In such a case, a review must be requested by no later than five working days from the date of the decision to exclude or require the removal of a pupil.

The School will be mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in the application of this policy.

Although the School endeavours to manage complaints in an open and transparent manner, parents should be aware that there may be circumstances which mean the School is unable to share complete details about how a complaint has been handled by the School, the evidence collated, steps taken in response or other related matters. This could be the case even when a complaint is upheld. For example, this may be because such information constitutes sensitive third-party data (for example belonging to a staff member, pupil or other parent), legal or regulatory requirements prohibit disclosure, or withholding information is in accordance with specific instructions from a statutory agency. This list is not exhaustive.

“Parent(s)” means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil about whom the complaint relates.

The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

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 their son/daughter's form teacher (in the Pre-Prep or Prep School) or tutor (in the Senior School). Complaints regarding boarding should normally be dealt with by the Housemaster or by the Head of Senior School/Head Master if it is regarding the Housemaster. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the form teacher/ tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult with senior colleagues before responding to the complaint. He or she may also refer the parents and complaint directly to a senior colleague such as the Head of Pre-Prep, Head of Prep, Head of Senior School or one of the Deputy Heads.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, Head of Year/Section, Head of House or a Deputy Head will usually be referred to the relevant tutor unless the person receiving the complaint deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally. Even then, the tutor/form teacher can expect to be involved in any subsequent discussions.
- The staff involved in receiving a complaint at this stage 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 seven working days or in the event that the tutor and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents should proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this policy.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Head Master, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors whose contact details are available from the Clerk to Governors on request.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to one of the following:
    - ❖ If the child is in the Prep School (Nursery - Year 6) to the Head of Prep.
    - ❖ If the child is in the Senior School (Year 7 - Upper Sixth), to the Head of Senior School.
    - ❖ If the concern is to do with boarding, to the Head of Senior School.

- Receipt of the written complaint should be formally acknowledged within two working days and the recipient will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. In most cases, that will mean meeting the parents concerned, normally within seven working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the recipient to carry out further investigations.
- Written records of all meetings and interviews will be held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the person investigating is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. Reasons will be given for this decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, then parents should usually proceed to the Head Master who, unless he has been involved directly with the case already, will review the complaint. Should parents remain unsatisfied after meeting with the Head Master, or if he has already been involved, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this policy.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be directed by the Head Master to the Chair of Governors.
- Complaints under this stage should be brought within 20 working days of the concern arising or of the outcome of Stage 2 being communicated if relevant. Any supporting evidence accompanying a complaint must be provided alongside the grounds for appeal.
- Once the Chair of Governors has been informed, the matter will be referred to a Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors and one should be the Chair of the Panel. The Chair of Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint within two working days and will schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 10 working days.
- 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 not later than five working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. The Stage 2 decision-taker shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate and the companion should not be a lawyer. The identity of the companions should be confirmed to [the convenor/clerk to the Panel] as soon as possible and by no later than 2 working days before the hearing. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- A note-taker will attend the hearing to take a note. This will not be a verbatim note but an accurate reflection of what was discussed. Notes of the hearing will be shared with attendees as soon as practicable after the hearing. To the extent there is any disagreement about the content of those notes or further comments from the parties, these will be considered by and, where possible, resolved by the Chair. A copy of any comments on the notes will be appended to the notes.
- The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- 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 the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, **the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:**
    - ❖ dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
    - ❖ uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
    - ❖ make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within five working days of the Hearing. The Panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Head Master, the Governors and, where relevant, the subject of the complaint. The recommendations will be kept as detailed below in the Record of Complaints on the school premises for inspection by the Head Master and Chair of Governors.
- Any complaint about a decision taken by the Head Master to exclude or require the removal of the pupil under clause 7 of the School's Terms and Conditions will be governed by this Stage 3 of the School's Complaints Procedure. There may be circumstances in which the School considers it necessary and appropriate to deviate from the Stage 3 procedure in the context of appeals for exclusion and required removal, and the School will inform the parents of this. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint and ask the Stage 2 decision-taker to reconsider their decision if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Head Master, that the Head Master's decision to exclude / require the removal of the pupil was not a reasonable decision for the Head Master to have taken.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, **working days** refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay. The School expects parents to engage in the process in a reasonable, constructive and responsive manner to help ensure matters can be dealt with in a timely way and in line with the targets set out in this Procedure.

Persistent correspondence

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this will be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School by the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Education and Skills Act, or where any other legal obligation prevails. Parents and pupils may contact ISI (Tel: 020 7776 8849) or the DfE should they be dissatisfied with the school's response to a complaint.

Recording Complaints and use of personal data

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the Stage 1 (informal stage), **the formal stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a Panel hearing (Stage 3) and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).**

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice which can be found on the School's website and parent portal. When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- 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 and contact details of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes/minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector (see above), there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (eg, in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

In the 2025-26 academic year the School received three (3) complaints at Stage 2 and none (0) at Stage 3.

EYFS Complaints

Parents of EYFS pupils should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. The School will notify the parents about the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days from the date the complaint was received.

Ryde School will provide ISI/Ofsted, 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 in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the ISI:

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: info@isi.net

ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

Response to Pupil or Parent Complaints

The School wishes to improve by hearing constructive criticism or by acting appropriately when something has gone wrong. It is part of our practice to survey parental and pupil opinion regularly to encourage concerns to be raised with us.

The School will not penalise or deal unfairly with any pupil or parent who makes a complaint in good faith.

Summary of procedures

PROCEDURE STAGE	DETAILS	TIME SCALE
Stage 1	**Follow up and discussion with parents completed.**	**7 working days**
Stage 2	• **Formal acknowledgment** • **Meeting with parents to discuss complaint** • **Any further review needed** • **Decision taken and communicated in writing**	• **2 working days since receipt** • **7 working days since receipt** • **14 working days since receipt**
Stage 3	• **Formal acknowledgment** • **Circulation of details and related matters to all parties** • **Hearing** • **Decisions and recommendations**	• **2 working days since receipt** • **5 working days prior to the Hearing** • **10 working days since receipt** • **5 working days since the Hearing**