

# WEATHERHEAD HIGH SCHOOL

## Complaints Policy

### Policy Statement

The policy of the school is to treat all concerns and complaints seriously and confidentially, in accordance with school procedures.

### Aims

Weatherhead High school has long taken pride in the quality of the teaching and pastoral care that the school provides to its students. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure.

For a member of the public (not a parent) wishing to make a complaint, please refer to procedures under Stage 2 -Formal.

Employees of the Academy (and ex-employees who wish to raise an issue relating to their former employment) cannot use this procedure but, where necessary, should raise concerns via the appropriate staff grievance procedure/HR Manager.

Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Act, as amended, requests access to them; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

## PRACTICE & PROCEDURE

### Stage 1 - Informal

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a concern/complaint, they should normally contact their daughter/son's Form Tutor, or subject teacher as appropriate. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means, to the parent's satisfaction. If the Form Tutor, or subject teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary to consult the appropriate Year Leader, Curriculum Leader, or Assistant Headteacher – Student Services (Years 7-11) , or Director of Sixth Form (Years 12/13). If the matter is still not resolved to the parent's satisfaction, parents may be referred to Stage 2.

In relation to the following procedures, the school aims to answer written complaints within 10 working (school) days of (either):

- receipt of a written complaint (where no further information is required)
- following a meeting with the complainant to discuss concerns (where no further information is required)
- following the outcome of any investigation
- following the conclusion of any further meeting with the complainant or Appeal stage hearing

If for any reason the above is not possible within the timeframe stipulated, the complainant will be informed and provided with a revised timescale for dealing with the complaint.

### Stage 2 - Formal

If a complainant considers their complaint to require immediate senior staff intervention, or the matter could not be resolved at Stage 1, a complaint may be directed to the Headteacher. A

complaint at this stage should be made in writing by the complainant, or by another person on their behalf and with their consent and addressed to the Headteacher. The Headteacher or a nominated member of staff will invite the complainant to meet and discuss the concerns. If necessary, the Headteacher or nominated member of staff will carry out a full investigation into the issues raised. A response will be provided after the conclusion of the meeting, or any investigations carried out. If the complainant refuses the offer of a meeting, a response will be provided based on available information only, or the Headteacher may consider the complaint to be unsubstantiated by reason of non-attendance.

A written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received will be made and retained. If the matter is not resolved or parties have failed to reach a satisfactory resolution, the complainant will be advised that they have the option to proceed with their complaint to Stage 3 of the procedure.

### **Stage 3 Chair of Governors**

If a complaint remains unresolved notwithstanding the previous stages detailed, a letter should be sent to the Chair of Governors, detailing all concerns/complaints for consideration.

If a complaint has been referred directly to the Chair of Governors and the preceding stages have not been followed, the Chair may refer the complainant to preceding stages of this procedure or ask the Headteacher to undertake an investigation in the first instance.

The Chair or nominated Governor may offer to meet with the complainant to discuss their concerns. The Chair will review any previous investigation and/or the Headteacher's decision. The Chair may:-

- confirm the Headteacher's decision
- reach a different decision regarding the whole or part of the complaint
- seek an investigation or further investigations relating to part or the whole complaint.

The Chair may seek advice as needed from the school's HR Advisors.

The Chair's written decision will be provided as soon as is reasonably practical to do so. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they will be referred to the Appeal Stage.

### **Appeal Stage**

If the complainant has exhausted Stages 1- 3, the Chair will ask the Clerk to Governors to convene a Complaints Committee Meeting so that the complaint can be considered.

The Committee will consist of 3 Governors who have not previously been involved in matters detailed in the complaint, together with the School Improvement Associate, as an independent member. If it is considered necessary, the Chair of the Committee 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 no later than 3 working (school) days prior to the meeting.

A complainant may be accompanied to the meeting by one other person. This may be a relative, colleague or friend. Legal representation will not normally be considered appropriate at this stage. Notice must be given to the Clerk to Governors, of a complainant's intention to be accompanied, including the name of the person attending and their relationship to the complainant. Details of any witnesses must also be provided ahead of the meeting. Where possible, the meeting will look to resolve the complaint immediately, without the need for further investigation. However, if after hearing all parties relevant to the complaint, the Committee considers further investigation is required, the Committee will decide how this should be carried out and the meeting may be adjourned to a later date to allow such investigations to be conducted. After due consideration of all the facts considered relevant, the Committee will

reach a decision and may make recommendations. The written decision of the Committee, together with its reasons, will be issued to the complainant. The Committee's decision will be final. The complainant will have no further right to appeal this decision within the school.

### **Additional Information**

Before complaining to an external body it should be noted, that it would usually be expected that all stages of this procedure have been exhausted.

The school reserves the right to reject frivolous or vexatious complaints at any time. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator has defined frivolous or vexatious complaints as follows:

- Complaints which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
- Insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
- Insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- Complaints which are designed to cause disruption or annoyance
- Demands for redress which lack any serious purpose of value.

Parents may contact:

Mr K Owen  
Wirral Borough Council  
Children & Young People's Department  
Hamilton Building  
Conway Street  
Birkenhead Wirral  
CH41 4FD

0151 666 4207

If a complainant believes Governors have acted unreasonably, a complaint can be made in writing to the Secretary of State for Education and will be dealt with by the Education Funding Agency.

Ofsted has powers to investigate certain types of complaint from parents to help decide whether to inspect a school.

The Parent Partnership Service assists parents/carers whose children have difficulties with learning, medical needs, or mental health problems. The service is confidential and offers impartial advice and information to enable parents/carers to make decisions about their child's education. This includes supporting parents with complaints to schools.

Tel: 01829 742997