

WOLVERHAMPTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Wolverhampton Grammar School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Complaints Policy. Wolverhampton Grammar School makes its Complaints Policy available to parents or guardians of all pupils on the School's website, and will ensure that parents or guardians of pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available. This procedure is not available for use by prospective parents - it may only be used by parents or guardians of current pupils and by parents of former pupils provided that the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered at the School.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Wolverhampton Grammar School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, 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, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

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

The three-stage Complaints Procedure

This procedure relates to complaints where the child is in Years 1 to 13 (Upper Sixth). A similar procedure exists for complaints where the child is in Reception (Early Years Foundation Stage) and the timeframe for this is different. Please see Appendix 1 towards the end of this policy document.

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 many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult a more senior colleague.
- The Form Teacher, or more senior member of staff, will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 5 working days, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure.
- Complaints made to anyone other than the Form Teacher will usually revert to the Form Teacher in the first instance. The matter will then be dealt with as above.

- If parents are unhappy with the outcome, they have 5 working days in which to escalate to Stage 2 of the process.
- If the complaint is against the Head, parents may choose to raise this directly with him if they feel the matter can be resolved informally. If resolution cannot be achieved informally, parents may proceed to Stage 2 of the process. Alternatively, parents may wish to raise a complaint about the Head by starting at Stage 2.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing or email to the Head within 5 working days of receiving the outcome at Stage 1. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will speak to the parents concerned, within 5 working 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 Head to arrange for further investigations.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for this decision.
- If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint to the Chairman of Directors. In this case, the Chairman (or another Director to whom the Chairman delegates the handling of the complaint) will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman (or his delegate) 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 (or his delegate) 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 (or his delegate) will give reasons for his decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure within 5 working days of receipt of the Head's or Chairman/Chairman's delegate's decision.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

Requesting a Panel Hearing

- Parents wishing to proceed to Stage 3 must write to the Company Secretary within 5 working days of receipt of the outcome at Stage 2. The Company Secretary has been appointed by the Chairman to call Hearings of the Complaints Panel. The School will consider the complaint closed if no correspondence is received. However, should extenuating circumstances have prevented a parent from meeting the expected timescale, these should be set out in the written complaint and will be considered by the Chairman and the Company Secretary.
- When writing, parents should set out:
 - Details of all the grounds for complaint and how they wish the matter to be resolved
- Within a further 5 working days, parents should forward to the Company Secretary:
 - Copies of all relevant documentation held by the parents
 - Reference to details and documents held by the School, which the parents wish the Complaints Panel to consider

Preparing for the Hearing

- The Company Secretary, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a Hearing to take place within 25 working days. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be

independent of the management and running of the School. This includes the proscription that the independent member shall be free of any indirect connection in the management and running of the School, e.g. as a legal advisor to the School or other professional consultant. One member of the Panel will assume the role of Chair.

- In planning for the Hearing, the Company Secretary will notify all parties and Panel members of the date, time and venue at least 10 working days in advance.
- 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 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the Hearing and be accompanied to the Hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate as the Hearing is an internal process.

Procedure for the Hearing

- For compliance purposes, the Hearing shall proceed notwithstanding that the parents may subsequently decide not to attend. If necessary, the Panel will consider the parents' complaint in his/her absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion. The requirement for the Panel to proceed does not prevent the School from accommodating parental availability for dates or considering comments concerning panel composition.
- During the Hearing, each party will have the opportunity to present their point of view, ask questions and make comments in an appropriate manner. There is no obligation on the Panel to hear oral evidence from witnesses or consider written statements, but it may do so at its discretion.
- All parties are entitled to take notes during the course of the Hearing. However, it is important to point out that the Hearing is a private process and therefore no notes or other records of the Hearing are to be disclosed to the media or published on social media.
- The Company Secretary (or her delegate) will be present to take notes as a formal record.
- All those present must show courtesy, good manners and restraint. Where the behaviour of an attendee is inappropriate, the Chair of the Panel may at his/her discretion and after due warning either adjourn or terminate the Hearing.
- The Chair of the Panel may also adjourn the Hearing if he/she feels it is appropriate to do so, for example if either party feels that specific legal advice should be sought.
- When the Chair of the Panel is satisfied that sufficient consideration has been given to the documents submitted and to the oral representations of all parties, he/she will conclude the Hearing.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

Outcome of the Hearing

- After due consideration of all details they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations. The Panel has no power to make financial awards to parents. The Panel has no power to impose sanctions on staff, students or parents.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 10 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by email or otherwise given to the parents and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chairman of Directors and the Head. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chairman of Directors and the Head.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

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 20 working days. Stage 3, the Complaints Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 35 working days.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays. Further time may be required during school holidays.

