



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Westfield has always prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to our girls. However, if you do have a concern about any aspect of your daughter's life in school you can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure. Westfield makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on our website and in the school office during the school day and we will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and the form in which it is published or available. This policy applies to the whole school including the Early Years Foundation Stage

In accordance with paragraph 24(3)(g) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards)(England) Regulations 2010, Westfield will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to ISI for the purposes of section 162A(1) of the Education Act 2002 (as subsequently amended), details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your daughter and you can be assured that your daughter will not be penalised for a complaint that you, or your child, raises in good faith.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within five working days, if received during term time, and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. There is always a member of the Senior Leadership Team available during the school holidays if the Headmistress is unavailable. It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible. The school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 days, if the complaint is lodged during term time, and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 28 days, if the appeal is lodged during term time, and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, we will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage

- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph (k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards)(England) Regulations 2010, by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required by the ISI under Section 162(A) of the Education Act 2002 (as amended), or under other legal authority.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If you have a concern you should normally contact your daughter’s Form Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means. If the Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Assistant Head in Junior House or the Deputy Head in Senior House or the Headmistress.
- Concerns initially raised with the Assistant Head in Junior House or the Deputy Head in Senior House or the Headmistress will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor unless the Assistant Head in Junior House or the Deputy Head in Senior House or the Headmistress deems it appropriate for her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form Tutor will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. If you fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then you will be advised to proceed with your complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Headmistress, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then you should put your complaint in writing to the Headmistress within 7 days. The Headmistress will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action.
- In most cases the Headmistress will either meet with or speak to the parents concerned, normally within 7 days of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter. If possible a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headmistress to carry out further investigations.
- The Headmistress will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headmistress is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and you will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmistress will also give reasons for her decision.
- If the complaint is against the Headmistress, the Chairman of Governors will call for a full report from the Headmistress and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman may also call for a briefing from members of staff and will, in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chairman is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chairman will also give reasons for her decision.
- If you are still not satisfied with the decision, you should proceed to stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If you seek to invoke stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) you will be referred to a Convenor 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 meet within three weeks and 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 Convenor, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within seven days.

- 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 seven days prior to the hearing.
- You 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.
- If possible the Panel will resolve your complaint immediately without the need for further investigation.
- Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 7 days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to you informing you 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 you, the Headmistress, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.

During school holidays, if a complaint is received, this will be dealt with as expeditiously as possible by the member of the Senior Leadership Team who is on call if the Headmistress is unavailable.

WRITTEN COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE STATUTORY FRAMEWORK FOR THE EYFS

Westfield will provide Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.

You 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 the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations, where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection, or where any other legal obligation prevails.

If a parent wishes to make a complaint to the Independent Schools Inspectorate this can be done by telephoning ISI 020 7600 0100 or by writing to:

Independent Schools Inspectorate
 CAP House
 9-12 Long Lane
 London
 EC1A 9HA

A record of complaints is kept for at least three years.

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