



Parents' Complaints Policy

Review cycle: Annual

Last Review Date: May 2021

Next Review Date: May 2022

Staff responsible: Davina Maroothynaden, Bursar

Governor responsible: Annabel Pavin

(This policy applies to the whole School including EYFS)



PARENTS' COMPLAINTS POLICY

This policy is for all Willington School parents, including EYFS parents and is linked to the [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#)

Introduction

1. Willington 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 procedure. Willington School makes its complaints procedure available to all parents on the School's website and it is also available on request to the School Office. The School seeks to ensure that parents are made aware that this document is published and available to them.
2. In accordance with Paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Willington School will, on request to the School Office, provide to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils, 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.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

3. 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.
4. 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 or your child raises in good faith.

The Three-stage Complaints Procedure

5. Stage 1 - Informal Resolution.
 - a. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
 - b. If parents have a complaint or concern, they should normally contact their child's teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult a head of department, a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or the Headmaster.
 - c. Complaints made directly to a head of department, a member of SLT or the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant teacher unless the head of department, member of the SLT or the Headmaster deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
 - d. Should the matter not be resolved to the parents' satisfaction within 5 working days, parents are invited to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.
6. Stage 2 - Formal Resolution.
 - a. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, or the parent is clearly not satisfied with the School's response, then the member of staff should refer the matter to the Headmaster or the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster or ask for a formal meeting with the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. (If however, the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should send their



complaint to the Chair of Governors, who will decide the appropriate course of action to take. Letters or emails for the Chair of Governors should be marked 'PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL' and sent to the Clerk to the Governors for forwarding to the Chair of Governors.)

- b. The Headmaster will seek to meet/speak to the parents concerned, within 5 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- c. It may be necessary for the Headmaster to ask a member of SLT to carry out further investigations.
- d. The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the formal complaint.
- e. 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 give reasons for his decision.
- f. If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all the relevant documents. It may be necessary for the Chair of Governors to ask another Governor to carry out further investigations. The Chair or the investigating Governor may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, seek to speak to or meet with the parents within 10 working days 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 seek to respond within 30 working days and will give reasons for his/her decision.
- g. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

7. Stage 3 - Panel Hearing.

- a. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should write to the Chair of Governors (via the Clerk to the Governors) within 5 working days of receiving the decision from Stage 2. Their complaint will be referred to the Clerk to the Governors who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- b. The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel ("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 to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place, normally within 10 working days.
- c. 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 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- d. 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 is not normally appropriate.
- e. If possible, the Panel will seek to resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation but if required, the Panel will decide how further investigation should be carried out.
- f. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.
- g. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 5 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 Headmaster. 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 Headmaster. The School will record the number of complaints received at this stage on the School's website.



Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

8. All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.
9. 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 (28 calendar days if the complaint is about the delivery of EYFS). Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will normally be completed within a further 20 working days (28 calendar days if the complaint is about the delivery of EYFS).
10. Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, 'working days' refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time.

Withdrawal

11. Should the pupil be withdrawn from or leave the School prior to or during the procedures set out above or should the parents not engage fully with the process, the timings and details set out in the Parent Complaints Policy will no longer apply and (while seeking reasonably to accommodate parents' reasonable wishes) the School will proceed as considered appropriate in the circumstances.

Recording Complaints

12. 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). At the School's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:
 - a. Date when the issue was raised
 - b. Name of parent
 - c. Name of pupil
 - d. Description of the issue
 - e. Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
 - f. Witness statements (if appropriate)
 - g. Name of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
 - h. Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
13. 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.
14. Willington 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.

EYFS Parents

15. EYFS Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements:
 - a. Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 1234 234 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.
 - b. ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net



Review period: Annual

Review by: Bursar



Appendix 1

The Three-stage Complaints Procedure

3. **Stage 1 - Informal Resolution.**
 - a. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
 - b. If parents have a complaint or concern, they should normally contact their child's teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved quickly by this means to the parents' satisfaction.
 - c. Should the matter not be resolved to the parents' satisfaction within 5 working days, parents are invited to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.
4. **Stage 2 - Formal Resolution.**
 - a. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster. (If however, the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should send their complaint to the Chair of Governors. Letters or emails for the Chair of Governors should be marked 'PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL' and sent to the Clerk to the Governors.)
 - b. While investigating the complaint, the Headmaster/Chair of Governors is likely to wish to meet/speak to the parents concerned. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
 - c. Parents will be informed of their decision in writing and will be given reasons for the decision.
 - d. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.
5. **Stage 3 - Panel Hearing.**
 - a. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should write to the Chair of Governors within 5 working days of receiving the decision from Stage 2.
 - b. A Complaints Panel will be formed and will seek to arrange a hearing within 10 working days.
 - c. 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 is not normally appropriate.
 - d. After due consideration, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.
 - e. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final.
6. 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.
7. EYFS parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the School is not meeting the EYFS requirements:
 - a. Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.
 - b. ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net