

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This procedure refers to both Wellington Senior School and Wellington Prep School

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Website	Yes

1. Introduction

Wellington School prides 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 Procedure.

Wellington School makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School's website and in the School office during the school day and will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective 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, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year. In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Wellington School will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of the School's Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year

Although this Procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them and may only be used by the parents of current pupils.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only where the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School.

Appeals against exclusions are dealt with in accordance with the School's Exclusions Policy, which is published on the School website and available on request from the School Office.

References to the Head include the Headmaster of the Senior School or the Prep School Head, as appropriate.

"Parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a pupil to whom the complaint relates

2. 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 of a registered pupil 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 or children will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

3. The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

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

Senior School:

If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Tutor. Parents of boarders will usually speak first to their Head of House. Staff email addresses can be found in the termly calendar.

- If you are not sure who to contact, please contact the School Office on 01823 668800 or enquiries@wellington-school.org.uk. Please remember that teachers will have a full programme of teaching and activities and may not be able to get back to you on the same day. They will endeavour to do so within 24 hours.
- The Tutor (or Head of House) will inform the Headmaster's PA of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received and she will make a record of the complaint.
- Should the matter not be resolved within 5 working days, or in the event that the Tutor (or Head of House) and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, the parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, a Head of Section, a Deputy Head or the Head, whether verbally or in writing, will usually be referred to the relevant Tutor (or Head of House) unless the Head of Department, Head of Section, Deputy Head or, on rare occasions, the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- Parents may make their complaint in writing, but doing so does not automatically escalate the complaint to the 'Formal' stage.
- A complaint made directly to the Head may still be resolved at an informal stage.
- If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors, whose contact details are available from the School Office on request.

Prep School:

- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Class Teacher. Email addresses for Prep Years' teachers can be found in the termly calendar. All Prep School staff can also be contacted via wpsoffice@wellington-school.org.uk. If you are not sure who to contact, please contact the Prep School Office on 01823 668700. Please remember that teachers will have a full programme of teaching and activities and may not be able to get back to you on the same day. They will endeavour to do so within 24 hours.

- The Class Teacher will inform the Head's PA of the complaint and the Head's PA will then make a written record. Should the matter not be resolved within 5 working days or in the event that the Class Teacher and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure
- In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Class Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Head.
- Complaints made directly to the Head will usually be referred to the relevant Class Teacher unless the Head deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- If the complaint is against the Prep School Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Headmaster of the Senior School, who can be contacted by writing to the School address or by email to headmastersoffice@wellington-school.org.uk.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- The Head will acknowledge the complaint in writing, within 5 working days of receiving the complaint, and may wish to speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations. This investigation might be delegated to a member of the Leadership Team.
- 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 his decision. In most cases, the Head will make his decision and provide the parents with reasons within 20 working days of the complaint being received in writing.
- If the complaint is against the Head, the parents can refer it to the Chair of Governors by writing c/o the Clerk to the Governors at the School address or by email to clerktogovernors@wellington-school.org.uk, stating clearly that they are making a complaint.
- The Chair of Governors or their nominee will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 5 working days of receipt.
- The Chair of Governors, or their nominee will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors, or their nominee may also call for a briefing from relevant members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter

further. Once the Chair of Governors 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 Chair of Governors or their nominee will give reasons for their decision within 20 working days of the complaint being received in writing.

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

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should do so in writing to the Clerk to the Governors within 10 working days of receiving the decision setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.
- The Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of 3 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. The Chair of Governors will appoint one of the Panel members to act as the Chair of the Panel.
- The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as reasonably practicable and, where possible, within 20 working 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 or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- The Panel will not consider any evidence which was not considered at stage 2, unless such evidence is directly relevant and has only become available to the Complainants since the Stage 2 decision was made.
- The parents may attend the Panel hearing and be accompanied by one other person if they wish. The Head shall also be entitled to 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. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend. The manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- 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, and in what timeframe, it should be carried out.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and accordingly decide whether to:

- dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
- *Uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and*
- may make recommendations. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 5 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 to the parents by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors 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 Chair of Governors and the Head.

4. Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

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 Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 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. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve complaints during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only be permitted on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.

5. Persistent Correspondence

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all 3 stages, this may be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

6. Recording Complaints and use of personal data

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints, whether they are resolved at the informal stage (Stage 1), the formal stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a panel hearing (Stage3) 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, which is available in the Policies section of the School website (<https://www.wellington-school.org.uk/senior/information/policies>) When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include 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 and contact details 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)
- Notes/minutes of the hearing; and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy.

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, Data Protection Policy and Retention of Records Policy.

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.

Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to ISI or Ofsted. Parents will be notified by ISI or Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received.

- ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net.
ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA
- Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

Wellington School will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action that which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Retention of Records Policy.

