

PROCEDURES FOR THE HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS

Purpose

The policy of the School is to work in partnership with parents and the wider community.

It is based on the belief that co-operation and a sense of joint purpose between staff, parents and the School will assist in ensuring open and positive relationships.

The School will always give consideration to concerns and complaints that are brought to its attention. However, anonymous complaints will not normally be considered.

The School would, in most cases, hope to resolve concerns and complaints at an informal stage, but the procedures allow for formal consideration of a complaint and an appeal stage if matters cannot be resolved.

What is a concern or complaint?

A concern or complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about the conduct/operation of the School, the conduct of, actions or lack of actions by a member of staff, or the unreasonable treatment of a pupil or other person.

Serious complaints or allegations relating to the abuse of children, assault, criminal or financial matters are subject to separate procedures or the School Terms & Conditions.

Making a complaint:

If the complaint is about:	Contact:
A concern or incident in the playground or classroom	In the first instance: the form tutor, subject or class teacher
A concern or incident the complainant considers needs a senior member of staff to investigate:	Nursery to Reception - Head of the Early Years School Years 1 to 6 – Head of the Primary School Years 7 to 13 - Head/ Deputy of Senior School
A serious incident or concern	Head of Wingate School OR if the incident/concern is against the Headteacher to the Owners of the school. From now on , if the concern is against the Headteacher, replace Headteacher with Owners.

The School is committed to dealing with complaints as speedily as possible and would plan to complete each stage within 5 school days. From time to time, it may not be possible to complete the process in that timescale. Where that is not possible the complainant will be informed of any delays and the reasons.

Where complaints are made against an individual member of the School staff, that person will be informed of the complaint at the earliest opportunity.

The Complaints Procedures:

(i) Informal stage:

The School will seek to resolve concerns and complaints informally with the member of staff concerned and encourage the complainant to discuss with them the matters causing them concern. In the first instance, the complainant should complete the online 'Complaint Form' from the website and submit this to the office. However, if that does not resolve the problem then the matter should be brought to the attention of a Senior teacher and ultimately, the Head/Owners. They will then seek to resolve the matter informally and will:

- acknowledge the complaint
- make enquiries to establish the facts
- seek advice as appropriate

- attempt to resolve the matter informally
- establish whether or not the complainant is satisfied
- advise complainants of the next stages if they wish to proceed to a formal consideration of the complaint
- make a note of the complaint and the outcome in the complaints Register

A complainant wishing to proceed to the formal stage of the procedure should notify the Head within 5 school days of being notified of the outcome of the informal stage.

(ii) Formal stage:

Where an informal complaint has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant or the complainant has indicated they wish to go to the formal stage the Head will ensure the complainant is aware of the formal stage procedure.

The Head will:

- request a written record of the complaint
- seek advice as appropriate
- if the complaint concerns a member of staff, they will be informed and provided with a copy of the complaint
- arrange for a full investigation of the complaint
- prepare a report as a result of the investigation and consider actions to be taken
- advise the complainant of the outcome
- make a note of the complaint and the outcome in the Complaints Register

This stage would normally be expected to take no more than 5 school days.

Where it is considered that no further action is needed or the complaint is unsubstantiated, the complainant will be advised, in writing. They will also be informed of their right to appeal to the Complaints Appeals Committee. The appeal, in writing, must be made within 5 school days and will be retained for School records in accordance with the School GDPR Policy and Procedures but a minimum of 1 year of the written complaint being made.

(iii) Appeals stage:

A Complaints Appeals Committee will be convened of the school owners, senior staff and **if possible**, an independent person to consider the appeal. An Independent person is a person considered to be of sound character. He or she may be known to the school but will be instructed and trusted to be of neutral opinion and assess the complaint fairly by evidence and merit. They should not know the complainant personally. If an independent person cannot be appointed, the complainant will be advised that an Appeals Committee will be convened with the School owners and senior staff only.

The complainant, if invited to attend, may bring a friend or translator.

The Committee will:

- consider the written materials
- consider the complaint and the Head's actions taken
- if deemed appropriate and so invited, the committee may interview the complainant
- seek internal or external advice and support as necessary

At the end of their consideration the Committee will determine whether to refer the matter back to the Head for further consideration, dismiss or uphold the appeal in whole or part. The Appeal Committee will:

- decide on appropriate action
- advise the complainant and Head of their decision
- advise the complainant of any further action they could take if they remain dissatisfied
- make a note of the complaint and the outcome in the Complaints Register

This stage would normally be expected to take no more than 10 school days.

The Appeals procedure is the final step in the school based complaints process and the decision of the Appeals Committee shall be final and not subject to review or further appeal.

5. Vexatious Complaints:

The school will resist abuse of the complaints procedure and may reserve the right not to investigate complaints considered to be vexatious or malicious or where the Head or School Owners are satisfied with the action that the school has already taken or proposes to take to resolve.

Mr M Howells
Head of Wingate School

Date of Review: August 2022