

WESTBOURNE SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction

Westbourne is committed to providing a caring and supportive environment in which each pupil can feel secure and able to learn. Whilst we believe we maintain the highest of standards, we want to continually improve and if you have any concerns about the way we are dealing with matters affecting the education or care of children, we welcome your views. Westbourne has an 'open door' policy so you need never feel concerned about discussing issues with anyone in the school – your concerns are ours. Whilst we hope we will deal with any matters informally, we do have a formal complaints procedure as listed below:

Westbourne School is required under the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2003 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, pupils and members of the public who have a grievance should have the opportunity to express their views and feelings and that they should obtain a fair hearing and prompt response to any complaint they make.

It is important that the School should have due regard for the rights of all who work for them and that any complaints against members of staff should be handled in a professional manner.

Definition of a Complaint

Complaints are not defined in the Independent Schools Standards Regulations but are regarded as being a statement of protest or remonstrance, verbal or written. There is a difference between a complaint and a concern which can best be described as an expression of lower level unease. Concerns should be handled informally through normal dialogue and discussion whereas complaints should be subject to a formal procedure.

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 School.
- Complaints may relate to the behaviour of a pupil or a 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 progress 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 discipline.
- Complaints may involve child protection issues.

Complaints can be made to the School that are general or they may be about specific members of staff and complaints can be received from parents, pupils, members of staff or members of the public.

Complaints made by members of staff in respect of their own employment by the School are covered by the Grievance procedure set out in the Terms and Conditions of Employment for staff.

Procedure

Westbourne has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and the pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School in accordance with this Procedure.

The basic policy for complaints either verbal or written is to deal with them promptly, thoroughly and professionally. All complaints should be acknowledged within 72 hours with the promise of an effective enquiry and action if appropriate. A copy of this policy should be sent to the complainant.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

*It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and **informally**.

*If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Form Teacher in the Junior School or Form Tutor/Subject Teacher (as appropriate) in the Senior School. In many cases the matter will be resolved straightaway. If the Form Teacher/Tutor/Subject Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Head of the Junior or Senior School (henceforth referred to as Head of the Department) or the Headmaster.

*Complaints made directly to the Head of the Department or to the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher/Tutor/Subject Teacher unless the Head of Department or the Headmaster deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

*The Form Teacher/Tutor/Subject Teacher will make a **written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received**. Should the matter not be resolved, **then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2** of this Procedure.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution

*If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should **make their complaint in writing** to the Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

*In most cases, the Headmaster will speak to the parents concerned, normally **within five school days** of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

*It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations.

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

*Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.

***If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3** of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

*If the parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Secretary to the Governors who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.

***The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration.** The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, **one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors.** The Secretary to the Governors will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within **twenty-one school days of the complaint being referred to him..**

*If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than three school days prior to the hearing.

***The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person.** This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

*After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete **within seven school days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it.** The decision of the Panel will be final. **The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmaster, the Governors and, where relevant, the person who was the subject of the complaint.**

A written record of all formal complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing, will be kept in school. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection; or where other legal obligation prevails.

The number of formal complaints during 2008/9 was 1.

Parents with pupils in the Nursery/Foundation Stage who have not been satisfied with the school's remediation of problems may refer complaints to OFSTED – their complaints number is 08456 404045 – there is also an online complaints form at www.ofsted.gov.uk under information for parents and carers. By telling us of your concerns about our provision, we will improve, so do not hesitate to contact us.