

### **Introduction**

Wycliffe College ('the School') has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents or carers do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. The School makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents or carers of pupils and of prospective pupils on the School's website and in the School office during the school day.

The School name will ensure that parents or carers of pupils and of prospective pupils, who request it, are made aware that this document is published or available and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the School will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), details of this 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 or carers of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents or carers of current pupils.**

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

The School will be mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in the application of this policy. "Parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil about whom the complaint relates.

### **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 or carers can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The School is here for your child, and they will not be penalised for a complaint that is raised in good faith

**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 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. There may also be other circumstances in which the School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.**

## **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 or carers have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's Tutor or Housemaster /Housemistress, or Class Teacher if a child in the Prep School. If the Tutor, Housemaster/Housemistress or Class Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult a Head of Department, Head of the Lower School or Sixth Form in the Senior School, or a Deputy Head, or Pastoral Lead if in the Prep School.

Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, a Deputy Head, the Head of Prep or Head will usually be referred to the relevant Tutor, Housemaster /Housemistress or Class Teacher unless they deem it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.

The Tutor, Housemaster/Housemistress or Class Teacher 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 7 working days** or in the event that the Tutor, Housemaster/Housemistress or Class Teacher and the parent or carer fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents or carers 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 or carers should make their complaint directly to the Clerk to the Council of Trustees ('the Clerk') who will refer it immediately to the Chair of the Trustees.

### **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then parents or carers should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head may deem it appropriate to nominate a staff member to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Head (or their nominee) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Head (or their nominee) will meet with/speak to the parents or carers concerned, normally **within 10 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 further investigations to be carried out. The Head (or their nominee) will determine who should carry out any investigation and this may be someone external to the School.

Parents or carers are expected to proceed with their complaint in a timely manner. The School will provide a response to a Stage 1 complaint as outlined above. It is expected that if parents or carers then wish to escalate their complaint to Stage 2, they will do so **within 15 working days** following the Stage 1 response. Depending on the circumstances, the School may, acting reasonably, treat a complaint as closed if a parent has not responded within this timeframe.

**Written records** will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Head (or their nominee) is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, and parents or carers will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head (or their nominee) will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Head will make their decision and provide the parents or carers with reasons normally **within 15 working days** of the complaint being put in writing (or following the provision of any further clarificatory information about the complaint to the Head, if so requested).

If the complaint is against the Head, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Trustees. The Chair of Trustees will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will

then be followed as if the references to the Head (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of Trustees to determine the complaint against the Head.

If parents or carers are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

If parents or carers seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the Clerk who has been appointed by the Trustees to call hearings of the Complaints Panel **within 10 days** of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents or carers wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal. To contact the Clerk, parents or carers should write to:

Clerk to Council of Trustee  
Wycliffe College  
Regent Street  
Stonehouse  
GL10 2AD  
[chair@wycliffe.co.uk](mailto:chair@wycliffe.co.uk)

To the extent the parents or carers are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated due to extenuating circumstances which have impeded the parents or carers from taking action, the parents or carers should request an extension in writing. Such a request should be made to the Clerk in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. This will be considered. In the event the parents or carers are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated (including to the extent applicable any extensions if agreed) the School reserves the right to conclude the complaint process and not progress the matter to Stage 3.

**The Clerk who has been appointed by the Trustees to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of 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.**

The Clerk, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint **within 5 working days** and schedule a hearing to take place **within 10 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 parents or carers may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish.** This must not be a pupil but may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate, and the companion should not be a lawyer. Parents or carers should inform the Clerk in writing **at least 3 working days** in advance of the meeting of the identity of any person accompanying them. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.

The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Trustees and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents or carers' complaint 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 the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, **the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:**

1. dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
2. uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
3. make recommendations.

The Panel will write to the parents or carers 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 by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents or carers, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Trustees. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Trustees and the Head.

### **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 32 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 and half term (as published in the School calendar and on the School's website). 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 a complaint 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 occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.

### **Persistent Correspondence**

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

### **Recording Complaints and Use of Personal Data**

Following resolution of a complaint, a written record of all formal complaints that progress beyond Stage 1 is held by the School including whether they are resolved following a formal procedure (Stage 2) or proceeded to a panel hearing (Stage 3). A written record will also be kept of action taken by the School as a result of complaints, regardless as to whether or not they are upheld.

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. 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 Privacy Notice.

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 and Data Retention Policy. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector (see above), there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (e.g., in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

#### **The School received two formal complaints in the academic year 2024-25.**

Parents or carers of EYFS pupils should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents or carers remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents or carers may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted.

The School will provide ISI/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 in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Data Retention Policy.

Parents or carers may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the ISI:

Ofsted ask complaints to be registered through their contact form on their website [Ofsted Complaints Procedure](#) or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) or Tel: 0330 123 4666

**Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD**

**ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)  
ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA**