



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

The Royal Ballet School is committed to working in a close partnership with parents, guardians and carers. A vital aspect of this partnership is the need for the School to know when you feel that things are not going right. If you have any concerns about any aspect of life at School, please contact an appropriate member of staff as soon as possible. The School takes all such expressions of concern seriously and aims to follow them up courteously and promptly. In any school things can go wrong but the School wants to do all it can to sort those things out.

Two things tend to make parents reluctant to complain or to express concerns:

- a) A fear that the School will not see the issue to be important: please be assured that, if it is important to you, it is important to us.
- b) A fear that a concern or complaint may lead to repercussions for the student: under no circumstances will the School discriminate against a student because of expressions of concern or complaints. The School is experienced in ensuring that, if other students are involved (e.g. in an allegation of bullying), there are no repercussions from other quarters.

This policy seeks to explain the systems we have put in place to give you confidence in our willingness to listen and in our determination to be open, honest and fair in our dealings with you. It highlights the routes anyone can follow if they feel that something is not right, that their child or ward is fed up, unhappy, being treated unfairly or bullied, or if they have any other concern or complaint.

Aims

Our aims are to:

- a) make it as easy as possible to voice a concern or submit a complaint
- b) treat each concern or complaint as a constructive expression of dissatisfaction with an aspect of School life and, as such, deserving of a response
- c) treat each concern or complaint seriously, however it is made, whether in person, by telephone or in writing (letter, fax or e-mail)
- d) deal with each concern or complaint promptly and politely; where appropriate, this may be by telephone, face-to-face or in writing
- e) respond appropriately, with for example;
 - i an explanation
 - ii an apology, if we have made an error
 - iii information on the action we have taken
- f) learn from the concerns and complaints of parents and students by referring the outcomes to the Senior Management Team via the Concerns and Complaints Log
- g) make and keep confidential records of complaints so that they are available for consultation in the future.

PROCEDURE FOR RAISING A CONCERN OR MAKING A COMPLAINT

Stage 1 - Informal raising and resolution of concerns

Most problems or uncertainties at School begin life as concerns. We hope that you will feel that such concerns can initially be raised and resolved on an informal basis. You should always feel free to speak in person or by phone to the appropriate member of the School staff, or to write a letter, e-mail or fax.

Depending on the nature of the concern please speak to a member of your son or daughter's House staff, relevant artistic or academic teacher, and at White Lodge, your son or daughter's Tutor.

If the concern is of a more serious nature then please contact the Artistic Programme Manager at either site, the Senior Teacher (academic) at White Lodge or the Head of Vocational Studies (academic) at Upper School or the Assistant Principal (Pastoral & Welfare). Concerns relating to fees and services should be addressed to the Head of Finance or the Head of Site Operations.

When a concern is raised, the person who has been spoken or written to will acknowledge the message and respond to the concern within five working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable in the School holidays. If we are not able to provide a full reply within this time, for instance, because an investigation is necessary, we will tell you what is being done and when you can expect a full reply. We will usually respond by telephone to matters raised orally and make a written response to matters raised in writing, unless requested otherwise.

If the concern involves an allegation against a member of staff, it will be immediately passed to the relevant Head of Department or senior manager. Any Safeguarding or Child Protection concern will be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or as otherwise directed by the Child Protection Policy.

Once an initial response has been made you will be asked to confirm your satisfaction with this process. If you are not satisfied, you will be asked if you would like a meeting in school to see if the problem can be resolved. If you are unable to attend such a meeting or think it is not appropriate, it may be suggested that you raise the matter at the next highest or any further level.

Stage 2- Formal making and resolution of complaints

There are a number of reasons why you might wish to make a formal complaint:

- a) if you feel that the initial expression of concern has not been handled properly by a member of staff
- b) if a concern has not been resolved within a reasonable period (one not normally exceeding two term-time weeks)
- c) if a concern has not been resolved in a satisfactory way
- d) if you feel that the complaint is more serious than a concern.

Anyone wishing to make a formal complaint should send full written details to the School of the nature of the complaint, any relevant documents and full contact details in an envelope addressed as follows:

- If the complaint concerns an academic or pastoral matter, the complaint should be addressed to Academic & Pastoral Principal
- If the complaint concerns dance or a wider question of School policy or procedure, the complaint should be addressed to the Artistic Director
- If the complaint relates to issues of fees or services then the complaint should be addressed to the Chief Operating Officer.

