



Complaints Procedure

West House has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint requiring action by the School, they can expect it to be treated in accordance with the procedures laid out hereafter.

Availability

This policy applies to the whole school, including EYFS, and is available to view via the school website. Hard copies are available to view in the school office and parents may request that a hard copy be sent home free of charge.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

1. It is hoped that most issues raised by parents will be resolved quickly and informally. These will usually take the form of a telephone call, a note in a pupil's planner or reading record book, an email, or a word with a member of staff.
2. Matters raised informally by parents, which require a response but not action at a school level, will normally be handled by the Form Teacher/Tutor or Key Worker, who will be encouraged to exercise their professional judgement. No formal record will be retained.
3. Any matter raised informally but requiring action at a school level, whether it is presented as a concern or a complaint, will fall within the scope of this policy and, as such, will be referred to the Headmaster and recorded as detailed below.
4. Initially, the Headmaster may delegate the task of addressing the matter to a member of the Senior Leadership Team who will carry out the investigation and seek an informal resolution. A record will be kept on the 'Informal Complaints Record Sheet' and will include the date on which the complaint was received, details of any investigation and the date on which parents were informed of the outcome.
5. In the vast majority of cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway and normally within 48 hours, to the parents' satisfaction.
6. The Informal Complaint Sheet will be retained in the Parental Complaints File.
7. Should the matter not be resolved within two days, or in the event that the Member of the Senior Leadership Team and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure, at which point the complaint will be treated as 'formal'.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

1. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster (an email would not necessarily constitute a formal complaint, unless specifically presented as such). This action will constitute a formal complaint. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
2. The Headmaster will acknowledge the complaint upon receipt of the letter and, in most cases, he will speak to the parents concerned, normally within seven days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage and, if this is achieved, the resolution will be recorded as ‘informal’ with the written agreement of the parents.
3. It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations.
4. Once the Headmaster 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 Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision. Parents will be informed of the decision within 14 days of the complaint being made (during term time).
5. The Headmaster will keep all written records relating to the complaint, along with those relating to all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint and these will be retained in the Parental Complaints File.
6. When a resolution is achieved under such circumstances, it will be recorded as ‘formal’.
7. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

1. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to a convenor, appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. Under normal circumstances, the convenor will be the Secretary to the Board of Governors.
2. 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, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school (the school will follow DfE guidance on the identity of an independent panel member in selecting someone who has held a position of responsibility and is used to scrutinising evidence and putting forward balanced arguments). Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors. The Convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 days of the panel being appointed (during term time).
3. 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 four days prior to the hearing.
4. The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

5. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
6. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
7. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within seven days of the Hearing. The Panel will inform the parents, by electronic email or otherwise, of the findings and recommendations. Where relevant, a copy of the findings and recommendations will also be sent by electronic mail or otherwise to the person complained about.
8. All documents relating to the complaint, subsequent investigations and the panel hearing will be retained in the Parental Complaints File.
9. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Headmaster and the Governors.

Complaints Relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage

Parents with children within the Early Years Foundation Stage should follow the procedures laid out above. However, they should also be aware of the following points specifically relating to EYFS:

- A record of complaints will be kept by the school for at least three years.
- Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome within 28 days.
- Should parents believe that the school is not meeting the EYFS requirements and wish to make a complaint to Ofsted (Tel: 0300 123 4666) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (Tel: 0207 6000 100), they may do so. Full details of procedures and contact details appear in the entrance to the main Early Years building ('Field House').
- The school will inform parents about an inspection once it has been notified. Once the final inspection report has been provided, it will be supplied to the parents of children who attend the setting regularly.
- On request, the school will provide Ofsted and ISI with a written record of all complaints received during a specific period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

Confidentiality and Record Keeping

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. 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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them or where any other legal obligation prevails.

In the case of all complaints, a written record is retained in the Parental Complaints File, along with a note of the stage at which the complaint was resolved. The record will include the action taken by the school as a result of a complaint (regardless of whether or not it was upheld).

A record of the number of formal complaints received during the academic year is maintained in the Parental Complaints File and is made available to parents on request via the school office. There were no complaints registered under the formal procedure during 2018-19.

Monitoring and Review

The Headmaster will carry out an annual review of this policy. He will inform the Board of Governors of the outcome of the review and any formal complaints received on at least an annual basis.

Implemented: February 2008

Reviewed: August 2019

Next Review: August 2020