

## Preamble

The safeguarding and protection of children and young people is of paramount importance to the Governors, Principal and staff of George Watson's College. There is no place in the School for bullying or abuse of any kind and we are constantly reviewing and improving our practice to keep our pupils safe, working with other agencies as necessary.

George Watson's College ('the School') recognises that abuse suffered during childhood can have long term effects and that survivors and witnesses of abuse can remain affected during their adult life. The School takes all allegations of historic abuse seriously. The purpose of this policy is to set out how someone can report an allegation of historic abuse and how the School will deal with it.

## Definition

Historic abuse refers to acts against former pupils carried out by others - staff, pupils or visitors - who are no longer associated with the School. Any allegations which involve current pupils or staff should be dealt with in line with the [School's Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy](#).

## Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- That historic allegations of abuse at the School and its predecessors are promptly and professionally responded to
- That survivors are appropriately supported by the School and helped to achieve the outcome that they desire where possible
- That any lessons which may help to improve the safety and wellbeing of current pupils are learned and implemented
- That any regulatory or criminal matters concerning current or former members of staff, volunteers or pupils are reported or referred appropriately.

The School does not have the expertise to investigate allegations of historic abuse and make findings, but we will refer allegations of behaviour that may be of a regulatory or criminal nature to the police or other relevant agency. In cases where the complainant does not wish to make a complaint to the police or the relevant agency, we will share intelligence on an anonymous basis. Where the complainant wishes to make a report to the police or other agency, the School will support them to do this and will assist with any investigations as far as possible.

This policy does not purport to restrict any complainant's right to refer matters directly to regulators or the police.

## How to make a complaint about Historic Abuse

Any complaints relating to Historic Abuse should be addressed to the Principal either by letter to the School postal address:

George Watson's College  
67-71 Colinton Road  
Edinburgh  
EH10 5EG

or by email to: [principal@gwc.org.uk](mailto:principal@gwc.org.uk)

## Receiving the Complaint

Any complaint relating to historic abuse will be routed in the first instance to the Principal's Office. The Principal, or in his absence, his Executive Assistant, will acknowledge the complaint, make the complainant aware of this policy (if they are not already aware of it) and explain the complaint handling procedure. The handling of the complaint will then pass to the School's Complaint Reviewer.

The complaint will be recorded in accordance with the Complaints Handling Policy and eventual outcomes noted. However, confidential information (including the name of the complainant) will not be recorded.

## Complaint Handling

The Complaint Reviewer will contact the complainant without delay to ascertain whether or not the complainant wishes the complaint to be referred to the police or other statutory authority, including the regulators, and what outcome the complainant is seeking.

When making initial contact with the complainant, the Complaint Reviewer will ensure that the complainant knows:

- That all complaints are dealt with confidentially but in certain circumstances the School may be under a duty to refer matters in confidence to the police, social services or the appropriate regulator
- That the School will be unable to disclose information about any other complainants, or about past or current pupils or members of staff
- Where help and support for survivors of abuse may be found.

If the complainant does not wish the complaint to be referred to the police or other statutory authority, the Complaint Reviewer will discuss with the Principal (or other senior member of staff in his absence) whether an anonymised report should nevertheless be made. This may be appropriate for a number of reasons, for example if the School is aware of other relevant information of which the complainant is unaware. Any information which indicates that a serious crime may have been committed must be reported to the Police.

If the Complaint Reviewer considers that the complaint raises issues which may still put children and young people at risk, an immediate referral in line with the [School's Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy](#) will be appropriate.

## Outcomes

Following contact with the complainant, the Complaint Reviewer will prepare a report which will be sent to the complainant and to the Principal, who will decide what action to take. The report may be redacted to prevent unlawful disclosure of personal information to the complainant.

The report will make recommendations for next steps, which may include:

- That the matter be referred to the Police, regulators or other agencies
- That the complainant be invited to visit the School
- That consideration be given to the improvement of school procedures and processes
- That action under the [School's Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy](#) should be instigated
- That the Principal writes to the complainant to acknowledge the issues raised and confirm what action may be taken and/or lessons learned.

## Confidentiality

The School treats any allegation of abuse in a highly confidential and sensitive manner and the details will only be shared with the necessary personnel. Complainants should note that in addition to any referral to the statutory agencies, the School may need to inform its insurers of any allegations made if these could result in a claim against it.

## **Feedback from Complainants**

At the conclusion of the process, a complainant will be invited to feedback on how this policy has worked and whether they feel that the School has adequately addressed their complaint.

## **Monitoring**

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored by the Education and Pupil Wellbeing Committee of the Governing Council which will receive a confidential and anonymised report at least once a year.

## **Review**

This Policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where there are changes to legislation, significant changes to the school structure or other variables that require a review. The Approval Body for the Historic Abuse Policy is the Education and Pupil Wellbeing Committee of the Governing Council.

## **Policy Owner**

The Principal.

## **Related Policies, Documents and Legislation**

- [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#)
- Concern and Complaint Handling Procedure

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