It would be very helpful if you could also indicate what you envisage as the desired outcome.

After considering the complaint, the person written to:

- a) will, if necessary, consult other colleagues and will decide upon the appropriate course of action to take
- b) may ask to meet you for a discussion about the problem, normally within 10 days of receiving the complaint
- c) will conduct a full investigation of the complaint and may interview any members of staff or students involved.

If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. You will receive a written response to your complaint, giving reasons for the way the complaint has been resolved.

In more complex cases it may be necessary for the Artistic Director, Academic & Pastoral Principal or Chief Operating Officer to appoint another senior member of staff to carry out further investigations that may delay a resolution. They may also involve one or more Governors. Once the School is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made about how best to resolve the complaint, and you will be informed of the decision in writing (within a further 14 working days after the initial discussion). The letter will also give reasons for the decision.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

If you still feel dissatisfied after going through Stage 2, you should contact the Chair of Governors. You can write to the Chair in confidence c/o the Chief Operating Officer, who is Secretary to the Governors. The Secretary to the Governors will acknowledge requests within five working days of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable in the School holidays.

Within five working days of the acknowledgement, the Chair of Governors will convene a panel of at least two members of the Governing body and one person independent of the management and running of the School to consider the complaint. No member of the panel may have any involvement with any matter detailed in the complaint. At least 10 days' notice will be given of the date on which the Panel will meet.

You may attend the Panel Hearing and may be accompanied by one other person e.g. a relative or friend. Legal representation is only permitted if the Chairman considers it appropriate. If it is considered appropriate, the Chairman will inform you to that effect so that you may choose to be legally represented at the Hearing if you so wish. Should you decide to be so represented you must inform the Chairman of your intention at least seven days before the date set for the Hearing. If you choose to be legally represented the Chairman will notify the other parties of that decision, to enable them to have legal representation at the Panel Hearing should they so wish.

If possible, the Panel will resolve a complaint immediately 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 Panel reaches a decision and may make recommendations, which it completes within seven days of the meeting or Hearing or as soon as reasonably practicable. The Panel will write to you informing you of its decision and the reasons for the decision within seven days of reaching this decision.

The Panel's findings and any recommendations are sent in writing by email or in hard copy to you, the Artistic Director, members of the Governing body and, where relevant, the person(s) about whom the complaint was made. A copy of the Panel's findings is available for inspection at the School premises by the Chair of Governors and the Artistic Director. The decision of the Panel is final.

RECORDS AND CONTACTS

Record-keeping

Written records are kept of all complaints, of all meetings and interviews held in relation to complaints, and of the outcomes of complaints.

Correspondence, statements and records are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Education Act, as amended, requests access to them, or where any other legal obligation prevails.

SMT will review complaints annually.

Contact details

All contact details are available in the relevant School Handbooks, via Front of House at both sites and on the School website.

Chair of Governors

The Duchess of Wellington CBE

The Royal Ballet School, 46 Floral Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 9DA

e-mail: c/o the Clerk to the Governors: alan.winter@royalballetschool.org.uk

Tel: c/o Alan Winter (Clerk to the Governors) 0207 836 8899 Fax: 0207 845 7080

Artistic Director

Mr Christopher Powney

The Royal Ballet School, 46 Floral Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 9DA

e-mail: christopher.powney@royalballetschool.org.uk

Tel: 0207 836 8899 Fax: 0207 845 7080

Academic & Pastoral Principal

Ms Karen Davies

The Royal Ballet School, 46 Floral Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 9DA

e-mail: karen.davies@royalballetschool.org.uk

Tel: 0207 836 8899 Fax: 0207 845 7080

Inspectorates

Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI)

CAP House, 9 - 12 Long Lane

London EC1A 9HA

Telephone: 0207 600 0100

Fax: 0207 776 8849

The ISI number for whistleblowing i.e. raising concerns about child protection is: 020 7600 0100.

The Children's Commissioner for England

The Office of the Children's Commissioner

Sanctuary Buildings

20 Great Smith Street

London SW1P 3BT

Tel: 020 7783 8330

Email: info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

General Advice

If parents or students are unsure about a situation or events, several organisations will speak in confidence to advise what would be the best thing to do:

NSPCC: 0808 800 5000

Childline: 0800 1111

Kidscape: 08451 295

Child Protection

If parents or students are concerned that a student may be at risk of harm, please see the Child Protection Policy for further advice.