SHREWSBURY HOUSE SCHOOL TRUST

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Notice owner:	Bursar
Approved by:	Executive Head
Date of last review:	September 2026
Next review:	September 2027

Introduction

Shrewsbury House School Trust prides 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. Shrewsbury House School Trust makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the Schools' websites and in each School office. Shrewsbury House School Trust 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, Shrewsbury House School Trust 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.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at one of the schools. The only exception to this is if the complaint is a review of a decision taken by a Head to exclude or require the removal of a pupil under clause 7.6 of the School's Terms and Conditions in which case such 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. "Parent(s)" includes the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current or prospective pupil about whom the complaint relates e.g. "carers".

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the Trust or one of its Schools 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.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints raised in good faith will be treated seriously and all will be treated confidentially 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 legal or regulatory circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint. You can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most concerns or complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

- If parents have a concern or a complaint, they should normally contact their child's Form teacher or Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form teacher or Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult a Head of Department, Head of Year or a Deputy Head.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, Head of Year or a Deputy Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form teacher or Tutor unless the Head of Department, Head of Year or a Deputy Head deems it appropriate that they deal with the matter personally.
- The Form teacher or Tutor 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 **10 working days** or in the event that the Form teacher or Tutor 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 Complaints Procedure.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Executive Head or the Head of The Rowans School (now referred to collectively as the 'Head'), parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors whose contact details are available from the Clerk to the 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 formally to the Head. Written submissions must clearly explain the complaint in under 500 words and include the resolution which the claimant is seeking. If a complaint is raised which is over 500 words, over complex or obviously produced by AI, the school will request a summary of the complaint. The Head, or someone on their behalf, will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 2 working days of receipt, or as soon as practicable in the holidays. The Head may require further information from the parents to help clarify the scope and nature of their concerns. In some circumstances it might be deemed appropriate to nominate a staff member to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Head (or their nominee) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head (or their nominee) will meet/speak to the parents concerned, normally within **10 working days** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. The Head will determine who should carry out any investigation and this may be someone external to the School.
- W**ritten records** will be kept of all meetings, telephone conversations and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head (or their nominee) 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. The Head (or their nominee) will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Head will make their decision and provide the parents with **reasons within 20 working days of the complaint being put in writing** (or following the provision of any further clarificatory information about the complaint to the Head, if so requested). Please note that any complaint received within 20 working days of the end of term or half term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to the presence of school holidays and the unavailability of personnel.

- If the complaint is against the Executive Head or the Head of The Rowans School, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the reference to the Head (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to determine the complaint against the Head.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

<u>Stage 3 - Panel Hearing</u>

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the Clerk to the Governors within **20 working days** of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal. In the event that the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated due to extenuating circumstances which have impeded the parents from taking action, the parents should request an extension in writing. Such a request should be made to the Clerk to the Governors in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. This will be considered.
- **The Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School.** The Complaints Panel will appoint one of the Panel members to act as the Chair of the Panel. The convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint within **two working days (or as soon as is practicable in the holidays)** and schedule a hearing to take place within **20 working days**.
- If the Panel or the Clerk to the Governors deems it necessary, they may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties **not later than 5 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 5 working days of the hearing** (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Stage 2 decision-taker. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Governors, Executive Head and the relevant Head (as necessary).
- Any complaint about a decision taken by the Head to exclude or require the removal of the pupil under clause 7.6 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 Head to reconsider their decision if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Head, that the Head's decision to exclude / require the removal of the pupil was not a reasonable decision for the Head to have taken.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

- All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.
- It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure **within 20 working days**. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within **a further 20 working days**.
- 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

The School is committed to considering all complaints fairly and impartially, but we must balance this with our statutory duty to protect staff from harassment and unacceptable behaviour. A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable if a parent persists in making representations on a matter that has already exhausted our three-stage official process, or if their correspondence becomes aggressively toned, excessively frequent, or disruptive to daily operations. In such instances, the Executive Head or Chair of Governors will typically seek to address the conduct informally first. Should the unreasonable behaviour continue, the School reserves the right to implement a restricted communication plan - limiting the method and frequency of future contact - or to formally close all correspondence on the matter so that our resources remain focused on the education and welfare of the children

Recording Complaints and Use of Personal Data

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at 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. 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 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, Data Protection Policy and Retention of Records 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 (e.g., in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

The Number of Formal Complaints Referred to the Panel in the Last Academic Year

The number of formal complaints recorded at the Schools within the Trust for the last academic year were:

Shrewsbury House School: 2
The Rowans School: 0

Requirements Under The Statutory Framework For The EYFS

For Shrewsbury House School and The Rowans School

Parents of EYFS children 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.

Shrewsbury House School or The Rowans 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 Retention of Records 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