# Couple's arrest over school recruitment complaints sparks debate on authority



Rosalind Levine, 46, and her partner Maxie Allen, 50, experienced a shocking turn of events when six police officers arrived at their home in Borehamwood, Hertfordshire, on January 29, 2024. As they stood on the doorstep, the couple was informed that they were under arrest for malicious communications, harassment, and causing a nuisance on school premises. What had begun as a personal grievance about the recruitment process at their daughter's school escalated into a police intervention that they described as surreal and distressing.

The couple's ordeal stems from their participation in a private WhatsApp group for parents at Cowley Hill Primary School, where they raised concerns regarding the school's handling of the headteacher recruitment process. Rosalind recalls her immediate reaction upon the arrival of the officers: "There was a moment where I honestly thought I wanted to die, because I couldn’t cope with losing her... Until that moment, I was convinced Sascha was dead," referring to their nine-year-old daughter, who was at school at the time.

The police presence, characterised by two police cars and a van, led Maxie to compare the situation to that of a major drug bust or a terrorism-related arrest. “It was hard to shake off the sense that I was living in a police state," he said. This dramatic response was unexpected for the couple, who had previously lived unassumingly and had not been involved in any significant legal troubles before this incident.

After being detained for about eleven hours, the Levines were released without any charges. Hertfordshire Constabulary later concluded a five-week investigation, determining there was insufficient evidence against the couple. Maxie, reflecting on the events leading to their arrest, noted that their discussion had been civil and contained no abusive language. “These were private conversations, at no point abusive or even offensive," he stated.

Their troubles with Cowley Hill Primary School began after Maxie, who had served as a parent governor, raised questions about the transparency of the recruitment process for a new headteacher following the retirement announcement of the previous head. In response, the school issued a warning to parents, discouraging negative comments about the school on social media and threatening action against parents who did not comply.

In the aftermath of their arrest, both Rosalind and Maxie expressed concern over what they perceived as an overreach of authority by the school and the police. Speaking about their experience, Rosalind said, “In my opinion that was a bit over the top, because it’s not really for school to tell parents what to say in private.” Her sentiments echoed the confusion and distress faced during and after the police encounter, which included being fingerprinted and photographed in custody.

The couple's narrative has prompted discussions about the role of public institutions in addressing grievances and the delicate balance between maintaining order and respecting individual rights. Maxie added, “I don’t know if we’re the first people to have our collar felt because of something like this – but I hope we’ll be the last.”

Hertfordshire Police Chief Constable Andy Prophet defended the actions taken, acknowledging that although the handling of the incident could have been more discreet, the decision to arrest was made out of a belief that the Levines would not consent to a voluntary interview. In contrast, a spokesperson for Cowley Hill Primary School stated that the school consulted law enforcement due to the "high volume" of public correspondence that was deemed distressing for staff and governors.

As news of their arrest has spread globally, Rosalind and Maxie have refrained from branding themselves as victims, instead focusing on the broader implications of their experience for parents interacting with educational authorities. This incident serves as an illustration of the complexities surrounding parent-school relationships and the potential consequences of expressing dissent, especially in a private capacity.

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

## References

* <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/im-just-an-assertive-jewish-mum-and-the-school-couldnt-handle-it-says-mother-at-heart-of-whatsapp-arrest-scandal-xljotbpj> - This article provides details about Rosalind Levine and Maxie Allen's arrest after their concerns about their daughter's school led to a conflict with Cowley Hill Primary School. It highlights the couple's arrest, their release without charges, and their subsequent advocacy for assertive parents.
* <https://www.gbnews.com/news/parents-arrested-whatsapp-messages-revealed-free-speech-school-row> - This news piece covers the WhatsApp messages that led to the couple's arrest, emphasizing the lack of abusive language and the context of their criticisms about the school's headteacher recruitment process.
* <https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/jewish-mother-arrested-after-whatsapp-school-row-sparks-police-review> - This article discusses the police review sparked by the arrest and highlights comments from the couple and authorities regarding the situation, noting the overall reaction and impact on parent-school relationships.
* <https://www.gbnews.com/news/parents-arrested-whatsapp-messages-revealed-free-speech-school-row> - Further details about the WhatsApp messages and the couple's experience are provided here, including friends' reactions and the couple's description of the events as 'nightmarish'.
* <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/im-just-an-assertive-jewish-mum-and-the-school-couldnt-handle-it-says-mother-at-heart-of-whatsapp-arrest-scandal-xljotbpj> - This article also covers Rosalind Levine's view that the incident was an overreaction and her desire to move her child to a Jewish secondary school more welcoming of assertive parents.
* <https://www.jewishnews.co.uk/jewish-mother-arrested-after-whatsapp-school-row-sparks-police-review> - The article mentions Hertfordshire Police's rapid review of the case and comments from the Police and Crime Commissioner about the need for public institutions to respect individual rights while maintaining order.