



Windlesham School  
& Nursery



# Parents' Complaints Procedure

Whole School Policy including EYFS

Last Reviewed: August 2023

Next Review Due: August 2024

Reviewed by John Ingrassia, Headteacher

Graham Rowlands-Hempel, Chair of Governors

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Preparing children for life

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# 1 Introduction

Windlesham School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. Staff are actively encouraged to develop open lines of communication with all parents. Staff will give every opportunity for parents to discuss all matters relevant to their child's education and care. We encourage parents to inform us of their concerns while they are minor ones which can more easily be resolved. It is hoped 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. Windlesham School makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils in the School Office.

Parents of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) should follow this procedure. Parents of EYFS pupils can also make a complaint to ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate) [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net) or call 020 7600 0100, or to OFSTED by using their online complaints form at <https://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk/contact>

## 2 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. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do so something that it should have done or 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.

Parents includes persons who have parental responsibility or who have care of a child. Complaints may not be made by pupils.

## 3 Timeframe for dealing with complaints.

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within five 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. Details are set out below.

Any complaints must be made within 3 months of the event giving rise to the complaint.

Unless the chair of governors decides otherwise, this procedure applies to parents only. It does not apply to parents of prospective pupils or to complaints from parents who have left voluntarily or as a result of being excluded, unless the complaint process was started when the pupil was still being educated at the school. The policy does not apply to complaints about exclusions.

## 4 Recording complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- 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)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph (k) of Part 7, 8.1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2019, by the Secretary of State, or under other legal authority. The School will keep records of all action taken.

## 5 Stage 1 - Informal resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally, and we expect parents to allow a reasonable opportunity for informal resolution before resorting to the formal stages of the procedure set out below.

If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact the relevant Class Teacher/Tutor. In many cases, the matter can be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Class Teacher/Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult the Headteacher.

Complaints made directly to the Director of Studies, Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher in the first instance will usually be referred to the relevant Class Teacher/Tutor unless the Director of Studies, Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter.

A written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received will be made. Should the matter not be resolved then parents may proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

If the complaint is against the Headteacher, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors. Their details can be found at the end of this policy.

## 6 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 Headteacher. This should include details of the complaint and the reasons for their dissatisfaction with the school's response.

The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

As referred to in section 3 above, the written complaint will be acknowledged within five working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

In most cases, the Headteacher will meet the parents concerned, normally within 7 days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. This period may be extended if it is necessary for the Headteacher to carry out further investigations, or longer if the response period coincides with a holiday period.

The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings, telephone conversations and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Headteacher 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 Headteacher will also give reasons for their decision. The decision will normally be communicated within 21 days of the receipt of the written complaint.

If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Headteacher 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 the decision. The timing will be the same as that set out above.

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

## 7 Stage 3 – Appeal Panel Hearing

If parents wish to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will notify the school within 7 days of the decision being notified under Stage 2. The school will then convene an appeal panel. 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, usually a member of staff of from another local independent school. The panel shall be chosen and appointed by the school. Two of the panel may be governors of the school not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

The school will acknowledge the complaint within 5 days of the notification by the parents and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 15 working days of the acknowledgment.

The manner in which the panel hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the panel.

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 normally not later than 3 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 be allowed unless the school decides otherwise. The panel hearing will take place even if parents do not attend.

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 and may make recommendations. The decision of the panel shall be final.

The panel does not have the power to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents; require apologies to be given by individual members of staff; or make refunds of fees or compensatory awards.

The panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 7 days of the hearing. The decision of the panel will be final. A copy of the panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher. The findings will be made available for inspection at the school premises.

In accordance with Part 7, paragraph 33 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2019, Windlesham School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector or the Secretary of State for the purposes of section 162A(1) of the Education Act 2002 (as subsequently amended), and

paragraph (j) of the standards, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

## 8 Closure of complaints

The school is committed to providing the highest quality of teaching and care of its pupils. It will investigate fully all concerns of parents. However, sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all of a complainant's wishes. Sometimes it will be a case of agreeing to disagree. If a complainant persists in making representations to the school to the Headteacher, chair of governors or anyone else, this can detract from the school's responsibility to look after the interest of all children in its care.

For this reason, the chair of governors may decide to close correspondence on a complaint where they feel that the school has taken all reasonable actions to resolve the complaint or where they judge the complaint to be unreasonably persistent or vexatious.

Where repeated attempts are made to raise substantially the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this may be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy

## 9 Contact details available to all Parents and Carers

| Contact                                 | Details   |
|---|---|
| <b>Chair of Governors</b>               | Graham Rowlands-Hempel<br>Email: <a href="mailto:governors@windleshamschool.co.uk">governors@windleshamschool.co.uk</a>                   |
| <b>Independent Schools Inspectorate</b> | Address:<br>CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA<br>Helpline: 0207 6000100<br>Email: <a href="mailto:info@isi.net">info@isi.net</a> |

**Appendix 1:** Number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the year 2022-2023 - The number of complaints dealt with at this stage in 2022-2023 was **1**