Please note that a different timeframe applies to complaints where the child is in Reception. Please see Appendix 1 towards the end of this policy document.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the informal stage, the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice for Pupils and Parents. In dealing with complaints, the School may process a range of information which may contain the following:

- 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)

This may also contain 'special category personal data' as detailed in the Privacy Notice for Pupils and parents where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice but in most cases for a period of at least six years after the pupil leaves the School. The number of complaints during the academic year 2022-2023 at Stage 2 was one and at Stage 3 was one.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

Addresses:

Nic Anderson
Head
Wolverhampton Grammar School
Compton Road
Wolverhampton
WV3 9RB

James Sage
Chairman of Directors
Wolverhampton Grammar School
Compton Road
Wolverhampton
WV3 9RB

APPENDIX 1: COMPLAINTS WHERE THE CHILD IS IN RECEPTION (EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE)

The three-stage Complaints Procedure

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 many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult a more senior colleague.
- Complaints made directly to an Assistant Head/the Head of Junior School/the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher, unless the Assistant Head/the Head of Junior School/the Head deems it appropriate for themselves to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form Teacher, or more senior member of staff will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 5 days, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure.
- If the complaint is against the Head, parents may choose to raise this directly with him if they feel the matter can be resolved informally. If resolution cannot be achieved informally, parents may proceed to Stage 2 of the process. Alternatively, parents may wish to raise a complaint about the Head by starting at Stage 2.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing or email to the Head within 3 working days of receiving the outcome at Stage 1. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head will speak to the parents concerned, within 3 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 Head to arrange for further investigations.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for this decision.
- If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint to the Chairman of Directors. In this case, the Chairman (or another Director to whom the Chairman delegates the handling of the complaint) will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chairman (or his delegate) 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 (or his delegate) 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 (or his delegate) will give reasons for his decision.

- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure, within 3 working days of receipt of the Head's or Chairman/Chairman's delegate's decision.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

Requesting a Panel Hearing

- Parents wishing to proceed to Stage 3 must write to the Company Secretary within 3 working days of receipt of the outcome at Stage 2. The Company Secretary has been appointed by the Chairman to call Hearings of the Complaints Panel. The School will consider the complaint closed if no correspondence is received. However, should extenuating circumstances have prevented a parent from meeting the expected timescale, these should be set out in the written complaint and will be considered by the Chairman and the Company Secretary.
- When writing, parents should set out:
 - Details of all the grounds for complaint and how they wish the matter to be resolved
 - Copies of all relevant documentation held by the parents
 - Reference to details and documents held by the School, which the parents wish the Complaints Panel to consider

Preparing for the Hearing

- The Company Secretary, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a Hearing to take place within 7 working days. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. This includes the proscription that the independent member shall be free of any indirect connection in the management and running of the School, eg as a legal advisor to the School or other professional consultant. One member of the Panel will assume the role of Chair.
- In planning for the Hearing, the Company Secretary will notify all parties and Panel members of the date, time and venue at least 5 working days in advance.
- 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 3 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the Hearing and be accompanied to the Hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate as the Hearing is an internal process.

Procedure for the Hearing

- For compliance purposes, the Hearing shall proceed notwithstanding that the parents may subsequently decide not to attend. If necessary, the Panel will consider the parents' complaint in his/her absence and issue findings on the substance of the complaint thereby bringing the matter to a conclusion. The requirement for the Panel to proceed does not prevent the School from accommodating parental availability for dates or considering comments concerning panel composition.
- During the Hearing, each party will have the opportunity to present their point of view, ask questions and make comments in an appropriate manner. There is no obligation on the Panel to hear oral evidence from witnesses or consider written statements, but it may do so at its discretion.

- All parties are entitled to take notes during the course of the Hearing. However, it is important to point out that the Hearing is a private process and therefore no notes or other records of the Hearing are to be disclosed to the media or published on social media.
- The Company Secretary (or her delegate) will be present to take notes as a formal record.
- All those present must show courtesy, good manners and restraint. Where the behaviour of an attendee is inappropriate, the Chair of the Panel may at his/her discretion and after due warning either adjourn or terminate the Hearing.
- The Chair of the Panel may also adjourn the Hearing if he/she feels it is appropriate to do so, for example if either party feels that specific legal advice should be sought.
- When the Chair of the Panel is satisfied that sufficient consideration has been given to the documents submitted and to the oral representations of all parties, he/she will conclude the Hearing.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

Outcome of the Hearing

- After due consideration of all details they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations. The Panel has no power to make financial awards to parents. The Panel has no power to impose sanctions on staff, students or parents.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 7 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by email or otherwise given to the parents and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chairman of Directors and the Head. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chairman of Directors and the Head.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 3 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

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 14 days. Stage 3, the Complaints Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 14 days.

Please note that, for the purposes of this EYFS-specific procedure, 'days' refers to calendar days during both term time and school holidays.

Referring Complaints to External Bodies

If parents of a child in Reception believe that the School is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, they can contact the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) and/or Ofsted as follows:

ISI
concerns@isi.net
 020 7600 0100

Ofsted
cie@ofsted.gov.uk
 0300 123 4666
 Or follow the advice on complaints at
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

APPENDIX 2: UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS & RELATED BEHAVIOUR

The School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality of service to those who complain. We shall not normally limit the amount of contact that complainants have with the School. Nevertheless, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from such behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Where parents make repeated attempts to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at Stage 3, this can be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

In accordance with Department for Education guidance, we define unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders the consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the School, such as if the complainant:

- refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process whilst still wishing their complaint to be resolved
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the Complaints Procedure
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the Complaints Procedure or with good practice
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to external agencies
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- makes excessive demands on the School's time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- uses threats to intimidate
- uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- knowingly provides falsified information
- publishes unacceptable or private information on social media or other public forums

While the complaint is being progressed, complainants should try to limit their communication with the School that relates to their complaint. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (whether by letter, phone, email or electronic message), as this could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Head or Chairman of Directors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before dismissing a complaint as unreasonable.

If the behaviour continues, the Head will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the School, causing a

significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from the School.

NJCA
September 2024

Next Review:
September 2025