

Complaints, Concerns, Suggestions & Compliments Policy

This policy has been written for...	All students, parents/carers, Trustees and other stakeholders of West Heath School. In accordance with the Independent School Standards Part 6, the number of complaints under the formal procedure in the last academic year totalled 4.
Copies of this policy may be obtained from...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The School website - http://www.westheathschool.com It is available as a hard copy on request from the School Reception
This policy links with the following policies	This policy is linked to the following policies: Anti-Bullying Policy Exclusion of Pupils Policy Online Policy Positive Handling Policy Whistleblowing
Participants and consultees in the formulation of this policy were...	The Principal, Senior Management Team, Student Services Committee and the Trustees of the School.
Edition, Review frequency and dates	This is edition 8, released June 2024. This policy will be due for review June 2025.
Relevant statutory guidance, circulars, legislation & other sources of information are...	Useful links: Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards, NMS18. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/residential-special-schools-nationalminimum-standards The Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2015 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389467/Revised_independent_school_standards.pdf Ofsted: http://www.ofsted.gov.uk DfE: http://www.education.gov.uk/ Children Act 1989
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	<p>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.</p> <p>We actively encourage students to participate in sharing ideas, for example, through the Student Council, Boarding Council, Key Working Sessions, Standard 3 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</p> <p>Additionally, we have appointed the services of an independent visitor who conducts Standard 3 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.</p> <p>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.</p>

Procedures & Practices

Our procedure is as follows:

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

- 1. Problem Solving (informal)**
- 2. Formal Complaint**
- 3. Appeal to Chair of Trustees**

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. Please note that the school will only investigate complaints received regarding recorded telephone conversations if all the requirements of all of the relevant legislation is complied with, in particular, the person recording the call has reasonable grounds for believing that it has the consent of the caller and the recipient of the call.

The main articles of legislation are:

- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ("RIPA")
- Telecommunications (Lawful Business Practice)(Interception of Communications) Regulations 2000 ("LBP Regulations")
- Data Protection Act 1998
- The Employment Practices, Data Protection Code
- Telecommunications (Data Protection and Privacy) Regulations 1999
- Human Rights Act

Many concerns/complaints can be resolved informally. We will normally respond to concerns/complaints at an informal problem-solving level within two school-term weeks and request that you notify the school, within two school-term weeks, as to how you wish to proceed. Should the school not receive any further communication then we will assume no further action is required at this stage.

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 and our Tribunal and Projects Lead manages the process as specified in this policy.

If the complaint relates to the Principal, The Chair of Trustees will deal with this type of complaint assisted by the Tribunal and Projects Lead.

Where a complaint regards a Trustee, the same process applies as for the Principal, it will be dealt with by The Chair of Trustees and assisted by the Tribunal and Projects Lead.

Where a complaint concerns the Chair of Trustees, the individual should contact the Tribunal and Projects Lead. Informal resolution will be sought, but where this fails, the complaints will be taken to a panel and the Deputy Chair of Trustees will mediate any proceedings.

Complaints against the Chair of Trustees, any individual Trustee or the Trustees as a whole, should be sent directly to the Tribunal and Projects Lead marked 'Private and Confidential'.

With the exception of the Principal, Trustees and Chair of Trustees, all formal complaints will be managed by the Projects and Tribunal Lead. All correspondence and communication will be directed to the Tribunal and Projects Lead who will manage the school's investigation into the complaint as agreed by the Principal.

The Tribunal and Projects Lead will respond to the complainant on the school's behalf as directed by the Chair of Trustees. 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

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 Tribunal and Project Lead, who will arrange for a panel to hear and consider the outcome of 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 Tribunal and Project Lead will manage 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. The panel's findings and recommendations from the panel hearing will be distributed by the Tribunal and Project Lead to all parties having a direct interest in the issue within two school-term weeks.

Exceptional circumstances

Record Keeping, Compliments and Suggestions

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 presenting a case for consideration. Decisions made by the Full Board of Trustees will be minuted by the Clerk to the Trustees and communicated to the relevant complainant via the Tribunal and Projects Lead.

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.

Records of complaints

A record will be kept of all written formal complaints, including at what stage they were resolved and action taken by us as a result of those complaints regardless of whether they were upheld. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual concerns and complaints will be kept confidential except where:

- Access is requested by the Secretary of State for Education
- Disclosure is required in the course of a school inspection
- An individual has a legal right to access their own personal data contained within such documentation
- Under other legal authority

We will make the findings and recommendations of the panel available for inspection by the Trustees and the Senior Management Team.

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 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 procedure outlined within the staff Complaint and Grievance Policy.

Persons with particular responsibilities

Tribunal and Projects Lead whs.projects@westheathschool.com
Principal
Head of Care and Safeguarding
Independent Standard 20 Visitor
Trustees (*The Trustees are made aware of all complaints at the termly Student Services Committee Meeting.*)

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

Senior Management Team (SMT)
Student Services Committee
Trustees
Standard 3 Visitor