



Complaints Procedure (Whole School – including EYFS)

Version Number:	V 3.0
Applies to:	Whole School incl EYFS
Author (s):	Head
Review Frequency:	Annual
Policy category (1, 2, 3, 4):	1
Last reviewed:	Lent Term 2024
Next review due by:	Lent Term 2025
Approved on (date):	Governors 29.02.24
Committee (s) Responsible:	Governors
References (including legal and others eg ISBA).	ISSR 32 & 33; ISBA Model Complaints Procedure
ISI Reg:	33; 32(3)(f); NMS 14 & 2.7
Other related policies and documents:	Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions

Contents:

1. Introduction	2
2. What constitutes a Complaint	2
3. Principles for Resolving a Complaint	3
4. The Three-stage Complaints Procedure	3
4.1 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution	3
4.2 Formal Resolution	4
4.3 Panel Hearing	5
5. Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints	6
6. Recording Complaints and use of personal data	6
7. EYFS	7
8. Vexatious Complaints and Harassment	8
9. Compliance and Monitoring arrangements	8
APPENDIX. Complaint Form	9

1. Introduction

Woodbridge School (which includes the Senior and Prep Schools) has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils, and its communication with parents. However, if parents do have concerns, they can expect them to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. Woodbridge School makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School's website and in the School office during the school day, and Woodbridge School 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. This procedure is not, however, available for use by prospective parents – it may only be used by parents of current and currently registered pupils.

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 the School.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1) (b) (3) (f) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, **Woodbridge School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.**

“Parent(s)” means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil about whom the complaint relates.

2. What Constitutes a Complaint?

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

In the following, the term “complaint” includes any worry or concern communicated to the School.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for the pupils and complainants can be assured that their children will not be penalised for a complaint that is raised in good faith.

3. Principles of Resolving a Complaint

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. At each stage of the complaints procedure, the person investigating will clarify the detail and the outcome the complainant is seeking.

At each stage of the Complaints procedure, the person investigating will consider how the complaint may be resolved. It **may be** appropriate in order to bring the complaint to a resolution for the investigator to offer:

- an explanation
- an apology
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- reassurance that steps have been taken to prevent a recurrence of events which led to the complaint
- reassurance that the School will undertake a review of relevant policies and procedures in light of the complaint

None of the above will constitute an admission of negligence or an acceptance of liability on behalf of the School.

The Regulations require concerns to be addressed in three stages. It is important that complainants follow the three stages in raising concerns, and that both School and complainant are clear during the process at which stage they are working.

4. The three-stage Complaints Procedure

4.1 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Tutor/Head of House/Class Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Tutor/Head of House/Class Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult a head of department/the Deputy Head/the Head/the Head of Woodbridge School Prep.
- Complaints made directly to a head of department/the Deputy Head/the Head/the Head of Woodbridge School Prep will usually be referred to the relevant Tutor/Head of House/Class Teacher unless the head of department/the Deputy Head/the Head/the Head of Woodbridge School Prep believes it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

- The Tutor/Head of House/Class Teacher 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 seven working days** or in the event that the Tutor/Head of House/Class Teacher 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 the complaint is against the Head of Woodbridge School Prep, parents should make their complaint directly to the Head.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors who can be contacted via the Clerk to the Governors by emailing verity@seckford-foundation.org.uk

4.2 Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head/Head of Woodbridge School Prep. Parents are encouraged to complete the appended Complaint Form to proceed to Stage 2 although this is not mandatory. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head/Head of Woodbridge School Prep will speak to the parents concerned, within **seven working days** of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head/Head of Woodbridge School Prep, or their nominee, to carry out further investigations.
- The Head/Head of Woodbridge School Prep will **keep written records** of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head/Head of Woodbridge School Prep 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/Head of Woodbridge School Prep will also give reasons for the decision. In most cases, the Head/Head of Woodbridge School Prep will usually make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 15 working days of the complaint being put in writing.
- If the complaint is against the Head of Woodbridge School Prep, the Head will conduct a full investigation and once satisfied, so far as is practicable, that all of the relevant facts have been established, the Head will inform the parents of the decision in writing.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors who will in most cases speak to the parents concerned, within seven working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. The Chair of Governors will conduct a full investigation, call for a full report from the Head and

for all the relevant documents. Once the Chair of Governors is satisfied, so far as is practicable all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of their decision in writing. The Chair of Governors will usually make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 15 working days of the complaint being put in writing.

