

Complaints, Concerns, Suggestions & Compliments Policy

This policy has been written for...	All staff, students and Trustees at West Heath School
Copies of this policy may be obtained from...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The School web site - http://www.westheathschool.com It is available as a hard copy on request from the school office Hard copies for reference are filed in the staff room
This policy links with the following policies	This policy is referenced in a number of other policies for example the Positive Handling Policy.
Participants and consultees in the formulation of this policy were...	The Principal, Senior Leadership Team, Student Services Committee and the Trustees of the School.
Edition, Review frequency and dates	This is edition 3.5, released November 2019 It is due for review in November 2020
Relevant statutory guidance, circulars, legislation & other sources of information are...	<p>Useful links:</p> <p>Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards, NMS18. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/residential-special-schools-national-minimum-standards</p> <p>The Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2015 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/..</p> <p>Ofsted: http://www.ofsted.gov.uk DfE: http://www.education.gov.uk/</p> <p>Children Act 1989</p>
The Lead Member of staff is	Principal
Definitions and key terms used in this policy...	None
The Rationale and Purpose of this policy	To provide a clear and transparent procedure should a parent or carer want to raise a concern, make a complaint, give a compliment or make a suggestion. This policy also outlines how students can raise concerns and complaints informally.
Appendices	This policy has no appendices.
Copying	No school policy is ever written in isolation. Acknowledgement of sources of advice and significant influence in the development and recording of policies at West Heath School are noted on the front page. We request that any schools or organisations incorporating large sections of this policy without alteration should make similar appropriate acknowledgement.

The Aim and Objective of this policy.

Complaints are listened to and responded to appropriately, along with learning from complaints being taken forward. Concerns are dealt with as early as possible. Compliments are acknowledged, celebrated and strengths identified are built on. Suggestions are taken seriously and where appropriate used to improve our school.

Introduction

We pride ourselves on being a “listening” school and this policy makes clear how a parent, carer or student can raise a concern, make a complaint, give a compliment or make a suggestion.

We actively encourage students to participate in sharing ideas, for example through the Student Council, Boarding Council, Key Working Sessions, Standard 20 Visits, Annual Reviews and daily target setting. There may be occasions when a student may wish to make a complaint about their experience, in which case they are encouraged to speak with a member of staff who will try to resolve the situation speedily.

Additionally, we have appointed the services of an independent visitor who conducts Standard 20 visits to the boarding houses. A regular feature of such visits involves the visitor listening to young people describe their experiences of school. The intention is to ensure that no student, having a need to make a representation or complaint feels unable to do so.

Students and parents/carers have the right to expect that we will try to provide the best possible service for them. For a variety of reasons things can sometimes go wrong. We will always try to put things right and yet the procedure described below can be used when necessary.

Our procedure is as follows:

The school follows a four-stage approach to resolving complaints.

- 1. Problem Solving (informal)**
- 2. Formal Complaint**
- 3. Appeal to Chair of Trustees**
- 4. Unreasonably persistent complainants and unreasonable complainant behaviour**
- 5. External Procedure**

1. Problem Solving (informal)

Complaints and concerns are often due to misunderstandings. Please tell someone at the school what the problem is and how you think it can be resolved.

We will try to find a solution to the problem in a way that is acceptable to all the people involved.

Many informal concerns/complaints can be resolved informally. We will normally respond to informal concerns/complaints at a problem solving level within two school-term weeks. Our aim is to resolve all concerns at this level.

However, if it is not possible to resolve your complaint informally then you may wish to follow the formal complaints procedure.

2. Formal Complaint

You can make a formal complaint in writing which will be investigated and you will be informed of the outcome. The complaint will be investigated by a senior member of staff working alongside our Company Secretary, who administrates the process as specified in this policy. If the complaint relates to the Principal & Chief Executive,

Procedures & Practices

the Chair of Trustees will deal with this type of complaint assisted by the Company Secretary.

All formal complaints will be handled by the Company Secretary. All correspondence and communication will be directed to the Company Secretary who will coordinate the school's investigation into the complaint as agreed by the Deputy Principal.

The Company Secretary will coordinate the response to the complainant on the school's behalf, having discussed the matter in full with the Deputy Principal or Chair of Trustees if the complaint relates to the Principal. Only under exceptional circumstances will communication with the complainant be entered into by any other member of West Heath Staff

We will normally respond to your formal complaint within two school-term weeks, although this can / may take longer depending on the complexity of the complaint and investigation required. You will receive a response in writing following the investigation with our findings and recommendations.

3. Appeal to Chair of Trustees

Finally, if a parent or carer is not satisfied with the response to a written complaint, they may appeal to the Chair of Trustees, via the Company Secretary, who will arrange for a panel to hear and consider the complaint. This panel would normally be held within five school-term weeks of the complainant notifying the school they wish to proceed to this level. The Company Secretary will administrate and coordinate this process.

The panel will comprise of at least three people, at least one of whom will be independent of the management and running of the school. At least one member will be a Trustee of the School. Parents or carers may attend the panel hearing and may be accompanied if they so wish. Copies of the panel's findings and recommendations from the panel hearing will be distributed by the Company Secretary to all parties having a direct interest in the issue within two school-term weeks.

4. Unreasonably persistent complainants and unreasonable complainant behaviour

Should there be, in rare circumstances, unreasonably persistent or vexatious complaints or complaint behaviour, the school will deviate from the complaint process described above.

The school is committed to ensuring complaints are taken seriously and to working in partnership with parents and carers. However, it is essential the resources of the school and charity are focussed on our students. In this context a decision may need to be taken in the best interests of our students not to follow our usual process.

In such circumstances, the decision to deviate from our usual complaints process can only be made by the Full Board of Trustees or the Audit Committee, following the Principal/Deputy Principal presenting a case for consideration. Decisions made by the Full Board of Trustees will be minuted by the Company Secretary and communicated to the relevant complainant.

5. External Procedure

Our complaints procedure does not preclude students or parents/carers going to the statutory agencies such as the Local Authority, or Ofsted in order to pursue their complaint. See contact details for Ofsted below.

Exceptional circumstances

Record Keeping, Compliments

Record keeping

Records of complaints are kept confidentially by the Company Secretary and all complaints, concerns and compliments are made available to Ofsted inspectors.

Compliments and Suggestions

Students, parents, carers and stakeholders are very welcome to make a compliment or a suggestion. Compliments and suggestions will be filed in the Complaints, Concerns, Suggestions and Compliments file and taken to the Student Services Committee, along with complaints and concerns.

Grievance Procedure for Staff

Where a complaint relates to matters associated with an individual's employment, staff can follow the grievance procedure. (See Staff Handbook).

Persons with particular responsibilities

Company Secretary company.secretary@westheath.com
Principal
Vice Principal Care and Safeguarding
Independent Standard 20 Visitor
Trustees

Other Participants & Stakeholders

Ofsted Welfare Department - **0300 123 4666** for complaints or concerns about any service Ofsted inspects or regulates (8.00am to 6.00pm)

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Monitoring & Evaluation

Company Secretary
SLT
Student Services Committee
Trustees
Standard 20 Visitor