



Wakefield Grammar School Foundation

| | |
|--|---|
| Document Reference | Complaints Policy (dealing with complaints against the Foundation Schools and their Staff) |
| Version Number | V2.04 |
| Policy Lead Job Title | Jenny Cocker Director of Finance and Operations |
| Consultation | School Heads and HR Manager |
| Checker Person Name / Title Quality Assurance | Simon Chamberlain (Chair of Governors) |
| Name of Approver / Committee Date Approved | Governors Board 31.08.2023 |
| Date of Next Review (Annually) | June 2024 |

VALIDITY – Policies should be accessed via the Foundation intranet to ensure the current version is used.

CHANGE RECORD - REVIEW PERIOD 2 YEARS

| Version | Date | Change details |
|---------|------------|---|
| V1.00 | Dec 2009 | Policy Written |
| V1.01 | Apr 2011 | Reviewed |
| V1.02 | Aug 2011 | Updated |
| V1.02 | Sept 2012 | Updated |
| V1.03 | March 2013 | Updated (additional EYFS requirements added) |
| V1.04 | Aug 2013 | Updated (amendments requested by Risk and Constitutional Committee) |
| V1.05 | July 2014 | Updated |
| V1.06 | June 2015 | Updated (procedure to be used if appeal against exclusion) |
| V1.07 | Oct 2015 | Updated (Definition of complaint, clarification of Stages 1,2 &3) |
| V1.08 | Nov 2015 | Updated (Recording of complaints) |

| | | |
|-------|-----------|---|
| V1.09 | July 2017 | Updated (General amendments to wording) |
| V2.00 | Nov 2018 | Updated (Formal complaints to be made in writing) |
| V2.01 | Jan 2020 | Updated (Head can resolve an informal complaint) |
| V2.02 | Jan 2021 | Updated (Updated complaint numbers) |
| V2.03 | Jan 2022 | Updated (Updated complaint numbers and minor changes to Stage 3) |
| V2.03 | May 2023 | Review, Jenny Cocker, Director of Finance & Operations (removed complaints numbers that are separately disclosed on the website, checked to ISBA template document) |
| V2.04 | Aug 2023 | Updated Richard Brookes, QEGS Head |

To be published on the following:

| | | | | | |
|---------------------|----------|-----------------------|--|-------------------|----------|
| Staff shared | X | School website | | ISI Portal | X |
|---------------------|----------|-----------------------|--|-------------------|----------|

Complaints Policy (for dealing with complaints against the Foundation schools and their staff)

1. Introduction

Wakefield Grammar School Foundation prides itself on the quality of the education and pastoral care provided to its pupils. If parents do have a complaint they can expect it to be treated 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. A copy of this policy will also be provided directly to any parent who makes a complaint.

2. 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 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 the progress being made 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.

3. School Days

For the purposes of this policy, school 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 website [Term Dates - Wakefield Grammar School Foundation](#). 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.

4. Child Abuse

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

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

5. 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.

6. Procedure

The basic procedure for complaints, either verbal or written is to deal with them promptly, thoroughly and professionally. All complaints should normally be acknowledged within 3 school days with the promise of an effective enquiry and action if appropriate.

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 or a matter not related to education or pastoral issues.. Complaints made directly to the Deputy Head or the Head will usually be referred to the form teacher or Head of Year/Department in the first instance. It is however reasonable for the Head to seek to resolve a complaint on an informal basis where appropriate.

If a complaint is made about the Head it should be addressed to the Chair of Governors: Mr Simon Chamberlain at wgsfoffice@wgsf.net

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 school days, or as soon as reasonably practicable if a complaint is made during school holidays (or equivalent), 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 and 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 Director of Finance and Operations (as Clerk to the Governors), then the DFO will inform the relevant Head immediately and send an acknowledgement to the parents within 3 school days.

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

The Head (or Deputy Head, where delegated by the Head) 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 their decision and the reasons for the decision. The parents will be informed of the decision within 20 school days of receipt of the complaint by the school/Foundation.

If a complaint is made about the Head it should be addressed to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors (or any Governor nominated by the Chair of Governors 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 Chair of Governors 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 school days of receipt of the complaint.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If the complaint 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 school days of receiving the outcome to the Stage 2 formal complaint to the Director of Finance and Operations who will report the matter to the Governors.

The panel will normally be convened to consider the complaint within 20 school days of receipt of the formal notice. The panel members will be appointed by the Chair of Governors (or by

the Director of Finance and Operations on behalf of the Chair of Governors) 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 Director of Finance and Operations should also attend the hearing to ensure its smooth running.

The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the panel.

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 school 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.

After due consideration of the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:

- dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part
- uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and / or
- make recommendations

The decision of the panel will be final and will be made within 5 school days of the panel meeting. A copy of these findings and recommendations will be provided in writing within 10 days 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 the school and Governors' Office by the Governors or the Head.

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.

7. Recording of Complaints and use of personal data

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 stage 1 complaints.

The school processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints the school (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- 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 and contact details 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)
- Notes / minutes of the hearing; and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include "special category personal data" (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed and retained in accordance with the Foundation's Data Retention, Storage and Disposal Policy.

Note: Documentation and records pertaining to complaints which do not have safeguarding implications will be retained for a minimum of 7 years. Where there is a safeguarding angle, records concerning allegations of abuse will be preserved for the term of the Independent inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

8. 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 - <https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/contact-form>. The email address is enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. The general helpline is 0300 123 123.

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.