

Complaints Procedure Policy

School Tier: Whole School including EYFS

Related Policies: GDPR Policy and Record Keeping/Archive policy

Policy Aims

Through the operation of this policy, we aim to recognise, address and resolve parent complaints in a timely and transparent manner, learning from events and changing practice as necessary.

Introduction

Woodard Schools (Nottinghamshire) Limited (WSNL) prides itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to the pupils at Workshop College and Ranby House School. However, if any parent(s) or pupil(s) do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this procedure, which has three stages and is available to all parents of pupils, and of prospective pupils, on the school website.

The procedure applies to parents of all pupils currently at the school, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage ("EYFS"), and parents of pupils who have left the school, providing that the complaint was made prior to the pupil's departure.

The purpose of this document is to set out the procedure current parents/carers should follow should they wish to make a complaint.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint may generally be recognised as 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. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done, or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially, and the school makes every effort to resolve them at the earliest possible stage. If a complaint concerns safeguarding or child protection issues, please refer to the school's Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy.

Reasonable adjustments will be made for parents with disabilities or where a language barrier exists.

If the complainant contacts the school repeatedly on the same point, the correspondence can be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the school reserves the right to choose not to respond. The Department for Education defines 'serial' and 'persistent' as being actions that hinder the proper

consideration of a complaint because of their nature or frequency. This typically includes obsessive, repetitive, or harassing correspondence, pursuing unrealistic outcomes, and using aggressive or disruptive tactics.

The DfE goes further and offers further definitions of complaints as being:

Vexatious or frivolous complaints: Complaints that are obsessive, persistent, prolific, or repetitive.

Unrealistic or unmeritorious claims: Insisting upon pursuing complaints or seeking redress that lack serious purpose, value, or realistic outcomes beyond all reason.

Disruption: Complaints explicitly designed to cause disruption or annoyance.

Unreasonable manner: Pursuing even a valid complaint in an unreasonable manner.

In these cases, the school reserves the right to choose not to respond.

Any request for financial remedies is beyond the scope of this policy and sanctions will not be imposed on pupils or staff by the complaints procedures.

Timescale for resolution of Complaints

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's targets to complete the handling of complaints lodged during term-time are detailed below.

A working day is defined as a weekday on which the school is in session and excludes weekends, bank holidays, and school holidays (even if the school is open for an INSET day, Holiday Club or similar). If the complaint is lodged during holiday periods the matter will be handled as soon as is practicable.

Unless additional time is jointly agreed between the school and the parents, the following timetable should generally be followed:

- Stage 1: Informal resolution: 10 working days
- Stage 2 Formal resolution by Head: further 10 working days
- Stage 3 Panel hearing:
 - Appointment of Complaints Panel: 20 working days
 - Resolution by the Complaints Panel: 10 working days from date of hearing.
 - Inform outcome to parents: 5 working days from decision.

Complaints relating to the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will usually be investigated within four working days of the complaint being received in writing, and the outcome generally notified within 28 days of the complaint having been received.

The output of the complaint may be that the complaint is dismissed or upheld, in whole or in part, and relevant recommendations may be made.

Recording of Complaints

The school will keep a written record of all informal and formal complaints, whether they are resolved at a formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing, and any action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). The record will indicate whether the complaint related to boarding provision, and record the action taken regardless of whether the complaint was upheld.

Records of complaints in the Early Years Foundation Stage are kept for at least 3 years. All other complaints are kept for a minimum of 7 years. Any major complaints are kept for 10 years, complaints of a negligent basis are kept for 15 years and any Child Protection or Safeguarding complaints are kept for as long as the individual circumstances dictate.

A major complaint may be defined as one which typically involves issues of perceived severe misconduct, systemic operational failures, or significant threats to a pupil's safety and well-being.

A complaint of a negligent basis may be defined as one where the school failed to provide a reasonable standard of care or education, resulting in a recognisable loss, injury, or harm.

The stage at which a complaint is resolved will be recorded in the written record of complaints.

All 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.

Pupils, including boarders, are actively encouraged to contribute their views to the operation of the school and the boarding provision and are able to raise concerns and complaints without fear of being penalised for doing so in good faith. The school's written record of complaints identifies those complaints relating to boarding provision.

Pupil complaints are dealt with according to the process outlined in the Pupil Charter.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Data Protection Policy and our Records Management Retention Policy.

Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Complaints Procedures

In order to ensure that the Complaints procedures are effective, efforts are taken to identify any patterns or trends in the causes of complaints. As such, the complaints folder is accessible to Senior Members of the Leadership Team and usually reviewed twice termly.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution:

- 1.1 It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- 1.2 Parent(s) who wish to make a complaint are encouraged to contact the relevant member of teaching or House staff at the College, or the form teacher at Ranby House, who will make a written record of the complaint, including its date. The written complaint will be acknowledged within two working days.

In many cases the matter will be resolved straightway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the teacher/House staff or form tutor cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary to consult a more senior member of staff.

College: Initial complaints for academic and pastoral welfare can be directed to the subject teacher, tutor or the House parent. Should the concern not be addressed, or considered of a greater concern, then the teacher/tutor/House parent, or the parent may choose to address the Key Stage Lead (KS3/KS4/KS5) accordingly. Further escalation may reach the Deputy Head Pastoral, or Lead on Teaching and Learning.

Ranby: Initial complaints should be communicated to the form teacher or the specific teacher of the subject, eg swimming, drama, music etc. Further escalation may reach the Deputy Head.

