

Complaints Procedure

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WYCHWOOD
SCHOOL • OXFORD

Scope

This Policy applies to complaints from parents of current pupils and to former pupils of the complaint was raised when the pupil was registered at Wychwood School, Oxford ("The School").

Introduction

The School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. On-going dialogue between the School and parents is seen as an integral part of their joint responsibility for the education - in its broadest sense - of our pupils. It is hoped that such dialogue will enable any concerns to be dealt with promptly and effectively and preclude the need for a parent to initiate a formal complaint.

The 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 we 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, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Wychwood School will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

Although this procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils. It may also be used by pupils who are current boarders to raise their own complaints about boarding provision.

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. The only exception to this is if the complaint is a review of a decision taken by the Head to exclude or require the removal of a pupil of the School's Terms and Conditions in which case such a review must be requested by no later than five working days from the date of the decision to exclude or require the removal of a pupil.

The School will be mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in the application of this procedure.

Definitions: 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/faculty 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.

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

Procedures

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 a relevant teacher e.g. form teacher, progress tutor or subject teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the relevant teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Deputy Head or the Head.

Complaints made directly to the Deputy Head or the Head will usually be referred to the relevant teacher unless the Deputy Head or Head deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.

In term time, the relevant 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 7 working days or in the event that the teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised that they may proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure, within 7 working days after the date of such advice. Outside term time, the relevant teacher will make such records within 7 working days of the date of receipt of the concern or complaint..

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- i. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents may put their complaint in writing to the Head explaining their dissatisfaction. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- ii. In most cases, the Head will speak to the parents concerned, within 3 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- iii. It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations.
- iv. The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- v. 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 his/her decision. This will take place within 28 working days following the delivery of the complaint to the Head under stage 2.
- vi. If the complaint is against the Head, the Chair of Directors will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will, in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for his/her decision. This will take place within 28 working days.
- vii. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they may proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure, within 7 working days after the date of the decision.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

- i. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the person who has been appointed by the Directors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, known as the Convenor. The responsibilities of the Convenor may be delegated to the Head if they are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

- ii. The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least two Directors not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Chair or Vice Chair of the Board of Directors will appoint each of the Panel members. This duty may be delegated to the Head. The Convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a Hearing to take place as soon as practicable but within 28 working days.
- iii. 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 7 days prior to the Hearing.
- iv. The parents may attend the Hearing and one other person may accompany the parents to the Hearing. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate either for the School or the complainant.
- v. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parental complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- vi. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all of the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and make recommendations, which it shall complete within 7 working days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision, resulting actions and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings, and, if any, recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained of. They will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Head and the Chair of Directors on request.
- vii. Where a parent is unable or chooses not to attend the Panel meeting after it has been convened, the school is under no obligation to convene another Panel Hearing.
- viii. Once convened, the Panel Hearing will take place whether or not the parent attends. If the parent expresses satisfaction and a desire not to proceed further after the convening of the Panel Hearing, the Hearing will close the complaint. If the parents remain dissatisfied, then the Hearing will consider the complainant in the parent's absence and issue findings on the matter that will bring it to a conclusion.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records kept will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them, or where any other legal obligation prevails.

A written record is kept of all formal complaints, their outcomes, when they were finalised and whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a Panel Hearing. Action taken by the School as a result of a formal complaint will be recorded.

All time limits referred to in the Complaints Procedure refer to term time. Any school holiday period will not be taken into account. References to 'working day' mean all days during term time other than Bank Holidays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Data Protection - Complaints

Correspondence, statements, and records relating to individual complaints are to 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. There may also be other circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.

The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

Where a data subject is concerned about the Wychwood School's response to any data protection issue, we request that they raise their concern with us in the first instance. The School's Data Officer can be contacted via office@wychwoodschool.org

Alternatively, data subjects can complain at any time about how the school has handled their data: they can contact the Information Commissioner's Office at <https://ico.org.uk/concerns/> and the Information Commissioner Office's (ICO) helpline is 0303 123 1113.

Previous Complaints

Academic Year	Number of Formal Complaints (Stage 2)
2021-2022	1
2022-2023	0
2023-2024	1