

WAKEFIELD GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOUNDATION

POLICY FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE FOUNDATION SCHOOLS AND THEIR STAFF

Introduction

Wakefield Grammar School Foundation prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. If parents do have a complaint they can expect it to be treated by the schools with care and in accordance with this policy.

The Foundation is required under the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014 to adopt, make available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils, and apply a complaints procedure in order to comply with the standards against which the Independent Schools Inspection will be carried out. These procedures are also relevant to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

It is important that parents and guardians who have concerns should have the opportunity to express their views and feelings and they should obtain a fair hearing and prompt response to any complaint they make.

This policy is available to download from the Foundation website or is available on request from any of the schools' offices and the Governors' Office.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school. It may be made about the school or Foundation 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.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The schools are here for our pupils and parents can be assured that their children will not be penalised for a complaint that is made in good faith.

Complaints can fall into a number of categories. Some examples are listed below but the list is not exhaustive.

- Complaints may be about operational or administrative matters such as school procedures, school finances or a breach of contract. These complaints can be specific or general.
- Complaints may be about the handling of a situation by staff or the management of the Foundation or the schools.
- Complaints may relate to the behaviour of a pupil or group of pupils
- Complaints may be academic in nature and relate to areas such as the service provided by the schools, the content of a course, the quantity of homework being given or progress by a pupil in a particular subject.

- Complaints may involve a child who is unhappy at school, is being bullied or has received an inappropriate sanction for indiscipline.

Child Abuse

Any complaint or allegation that might be categorised as child abuse should be reported immediately in accordance with the Foundation's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Complaints by Employees

Complaints made by members of staff in their capacity as parents will be covered by this policy but complaints in respect of their employment by the Foundation are covered by the Grievance procedure set out in the Terms and Conditions of Employment for teaching and support staff.

Procedure

The basic policy for complaints either verbal or written is to deal with them promptly, thoroughly and professionally. All complaints should be acknowledged within 72 hours with the promise of an effective enquiry and action if appropriate. A copy of this policy should be sent to the parents.

The schools should attempt initially to resolve complaints on an informal basis.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally and in the majority of cases they will be resolved by an appropriate member of staff such as a form teacher, the relevant Head of Year/Department or a member of the Governors' office in the event of a cross-Foundation complaint. Complaints made directly to the Deputy Head or the Head will usually be referred to the form teacher or Head of Year/Department.

If a complaint is made about the Head it should be addressed to the Spokesman (the Chair of Governors).

Each school has in place a means of recording complaints and ensuring that they are dealt with promptly and effectively. Similarly, each school will have mechanisms in place (such as standing agenda items in pastoral meetings) to monitor any emerging patterns of complaint so that suitable action might be taken.

Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days or in the event that the parents and the school fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

Formal complaints under Stage 2 must be made in writing. If a complaint is significant or complex such that it cannot easily be resolved on an informal basis then it should be reported at once to the Head. If the complaint has been made directly to the Governors or to the Bursar (as representative of the Governors), then the Bursar will inform the relevant Head immediately and send a letter of acknowledgement to the parents within 72 hours.

If parents are alleging professional incompetence or neglect against a member of staff or alleges that a member of staff behaved unreasonably or unprofessionally then the relevant Head should be informed immediately.

The Head or Deputy Head as appropriate will take steps to ensure that the complaint is fully and properly investigated according to the rules of natural justice and always with regard to the best interest of the pupil or pupils concerned. All steps taken should be recorded in writing including interviews with individuals involved and any evidence or documentation should be preserved.

Once the Head is satisfied, as far as is possible, that all the relevant facts have been established, the Head will inform the parents in writing of his decision and the reasons for the decision. The parents will be informed of the decision within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint by the school/Foundation.