4.3 Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution (at Stage 2) they should do so in writing to the Chair of Governors within 10 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. The Complaints Panel will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with under an earlier stage of this policy.
- **The matter will then be referred 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 Clerk will appoint one panel member to act as Chair of the Panel. The Clerk will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place **within 20 working days**.
- 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 five 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.** This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- **The Panel will decide whether it will be helpful to it for witnesses to attend.**
- **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 all facts they consider relevant, **the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and accordingly decide whether to:**
 - dismiss the complaint (s) in whole or in part;
 - uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and

- may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, **within seven 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 Head. 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 and the Head.**

5. Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within seven working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

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 22 working days**. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed **within a further 27 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. 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 be permitted on an exceptional basis and the school will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.

Where repeated attempts are made by parents to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this may be regarded by the school as vexatious which is covered elsewhere in this policy.

6. 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 [WBS-Pack Privacy-Notice-for-parents-WBS-25.04.22.pdf \(woodbridgeschool.org.uk\)](https://www.woodbridgeschool.org.uk/WBS-Pack/Privacy-Notice-for-parents-WBS-25.04.22.pdf). 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(s) and pupil(s)
- Description of the issue and completed complaint form
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Pupil records (as 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 meetings including the Panel hearing
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice, but potentially including sensitive data such as 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 and Data Protection Policy.

7. EYFS

Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this complaints policy. 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. For EYFS, all written complaints relating to the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated, and the outcome sent to the complainant within 28 days of receiving the complaint.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential 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.

Woodbridge 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 for at least six years.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

[Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD](#)

ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

[ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA](#)

8. Vexatious Complaints and Harassment

Very occasionally the School may judge that a complainant is behaving in an unreasonable manner when raising and / or pursuing concerns. These complaints may be characterised by being unreasonably persistent or aggressive and their actions may cause distress to a member of the School. In such circumstances the School will:

- Verbally inform the complainant that his / her behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable / unacceptable and, if it is not modified, action may be taken. This will be confirmed in writing;
- If the behaviour is not modified the School will take some or all of the following actions as necessary:
 - inform the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties;
 - inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication with the complainant to Woodbridge School should be by letter only;
 - in the case of physical or verbal aggression consider warning the complainant about being banned from the School site; or proceed straight to a temporary ban;
 - consider taking advice from the ISI on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation.

For the academic year 2022/23 the School received 0 formal complaints.

9. Compliance and Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be subject to a thorough review process including consideration at the Compliance and Risk Committee and ratification by the Governing Body on an annual basis. This will ensure that practice across the whole school is in line with this policy, and with current guidance and legislation.



Complaint Form

To be completed by those with parental responsibility¹ for a current pupil and returned to the Head via snorman@woodbridgeschool.org.uk, or the Head of Woodbridge School Prep via nmitchell@woodbridgeschool.org.uk.

If the complaint is against the Head return the form to the Chair of Governors via verity@seckford-foundation.org.uk

PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS

Your name(s)	
Name of pupil(s), year(s) and your relationship to them	
Contact address	
Contact telephone day	
Contact telephone mobile	
Contact email address	
Details of the complaint²	

² Please provide details of the nature of your complaint. If you have more than one ground of complaint we suggest numbering them so that each is considered in turn. If you require more space you may wish to attach an additional page setting out your complaint.



Woodbridge School

Action taken to date (including staff member(s) who has/have dealt with it so far) and solutions offered

The reason(s) that this was not a satisfactory resolution for you

What action(s) would you like to be taken to resolve your complaint?

Signature(s):

School use

Stage in the complaints procedure (circle as appropriate): 1 2 3

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Action taken:

Date:



Woodbridge School

How we may use personal information

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice available at [Privacy Policy - Woodbridge School](#). When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel members appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include:

- This completed complaint form
- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent(s) and pupil(s)
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations
- Pupil records (as appropriate)
- Witness statements (as 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 meetings including the Panel hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision.

As part of the complaints process we may also process 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy, 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 and Data Protection Policy.