

Woodbridge School COMPLAINTS

Policy Statement

Woodbridge School welcomes informed concerns or complaints that may improve the educational experience of current pupils. The policy only applies to all current parents and those pupils attending the school and may not be utilised in retrospect.

The aim of the procedure is that concerns or complaints are resolved, without unreasonable delay, either to the complainant's satisfaction, or with an otherwise appropriate outcome which balances the pupils' rights and duties.

Procedure

All pupils and their parents should feel welcome to contact the School, at any stage, if they have any anxieties or concerns. The procedure outlined below is available to parents, staff, and all pupils, and describes how these concerns will be addressed. It also goes further, explaining how to make a formal complaint if it is felt that the concerns have not been properly dealt with. This procedure allows in normal circumstances for a maximum of 28 of the School's working days between initial lodging of any complaint with the Headmaster and its agreed or arbitrated resolution.

Stage 1

It is hoped that most concerns and complaints will be resolved quickly and informally. At the Senior School, the first contact for parents who are concerned ought to be their son's or daughter's Tutor, Housemaster/Mistress, who will then speak to the Deputy Headmaster or Headmaster, depending on the seriousness of the problem. At the Abbey, the first contact for parents ought to be their son's or daughter's class teacher, who will then speak to the Second Master or Master, depending on the seriousness of the problem. At Queen's House, the first contact for parents ought to be their son's or daughter's class teacher, who may then speak to the Head of Queen's House, depending on the seriousness of the problem. This, of course, does not preclude any parent contacting the Headmaster directly at any time. He will always be delighted to listen to parents or to see them. A written record will be made of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received.

Should the matter not be resolved within 28 days or in the event that the tutor and parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 below.

Stage 2

If they feel that their concerns have not been dealt with seriously, or they are dissatisfied with the outcome, then the next step is to contact, in writing, the Headmaster and in addition, if desired, the Chairman of the School Committee and/or the Chairman of Governors. A letter, in a sealed envelope, addressed to the Chairman of the School Committee and/or the Chairman of Governors, care of the School Office, will be forwarded as appropriate. Obviously, this kind of letter is very rarely written.

The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

An acknowledgement to the letter(s) will be received within three of the School's working days of arrival and a written reply within a further ten of the School's working days. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to the stage below.

Stage 3

If the above has failed to solve the grievance or addressed the complaint, then under the Regulations of the Education Act 2002, the Governors will convene (within a further fifteen of the School's working days) a panel of at least three individuals not directly involved in the matter that is the subject of the complaint, one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the School. The parents/guardians, with representatives, are entitled to be at the panel meeting, as is the person complained about, with a representative.

The panel will ensure that findings and recommendations are copied electronically or otherwise to all interested parties (the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about), and are available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster. Written records are kept at every stage, but are kept confidential to those attending the panel. At the panel stage any breach of confidentiality by the School, School employer, or complainant may result in legal action (eg in the case of a parent talking about the allegation to another parent, or a teacher talking about a pupil/parent to another teacher).

Written records are kept of all complaints that have reached the Headmaster, noting whether they have been resolved at the preliminary stage or have proceeded to a panel hearing. Records are reviewed by the Headmaster annually. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them.

The School is a community that does try to listen to the worries, problems, suggestions and occasionally grievances of parents. The partnership between School and parents/guardians that is cited in the prospectus is not just an empty phrase.

For pupils who have a concern the initial process is the same: they should first approach their class teacher (Queen's House and Abbey), tutor or Housemaster/Mistress (Senior School), or if they feel it appropriate any other member of staff as they see fit. The concern will be noted and the pupils will be given a response as soon as possible, taking into account the nature of the complaint and the actions required to address it. If the pupils feel that the concern has not been dealt with seriously or sufficiently quickly, or they are dissatisfied with the outcome, then the next step will be to contact the Head of Queen's House, Master of the Abbey, or Deputy Head or the Headmaster. At this stage the notes of the complaint will be formalised and, within three of the School's working days, a resolution sought which balances the pupils' rights and duties. If the pupil remains aggrieved, then the next step is to contact, in writing, the Headmaster and in addition, if desired, the Chairman of the School Committee and/or the Chairman of Governors. At this point the School will contact the pupil's parents or guardians if they have not already been involved in discussions, and the process for handling parents' complaints, outlined above, will be followed.

No complainant, whether adult or pupil, will be penalized for making a complaint in good faith.

Written complaints relating to the requirements under the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage: Queen's House will provide Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specific period, and the action which is taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least 3 years.

Parents are entitled to make their complaints direct to Ofsted (see contact details below, under **Boarders' Welfare**) and/or the Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA (tel. 020 7600 0100) should they so wish.

Boarders' Welfare

In the particular case of boarders and their parents, and complaints they may have concerning boarders' welfare, such complaints can either be pursued through the procedures outlined above, or they can be taken directly to Ofsted by contacting the Complaints Manager (tel. 08456 40 40 40; enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk; or in writing to: The Complaints Manager, Ofsted National Business Unit, Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square, Manchester M2 7LA), or they can be taken directly to the local

authority designated officer (LADO): Southern Area Safeguarding Manager, St Edmund House, Rope Walk, Ipswich tel. 01473 581871.

Complaints registered under the formal procedure

Woodbridge School defines a complaint to have been registered under its formal procedures if and only if a letter of complaint has been received by the Headmaster and forwarded by the complainant to the Chairman of the School Committee and/or the Chairman of Governors. For the academic year 2010-2011 no such complaints were registered.

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