If a complaint is made about the Head it should be addressed to the Spokesman (*the Chair of Governors*). The Spokesman or any Governor nominated by the Spokesman to review the complaint will request a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. If necessary a briefing with relevant staff may be called. Once the Spokesman/Governor is satisfied, as far as is possible, that the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed in writing of the decision and the reasons for the decision. The parents will be informed of the decision within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If the complaint or grievance has not been resolved under the Stage 2 above then the Foundation will make provision for the complaint to be heard by a panel appointed by the Governors. Parents should submit a formal written notice within 20 working days of receiving the outcome to the formal complaint to the Bursar and Clerk to the Governors who will report the matter to the Governors.

Note that Stage 3 is to be followed in the event of an appeal by parents/guardians against a decision by the Head to exclude a pupil.

The panel will be convened to consider the complaint within 20 working days of receipt of the formal notice. The panel members will be appointed by the Spokesman or by the Bursar and Clerk to the Governors on behalf of the Spokesman and shall comprise at least three members, two of whom should be serving Governors and have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The third member should be a person independent of the management and running of the Foundation. The Bursar and Clerk to the Governors should also attend the hearing to ensure smooth running.

Parents may wish to supply additional information to the panel or the panel may request further information in advance of the hearing. In either case all relevant documentation must be submitted at least 5 working days before the panel is scheduled to sit. Parents and other involved parties will be invited to appear before the panel to present information and/or answer questions. The Governors will accept written submissions from any party who is not able or does not wish to attend in person.

Parents or any other individuals not employed by the Foundation who are invited to appear before the panel may be accompanied by one other person if they wish. This person may be a relative or friend but legal representation will not normally be appropriate. An employee of the Foundation invited to appear before the panel may only be accompanied by a colleague or a trade union representative.

The panel, in seeking to resolve the complaint, may adjourn the hearing or defer its decision if this is considered appropriate to promote conciliation or obtain further relevant information.

The decision of the panel will be final and will be made within 5 working days of the panel meeting. The panel will make findings and recommendations and a copy of these findings and recommendations will be provided in writing to the parents at their home address, and where relevant to the person(s) complained about. A copy of the findings and recommendations will be available for inspection at Governors' Office by the Governors or the Head teacher.

Notwithstanding the above time scale to resolve a complaint, in the event of an EYFS complaint, it should be resolved, including a panel hearing if required, within 28 days from receipt of the written complaint.

Recording of Complaints

Schools will keep a written record of complaints that have been handled under the formal procedure described at Stage 2 and whether they were resolved under Stage 2 or whether they required a panel hearing under Stage 3. Action taken by the schools as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld) will be recorded. The schools will also keep their own records of informal complaints.

Provision of Information to the Independent School Inspectorate (ISI)

Wakefield Grammar School Foundation will provide the Independent School Inspectorate (ISI) and/or Ofsted on request with a written record of all complaints including those related to EYFS, 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.

Parents may make a complaint directly to Ofsted or ISI if they believe the schools are not meeting the EYFS requirements.

Ofsted - Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. The email address is enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. The general helpline is 0300 123 1231 and the telephone number is 0161 618 8524.

ISI – 1st Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA. ISI may also be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email at: concerns@isi.net

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 33(k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014.

Working Days

For the purposes of this policy, working days are deemed to be Monday to Friday during school term time excluding bank holidays. Details of school term dates are available from the Foundation schools or from the Foundation website. The Foundation will attempt to resolve complaints that are made during holidays as soon as is practicable, but this will depend on the availability of relevant members of staff.

Review History

Policy written	December 2009
Reviewed	April 2011
Updated	August 2011
Updated	September 2012
Updated	March 2013 (additional EYFS requirements added)
Updated	August 2013 (amendments requested by Risk and Constitutional Committee)
Updated	July 2014
Updated	June 2015 (procedure to be used if appeal against exclusion)
Updated	October 2015 (Definition of complaint, clarification of Stages 1,2 &3)
Updated	November 2015 (Recording of complaints)
Updated	July 2017 (General amendments to wording)
Updated	November 2018 (Formal complaints to be made in writing)