

WINDLESHAM HOUSE SCHOOL
PROCEDURE: COMPLAINTS
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Policy: COMPLAINTS



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Policy: 01-15

Responsible Governor: Douglas Moody-Stuart
Responsible Member of Staff: Bursar, Emma Harris

Summary Policy Statement: *Any complaint against Windlesham will be dealt with in a fair, open and responsive way, with the aim of achieving a speedy and satisfactory resolution. Windlesham recognises that a willingness to listen to questions and criticism and to respond positively, can lead to improvements in school practices and provision for pupils. To that end we welcome feedback to which we respond in a structured way.*

This policy is available on the school's website www.windlesham.com or by request to the Bursar.

This policy also applies to our Early Years Foundation Stage and after school care.

1) Reporting on Compliance and Effectiveness

A yearly report will be given to governors on complaints and their outcomes.

2) Explanation

We welcome feedback from parents, children and the local community. This can be via email, letter or face to face meetings with a member of staff. The feedback will be shared appropriately and stored centrally in the Headmaster's office. We consider all feedback whether it is compliment, comment or complaint. However, we maintain a specific procedure (attached) relating to complaints since it is important that the channels be easily accessible. This policy is supported by the Procedure found in Annex A.

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Annex A

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1) Complaints Procedure

Windlesham has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. We welcome suggestions and comments from members of the public, parents or carers, and take seriously any public, parental or care provider concerns that arise.

Windlesham makes its complaints procedure available to all members of the public, parents or carers of pupils and pupils on Windlesham's website and in the Front office. A copy of the procedure can also be made available in larger print or more accessible print if required.

In accordance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended), Windlesham will make available to members of the public, parents or carers of pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

This procedure explains the steps which members of the public, parents or carers should take if they are dissatisfied about any aspect of our provision and outlines the procedures which they can expect Windlesham to follow in dealing with their complaint.

Pupils will not be penalised for a complaint made in good faith.

The complaints procedure also applies to our Early Years Foundation Stage, Boarding pupils and after school care.

2) Who Can Make a Complaint?

The complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Windlesham about any provision of facilities or services that we provide.

3) What Constitutes a Complaint?

A 'concern' may be treated as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A complaint is an expression or statement of dissatisfaction, however made, about a real or perceived problem or about actions taken or a lack of action. It may be made about Windlesham as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a member of the public, parent or carer (the 'complainant') believes that Windlesham has done something wrong, or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Members of the public, parents or carers can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially and will be considered and resolved as quickly, and efficiently as possible. Windlesham is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith. Complainants will be treated fairly and offered a chance to state their case either in person or in writing, at each stage of the procedure.

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4) Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will generally be acknowledged within seven 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: Windlesham's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 28 working days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Complaints reaching Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will generally be completed within a further 28 working days of receipt of a request for a panel hearing, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

The timeframe for dealing with complaints will only be extended in exceptional circumstances such as external issues impacting on the organisation of the school, e.g. Government restrictions resulting from a pandemic.

5) Recording Complaints

The School will keep written records of all formal complaints. Formal written complaints to the Headmaster and those which are not resolved at Stage 1 – Informal Resolution, will be recorded on a register held by the Headmaster's Secretary, noting at which stage they were resolved or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing. A written record will also be kept of action taken by the School as a result of the complaint, regardless as to whether it is upheld. 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(s);
- Name of pupil;
- Description of the issue(s);
- Records of all investigations (if appropriate);
- Witness statements (if appropriate);
- Name of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage; and
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individuals complaint will be kept confidential except to the extent required by the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended), by the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act. The data contained in the above will be retained in accordance with our Storage and Retention of Documents and Information Procedure.

6) Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- a) It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally by speaking with the person best able to address the issue. If members of the public, parents or carers have a concern or complaint they should contact the appropriate person as listed below:
- i) *Education Matters:* If the complaint relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, please discuss it with your son's or daughter's tutor in the first instance. If the concern relates to the tutor, please contact the Assistant Head Academic.
 - ii) *Pastoral Care:* If the concern relates to a matter outside the classroom, please contact your son's or daughter's House Parents in the first instance who will refer you to the Deputy Headmaster or the Headmaster if necessary or if you wish. If the complaint relates to House Parents, please refer directly to the Deputy Headmaster or the Headmaster.

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- iii) *Disciplinary Matters:* A concern about disciplinary matters should first be raised with one of the House Parents who may refer to the member of staff who imposed the sanction. If unresolved you will be referred to the Deputy Headmaster or Headmaster.
 - iv) *Financial matters:* A concern or complaint about matters relating to fees or extras should be addressed to the Bursar.
- b) If your complaint relates directly to the Headmaster, the Chair of Governors should be contacted directly via the Bursar's Office.
 - c) Complaints made directly to the Deputy Headmaster or to the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant House Parent or in relation to an educational matter as detailed in paragraph 5a)i), the tutor unless the Deputy or the Headmaster deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
 - d) In many cases, the matter will be resolved promptly by this means to the complainants' satisfaction. However, if the member of staff cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult with the Head of Department, the Assistant Head Academic, the Deputy Headmaster or the Headmaster (as appropriate).
 - e) The member of staff dealing with the issue will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received or referred to a more senior member of staff. Should the matter not be resolved within seven days or in the event that a satisfactory resolution is not achieved, then complainants will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 (Formal Resolution) of this Procedure.

7) Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- a) If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the complainant should put their complaint (written formal complaint) in writing to the Headmaster. Parents of boarders and of EYFS children should be aware that they have the right to refer a complaint directly to Ofsted
- b) The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take and may consult with the Chair of Governors in the process.
- c) In most cases, the Headmaster (or his nominee if deemed appropriate depending on the area of complaint) will meet with the complainant concerned, or make contact in respect of them living outside the UK, within seven days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- d) It may be necessary for the Headmaster (or nominee) to carry out further investigations. The Headmaster (or nominee) will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- e) Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the complainant will be informed of this decision in writing (normally within seven days and as soon as practicable during the holiday periods of the Headmaster having discussed the complaint with the complainants). The Headmaster will also give reasons for his/her decision.
- f) If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Headmaster and all the relevant documents within seven days of receipt of the complaint. The Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff and will if

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appropriate, speak to or meet with the complainants to discuss the matter further, Windlesham's target is to complete this stage of the procedure within 28 days during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the complainants will be informed of the decision in writing within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The Chair will give reasons for his/her decision.

- g)** If the complainants are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 (Panel Hearing) of this Procedure.

8) Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- a)** If the complainants seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Chair of Governors, who will acknowledge the complaints and schedule a hearing to take place, normally within 21 days of the receipt of the request for a panel hearing. If an extension is required, the Chair will inform complainants as to the reasons for an extension.
- b)** The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration.
- c)** The Complaints Panel will be appointed by the Governors and will consist of three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint: two Governors other than the Chair plus one member who is independent of the management and running of Windlesham.
- d)** The panel hearing will take place unless the parent later indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further.
- e)** The panel have the flexibility to meet 'virtually' should extenuating circumstances mean that meeting in person is not permissible within the timescales.
- f)** 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 three days prior to the hearing.
- g)** The complainants may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This person may make a representation at the hearing. Complainants should provide the name of the supporter, their relationship to the parent and whether they will be making a representation in advance of the hearing.
- h)** If possible, the Panel will resolve the complainants' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- i)** After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 10 days of the hearing.
- j)** The Panel will write to the complainants within seven days of the hearing informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing by e-mail or otherwise, to the complainants, the Headmaster, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained about. Once all parties are satisfied, each party will sign and date the papers to evidence their agreement. Windlesham will maintain a record of the resolution of the complaint raised, available for inspection by the Governors and the Headmaster on the School premises.

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- k)** If a parent decides not to attend the Stage 3 (Panel Hearing), but does not wish to withdraw their complaint, Windlesham will convene a meeting in their absence to consider the complaint and bring the matter to a conclusion. The decision of the Panel will be final and the complainants would be advised of the outcome in writing within 10 days of the panel hearing.
- l)** The decision of the Panel will be final. If a complaint remains unresolved, complainants may be referred to the Department for Education (DfE). Please note that the Independent School Inspectorate (ISI) is unable to become directly involved in investigating or resolving individual complaints or disputes or in any contractual matters.
- m)** The DfE cannot investigate individual complaints about private schools, but it has certain powers as a regulator if a school is not meeting the standards set by the DfE for education, pupil welfare and health and safety, school premises, staff suitability, making information available to parents, and spiritual, moral, social or cultural development of students. The DfE will consider any report of a major failure to the standards. A complaint can be made to the DfE by filling in [the school complaints form](#) on www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/private-schools.
- n)** For EYFS and boarding complaints, the above process must be completed within 28 days. Records of EYFS complaints will be available to Ofsted and ISI on request. Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS or Boarding minimum standard requirements. Contact details are as following:
 - i. Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 4666
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
 - ii. ISI, Cap House, 9-12, Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA
Tel: 0207 600 0100
Email: concerns@isi.net

9) Confidentiality

It is very much Windlesham's policy that complaints made by a complainant should not rebound adversely on their children. Complainants can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially and in accordance with Windlesham's Data Protection Policy except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them or where other legal obligation prevails.

An anonymous complaint may not be pursued (other than in issues of child protection and safeguarding) although they will be kept on file.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. A record of any written formal complaint will be held by Windlesham for six years after the resolution of the complaint.

Any action that needs to be taken under staff disciplinary procedures will be handled confidentially within Windlesham.

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10) Monitoring of written formal complaints

- a) Windlesham records details of all complaints. Such record will indicate:
 - i. Whether they are resolved following an informal, formal procedure, or a panel hearing; and
 - ii. The actions taken by Windlesham as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

Windlesham received 0 written formal complaints during 2018-2019, 0 during 2019-20 and 0 during 2020-21.