



School Complaints Policy

Context

We value feedback as a means to improve our school and make it the best it can be. We very much hope that you and your child will be very happy in our school community, and that our staff deal with any concerns that may arise swiftly.

This policy has been set out in line with the principles of the following documents:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Education Act 2002

It is important to note that some complaints fall outside the school's complaints procedure, for example:

- exclusions
- staff grievances
- disciplinary procedures

Aims

This policy sets out what the school will do if you wish to raise a concern informally, or make a formal complaint. We recognise that there may be an occasion when you are not entirely happy with an aspect of the service that we provide, and that you want the school to deal with your concern through a more formal process.

General Principles:

- This procedure is intended to allow you to raise a concern or complaint relating to the school, or the services that it provides, including remote education during school closures due to coronavirus (COVID-19).
- An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- To enable a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than 3 months after the event, being complained of, will not be considered.

Raising a concern or complaint

Informal Stage - Concern

At this stage, it is appropriate to communicate directly with the member of staff concerned. This can be done by telephoning the school office to arrange a telephone call or meeting.

Alternatively, staff can be contacted via their year group email address e.g.

year2@westfield.staffs.sch.uk or via the school office at office@westfield.staffs.sch.uk or by

telephoning 01902892143. Many concerns can be solved by clarification and it is anticipated that most concerns will be resolved at this informal stage.

We also have a learning/pastoral mentor in school – Miss Boswell. She works with families to support pupils' social and emotional needs. You may wish to discuss any concerns of this nature with her, and she may be able to offer advice, small group work or 1:1 support.

If, having spoken to the member of staff concerned, the issue has still not been resolved; parents/carers may telephone the school office to make an appointment to speak with a Phase leader or Deputy Head teacher.

It may be appropriate to address concerns directly to the Head teacher (or the Chair of Governors, if the concern is about the Head teacher).

It should be noted that some outcomes of a concern or complaint may lead to action being initiated under other formal procedures, such as safeguarding or disciplinary matters. Where this is the case, you will be advised and informed of the procedures that are to be followed. However, the school will not necessarily be able to provide you with the details of the outcome of those procedures for data protection reasons or otherwise, depending on the circumstances.

Formal Stage - Complaint

If initial, informal attempts to resolve an issue are unsuccessful, a formal complaint can be made. A formal complaint can also be raised in the first instance when a complainant deems the issue to be too serious to resolve at an informal stage. In both circumstances, the complainant must:

- State that they are raising a formal complaint.
- Give details of the complaint.
- Give details of any actions that have already been done to resolve the complaint.
- Outline any actions they feel may resolve the complaint.
- Provide any supporting paperwork if relevant.

A formal complaint can be raised by completing the school complaints form at the back of this policy. A copy of the form can be requested through the school office. Alternatively, a complaint may be made by letter or email, over the telephone, or in person.

If a complaint is about the Headteacher, then this should be raised with the Chair of Governors. Contact details can be obtained from the school office. Where a complaint is regarding the Chair of Governors or a member of the Governing Board, the complaint should be made to the Headteacher, who will then seek to instruct an impartial governor to carry out an investigation. Where a complaint is about the full Governing Board, the Headteacher will seek to appoint an independent review, made up of independent governors from local schools or the local authority to investigate the complaint.

The process for dealing with a formal complaint is as follows:

Step 1: The Head teacher/Senior Leadership Team

- The Head teacher (Mrs Lote) or Deputy Head teachers (Miss Thompson or Mrs Anderson) will seek to investigate complaints as well as attempt to resolve the matter, which may involve having a discussion/meeting with you. The outcome of the complaint will be discussed over the telephone or a written outcome will be sent to the complainant. We aim to resolve complaints at this stage within 7 days.

If a complainant remains unsatisfied that the complaint has been dealt with adequately, they may wish to have their complaint considered by the Governing Board. The Headteacher will provide governors with the original complaint, subsequent investigations and any copies of documentation relating to the complaint.

Step 2: The Board of Governors

- The Chair of Governors will need to consider whether it is appropriate for him/herself to investigate the complaint, or whether to refer it to a Complaints Committee of the Governing Board to undertake a review. If the latter course of action is followed, the Chair will convene a meeting of the complaints committee.

Convening the panel

The review panel consists of the first 3 members of the governing board available, who don't have direct knowledge of the complaint. These individuals will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress. The governors will select a panel chair from amongst themselves and will be impartial.

The complainant must have reasonable notice of the date of the review panel; however, the review panel reserves the right to convene at their convenience rather than that of the complainant.

The panel will investigate the complaint, along with the systems and procedures, where relevant, relating to the complaint. It will then put together its findings and recommendations from the case.

The outcome

The committee can:

- Uphold the complaint, in whole or in part.
- Dismiss the complaint, in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld, the committee will:

- Decide the appropriate action to resolve the complaint.
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The school will inform those involved of the decision in writing within 14 days.

Unreasonably persistent, harassing or abusive complainants

The Head teacher and Governing Board are fully committed to the improvement of our school. We welcome feedback from parents/carers and will always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible. Sometimes however, parents or carers pursuing complaints or other issues treat staff and others in a way that is unacceptable. Whilst we recognise that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, we will not accept threatening or harassing behaviour towards any members of the school community.

What do we mean by 'an unreasonably persistent complainant'?

An unreasonably persistent complainant may be anyone who engages in unreasonable behaviour when making a complaint. This will include persons who pursue complaints in an unreasonable manner. Unreasonable behaviour may include:

- Actions which are:
 - Out of proportion to the nature of the complaint.
 - Persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted.
 - Personally harassing.
 - Unjustifiably repetitious.
- An insistence on:
 - Pursuing unjustified complaints.
 - Unrealistic outcomes to justified complaints.

- Pursuing justifiable complaints in an unreasonable manner (e.g. using abusive or threatening language).
- Making complaints in public or via a social networking site such as Facebook.
- Refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint.

What is 'harassment'?

We regard harassment as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than to seek a resolution. Behaviour may fall within the scope of this policy if:

- It appears to be deliberately targeted at one or more members of school staff or others, without good cause.
- The way in which a complaint or other issues is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes undue distress to school staff or others.
- It has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.

In cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the school may take some or all of the following steps, as appropriate:

- Inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach.
- Inform the complainant in writing that the school considers his/her behaviour to fall under the terms of unreasonable persistent complaints/harassment.
- Require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a second person present. In the interests of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken.

Physical or verbal aggression

The Governing Board will not tolerate any form of physical or verbal aggression against members of the school community. If there is evidence of any such aggression the school may:

- Ban the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect.
- Call the police to remove the individual from the premises, under powers provided by the Education Act 1996.
- Prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation.

Legitimate new complaints will always be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the Unreasonably Persistent Complaints/ Harassment Policy. The school reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals, subject to the policy.

Step 3: The role of the Secretary of State for Education

If after following steps 1 and 2, a complainant feels that that the Governors have failed to consider your complaint properly and reasonably, you can raise the matter with the Secretary of State for Education, The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP. However, it is important to understand that this is not a general right of appeal for any parent/carer who disagrees with the Governors' decision. If the Governors have followed a proper procedure and considered the complaint reasonably, the Secretary of State for Education will not reverse their decision.

Monitoring/review arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually. At every review, it will be approved by the full Governing Board.

Emma Lote
Head teacher (March 2020)

School Complaints Form



Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

E-Mail address:

Please give details of your complaint.

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? Who did you speak to and what was the response?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Office Use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: