

Woodbridge School

Complaints Procedure (including EYFS)

Introduction

Woodbridge School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it 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 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) 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.

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.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

The three-stage Complaints Procedure

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/Housemaster/mistress. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Tutor/Housemaster/mistress 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/Housemaster/mistress unless the head of department/the Deputy Head/the Head/the Head of Woodbridge School Prep deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Tutor/Housemaster/mistress 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/Housemaster/mistress 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 Chief Executive of the Seckford Foundation.

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. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head 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, or their nominee, to carry out further investigations.
- The Head will **keep written records** of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head 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 will also give reasons for the decision.
- 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 Chief Executive of the Seckford Foundation and the Chair of School Committee, either of whom will in most cases speak to the parents concerned, within seven working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. The Chief Executive of the Seckford Foundation will conduct a full investigation, call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. Once the Chief Executive of the Seckford Foundation and the Chair of School Committee are 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 Chief Executive of the Foundation and the Chair of the School Committee will give reasons for their decision.

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

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to The Chief Executive of the Seckford Foundation who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- **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 Chief Executive of the Seckford Foundation, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place **within 15 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 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 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 School Committee 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 School Committee and the Head.**

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 20 working days**. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed **within a further 22 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.

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.

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 or proceed to a panel hearing 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 (http://www.woodbridgeschool.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/WBS-Pack_Privacy-Notice-for-parents-WBS-Copy.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
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name 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 of the 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.

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 but in most cases for a period of at least 6 years after the pupil leaves the School.

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 three 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 1234 234 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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

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 2018/19 the School received 1 formal complaint.

Author(s):	Bursar
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References:	ISI 33, 33(a); ISBA model Complaints document