



Complaints Policy & Procedure including Early Years Foundation Stage

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Approved by	Adam Holdsworth, Chair of Governors
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Westville House School (WHS) is proud of the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by Westville House in accordance with this procedure.

1. Introduction

WHS is required under the Education (Independent Schools' Standards) Regulations 2014 to adopt, make available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils, and apply a complaints procedure in order to comply with the standards against which the Independent Schools' Inspection will be carried out. These procedures are also relevant to the Early Years' Foundation Stage (EYFS).

It is important that parents of pupils currently at the school and for parents of pupils who have left the school (if their complaint was made prior their child leaving) should have the opportunity to express their views and feelings and that they should obtain a fair hearing and prompt response to any concern/complaint they make.

It is also important that the school should have due regard for the rights of all who work for them and that any concern, complaint against a member of staff should be handled in a professional manner.

This policy is available to parents via the school office or on request from Governors.

2. Definition of a Complaint

A 'complaint may be defined as 'any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action from the school'.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to invoke formal procedures.

Complaints can fall into a number of categories. Some examples are listed below but the list is not exhaustive.

Complaints:

- may be about operational or administrative matters such as school procedures, school finances or a breach of contract. These complaints can be specific or general;
- may be about the handling of a situation by staff or the management of the school;
- may relate to the behaviour of a pupil or group of pupils;
- may be academic in nature and relate to areas such as the service provided by the school, the content of a course, the quantity of homework being given or progress by a pupil in a particular subject; and
- may involve a child who is unhappy at school, is being bullied or has received an inappropriate sanction for indiscipline.



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3. Procedure

The basic policy for complaints either verbal or written is to deal with them promptly, thoroughly and professionally. All complaints would normally be acknowledged within 48 hours with the promise of an effective enquiry and action if appropriate. A copy of this policy should be sent to the complainant.

WHS believe it to be extremely important that the Complaints Policy is readily available to parents in writing and makes it clear that there will be appropriate timescales attached to the management of the complaint.

It is felt equally important that parents/pupils feel able to make a complaint and that the complaint will be managed initially on an informal basis. Where a parent does not feel satisfied that the complaint has been handled correctly, there should be the scope within the policy for the parents to formalise the complaint in writing.

If still not satisfied, the parent should have the opportunity to attend a hearing before a panel; appointed by and on behalf of the proprietor, consisting of three people who were not directly involved in the matters relating to the original complaint. One member of the panel is independent of the management and running of the school.

The parent/s should be allowed to be accompanied if they so wish, (please see below).

The panel should provide a copy of any findings and recommendations to the parents who have raised the complaint. The findings of any complaints should be made available to the ISI, on the school premises, should they request them.

The school should attempt initially to resolve complaints on an informal basis.

3.1. Stage 1 - Informal complaint

It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally and normally within five working days.

If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's Form Teacher or the relevant subject teacher. In most cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means, to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher/subject teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Headteacher, or the Early Years' Foundation Stage co-ordinator.

Complaints made directly to the Headteacher will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher or subject teacher, unless the Headteacher deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.

The Form Teacher/subject teacher will make a written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within five working days or in the event that the form teacher/subject teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory conclusion, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.



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In the unusual situation that the parent wishes to remain anonymous to the teacher at this Stage (i.e. Stage 1), we would draw your attention to the fact that this is only possible at Stage 1 and, once Stage 2 has been reached, it may be necessary for the complainant's name to be given to the relevant teacher. At all times we encourage parents to make a direct approach to the relevant teacher at an early stage.

3.2. Stage 2 - Formal Complaint

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their formal complaint in writing to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Headteacher will meet the parents concerned, normally within seven working days during term-time of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Headteacher to carry out further investigations.

The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Headteacher 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 Headteacher will also give reasons for her decision.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

3.3. Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to Mr Adam Holdsworth, who has been appointed by the Governors to call Hearings of the Complaints Panel which will hear the complaint and make a judgment normally with fifteen working days of receiving the Stage 3 complaint.

The matter will then be referred to the 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 Governors. Mr Holdsworth, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within fifteen working days during term-time.

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 seven working days during term-time prior to the hearing.

The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.



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Should a parent not wish to attend the hearing, the panel will still convene and reach its decision as per this policy.

If possible, the panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.

3.4. 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 will reach a decision and may make any recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 working days during term-time of the hearing. The panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the panel will be final. The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headteacher, the governors and, where relevant, the person complained about.

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

4. Expulsion

Parents have a right to appeal against their child being expelled by complaining directly to the Chair of Governors. (see WHS Behaviour Policy)

5. Records

All written records of complaints that have been made by parents will be kept on confidential record by the school, regardless of the outcome or whether they are resolved informally, via a formal procedure or as a result of a panel hearing. These will be kept securely and confidentially locked in the cupboard in the Headteacher's study and so available for inspection by the headteachers and governors. Complaints which do not have safeguarding implications will be retained for a minimum of 5 years.

Any action taken by the school as a result of a complaint regardless of the outcome will also be recorded.

6. EYFS Requirements

Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, must be investigated by the school and the parent notified of the outcome of that investigation within 28 days. If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, then they may go to Ofsted and/or ISI. The record of complaints must be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

7. Conclusion

Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated very seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 6 (2) (j) of the Education (Independent Schools' Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other



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legal obligation prevails. Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 4666. ISI can be contacted on 02076 000 100.



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Appendix

Number of Complaints Registered under the Formal Procedure during the Preceding School Year:

Academic year 2022-23	2
Academic year 2021-22	0
Academic year 2020-21	0
Academic year 2019-20	0
Academic year 2018-19	1
Academic year 2017-18	2
Academic year 2016-17	0
Academic year 2015-16	1