# Police intervention raises concerns over parental disputes at Borehamwood school



A significant incident involving a county councillor and two parents at Cowley Hill Primary School in Borehamwood, Hertfordshire, has raised concerns about police involvement in disputes between parents and educational institutions. On January 29, six officers from Hertfordshire Police arrested Maxie Allen and Rosalind Levine, both parents of a nine-year-old girl, on suspicion of harassment and malicious communications. The couple had been vocal about their concerns regarding the recruitment process for a new headteacher, leading to a dramatic police intervention at their home, which occurred in front of their young daughter.

Councillor Michelle Vince, an independent member of Hertfordshire County Council, provided support to Allen and Levine in their inquiries concerning the school. Following reports from the school alleging that the families were involved in a high volume of direct correspondence and problematic social media posts, police took the unprecedented step of raiding the couple’s home. Allen has been vocal about the incident, describing the police operation as "dystopian" and an alarming overreach of authority. Speaking to The Guardian, he remarked, "When you watch the doorbell footage, you think, what are these six police officers doing?"

The couple claimed they were targeted for making critical remarks in a private WhatsApp group, which ultimately led to their prohibition from entering the school. They previously expressed their concerns over the opaque headteacher recruitment process, asserting that their efforts to engage with the school went unanswered. The couple was subsequently banned from attending significant events, including a parents’ evening and a Christmas performance for their daughter, Sascha, who is neurodivergent and has epilepsy.

After an exhaustive five-week investigation, Hertfordshire Police determined that there was insufficient evidence to justify any charges against the couple, leading to their release after spending approximately 11 hours in custody. However, prior to their arrest, police warned councillor Vince against further involvement with the parents in the matter. An email from a Hertfordshire Police officer conveyed that her involvement could lead to her being regarded as a suspect in the harassment investigation should she communicate with the school further.

In response to this situation, Jonathan Ash-Edwards, the police and crime commissioner for Hertfordshire, has announced a rapid review of the case, agreeing that it should not have escalated to a police matter. He mentioned the need to facilitate mediation services to resolve such disputes amicably without law enforcement intervention. He emphasised that citizens should feel free to voice their concerns without fear of police retaliation.

Cowley Hill Primary School has asserted that they sought police advice due to concerns about communications that were unsettling for staff, parents, and governors alike. The school maintained that while they welcome parental engagement, such interactions should be conducted through appropriate channels.

The episode has also drawn political attention, with Oliver Dowden, the Conservative MP for Hertsmere, expressing worries that this incident could damage public trust in law enforcement. He noted that constituents are becoming frustrated with police inaction on other pressing crime matters while resources appear to have been allocated to monitor parental criticism of the school.

As discussions continue, Chief Constable Andy Prophet has pledged to review police priorities in light of public expectations, reaffirming the commitment to tackling serious crimes over community disputes. The findings from the announced review are expected to be discussed in an accountability meeting shortly.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/police-chief-criticises-force-parents-arrested-whatsapp-group-b1219622.html> - This article supports the claim about Maxie Allen and Rosalind Levine being arrested by Hertfordshire police and the subsequent criticism by their police chief. It highlights the police's response and the parents' assertion that they used no abusive language.
* <https://www.gbnews.com/news/parents-arrested-complaining-about-daughter-primary-school> - This source corroborates the details of the arrest, including the parents being detained for 11 hours and the police investigation that followed, ultimately leading to no charges.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This is the source mentioned in the query as the primary article detailing the incident at Cowley Hill Primary School and the ensuing police involvement.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noah_Wire_Services> - This should ideally provide more background on Noah Wire Services, but it is not available, suggesting a search error or lack of information.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oliver_Dowden> - This link would provide background information on Oliver Dowden, the Conservative MP for Hertsmere, who expressed concerns over public trust in law enforcement due to this incident.
* <https://www.herts.police.uk/about_us/our_structures/chief_constable> - This link provides information on Hertfordshire Constabulary's leadership, including Chief Constable Andy Prophet, who pledged to review police priorities in response to the incident.
* <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/education/article/school-whatsapp-group-maxie-allen-dmr2bhltg> - Please view link - unable to able to access data