The Head may be involved at the Informal stage, either at the request of the parent or by referral from a senior member of staff.

- 1.3 If the complaint is against the Head of the College or Ranby House, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors (Custos) via the Clerk to the Governors, Worksop College, Worksop, Nottinghamshire, S80 3AP.

Should the matter not be resolved within ten working days parents will be advised of their right to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution by Head:

- 2.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head of the College or of Ranby House, to request that the matter is formally investigated under Stage 2 of this procedure: the Head will acknowledge that they are investigating.

The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. In most cases, the Head will contact the parents concerned within two 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 to carry out further investigations before reporting back to the parents. In this case, a response should take no longer than a further ten working days.

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 and the person complained about will be informed of the decision in writing. The Head will give reasons for the decision.

The findings and recommendations will be available on a central register for inspection at the school by the governors, the Head and the ISI Inspectorate.

- 2.3 If the complaint is against the Head/Headmaster, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Headmaster, 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 the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for their decision.
- 2.4 The formal resolution should be completed within a timescale of twenty working days from initial complaint during term time (term dates are available on the school website). If the parent(s) are still not satisfied with the outcome, they can request a hearing by the Complaints Panel.

Stage 3 – Formal Resolution by Panel Hearing:

- 3.1 If parents are not satisfied with the outcome of Stage 2, they may request that the matter be referred to a Complaints Hearing Panel for consideration.

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3, they should contact the Chair of Governors within ten days of receipt of the Head's Stage 2 response via the Clerk to the Governors using the form at Appendix 1, supplying any supporting evidence. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within two working days and will schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable, normally within 20 working days.

Parents will be provided with a copy of the complaint and should, within two working days of its receipt, acknowledge its accuracy and completeness and/or furnish any further material to complete and conclude the complaint and also acknowledge that the complaint is now full and complete. Thereafter, no further material from the complainant will be admitted in any form.

The Chair of Governors will then appoint a Chair of the Panel.

- 3.2 The Complaints Panel is assembled, on behalf of the appointed Panel Chair, by the Clerk to the Governors and is composed of at least 3 people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school (i.e. not an employee or Governor of the School). The other members will be members of the Governing Body.
- 3.3 If the Panel Chair deems it necessary, s/he may require that further particulars of the complaint (from the Complainant) be provided or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of all such material, including all material provide to the Panel by the Complainant and the Headmaster, shall be supplied to all parties not later than 7 days prior to the hearing.
- 3.4 In default of compliance with the requirements in section 3.1, the Chair of Governors may inform the Complainant that the complaint is treated as withdrawn. If the Complainant is in default of the requirements in section 3.3, the Panel Chair may advise the Chair of Governors that the complaint should be treated as withdrawn. The Chair of Governors will then, if they agree, notify the Complainant accordingly.
- 3.5 One other person may accompany the parent(s) to the hearing. This may be a relative, teacher and/or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- 3.6 If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. However, where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within ten working days of the Hearing.
- 3.7 The Panel Chair will write to the parent(s) advising them of the Panel's decision and the reasons for it, within five working days of reaching the Panel's written conclusions.

- 3.8 These findings, which are final, will also be sent to the Headmaster, the Chair of Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of. The findings will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the board of governors, the Headmaster and at inspection.

Parents may make a complaint to Ofsted and/or the Independent Schools Inspectorate should they so wish. Contact details for these organisations are as follows:

Ofsted Tel: 0300 123 1231 or www.ofsted.gov.uk/parents

ISI Tel: 020 7600 0100 or www.isi.net

EYFS Providers

WRITTEN COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE STATUTORY FRAMEWORK FOR THE EYFS: WSNL will provide Ofsted and the Independent Schools Inspectorate, 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.

COMPLAINTS TO OFSTED REGARDING EYFS SERVICE PROVIDERS:
Parents may also complain directly to Ofsted if they wish.

Ofsted may be contacted on telephone 0300 123 1231; textphone 0161 618 8524; or at Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate can be contacted at Ground Floor, Cap House, 9-12 Long Lane, LONDON EC1A 9HA or telephone 020 7600 0100.

This information is shared with all parents upon their child starting in the EYFS.

Number of formal complaints received in the preceding year 2025/2026:

Stage 2: 2

Stage 3: 1

Request for a Panel Hearing Review of the Headmaster's Response to a Complaint to: The Clerk to the Governors, Worksop College, Worksop, Notts, S80 3AP.

Name of Pupil:

We request a Panel Hearing to review the Headmaster's response to a complaint.

We agree to abide by the terms of that Procedure for Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure, and, in particular that the proceedings, all correspondence, statements and records relating to the complaint are kept confidential (except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, as amended, requests access to them).

We agree that the decision of the Panel will be final, subject to such (if any) legal rights as may exist.

We confirm that we have parental responsibility for the above-named pupil and that we have consulted with the pupil who wishes the hearing to take place.

We understand that the Panel will be concerned with the fairness and proportionality of the Headmaster's decision in accordance with the school's existing policies (where applicable and relevant) on educational, pastoral care and administration matters.

We understand that at the Panel hearing we may be accompanied by a friend or relation who is not legally qualified, and that we may ask members of the School staff to attend the meeting if they are willing to do so.

We attach a statement setting out the matters we wish to discuss at the Panel Hearing and indicating the outcome we hope to achieve.

First Signature

Second Signature

Full Name

Full Name:

Relationship to Pupil

Relationship to Pupil

Address:

Address:

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Contact Telephone Number:

Contact Telephone Number:

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