

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This Policy is applicable to all pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A separate EYFS Section can be found towards the end of this policy.

This policy is available to parents on the parent section of Windermere School's website www.windermereschool.co.uk and on request from the school offices.

Introduction

Windermere School prides itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to pupils. If parents have a complaint, it will be handled in accordance with this procedure.

The School's Complaints Procedure has three stages:

Stage 1 – Informal resolution

Stage 2 – Formal resolution

Stage 3 – Reference to the Complaints Panel

What Constitutes a Complaint?

Any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school is a complaint. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. 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.

Limitations of this Policy

This complaints procedure applies to parents of pupils currently at the school. It does not apply in respect of past pupils unless the complaint was initially raised whilst the pupil was still at the school. This procedure does not apply to complaints by prospective parents, including those who have accepted a place at the school in respect of their child but where their child has not yet started at the school.

This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Suspension and permanent exclusion
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

Requests for financial awards, such as claims for compensation, damages or fee refunds, are beyond the scope of the school's complaints procedure.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and **informally**.
- If parents have a complaint, they should contact their son/daughter's form teacher or tutor, as appropriate, who will respond within two working days in term time. In many cases, the matter will be resolved immediately by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the form teacher or tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for the form teacher or tutor to consult the relevant Head of Section.
- A Complaint made directly to the Deputy Head will, in the first instance, be dealt with by the Deputy Head in consultation with appropriate staff. The Deputy Head or a senior manager on behalf of Deputy Head in case of absence, will contact the complainant within one working day in term time to discuss the concern.
- In some cases students or parents may complain or register their concerns directly to the Head or the Head of the Junior School. In these cases, the Head or the Head of the Junior School will acknowledge the complaint within 24 hours, and agree with the complainant a timeframe for investigation. The intention is to resolve all concerns and complaints informally as quickly as possible.
- A written record will be kept of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received.
- Complaints received during the school holidays will be dealt with in a timely manner as possible. However, this will depend upon the nature of the complaint and the availability of staff at the time the complaint is received. It may not be possible to make full investigations until the next term.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, then parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head, who will acknowledge the complaint within 48 hours during term time. The Head will decide the appropriate course of action.
- In most cases the Head will make arrangements to meet parents within five working days of receiving the written complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head to instruct further investigations to be carried out and will normally appoint a senior member of staff to do so. If deemed appropriate the Head may appoint an external investigator to carry out the investigation.
- The Head will keep 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, normally within five working days of meeting the parents or those making the complaint. Where an external investigator is deployed, the timescale will be extended by a period reasonable in the Head's judgment. The Head will give reasons for the decision.

- Whenever possible, a complaint should be raised within three months of the incident, or where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. However, the school will consider complaints made within 12 months if exceptional circumstances apply. Therefore, a complaint raised after three months should include details of the reasons for the delay.

If parents are not satisfied with the Head's decision they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 - Panel

This request will usually only be considered if Stages 1 and 2 have been completed.

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Clerk to the Board of Governors, who is authorised to consult governors with a view to calling a hearing of a Complaints Panel. This should be done within 10 days of receiving the Head's decision for a Stage 2 complaint.
- The reasons for referring the matter to the Complaints Panel should be itemised in writing by the parents, including the substance of the complaint and the parents' views on why the matter has not been resolved satisfactorily at an earlier stage.
- The matter will be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three people: a governor, a senior member of staff and one additional person who is independent of the management and the running of the school. None of the Panel members will have been involved directly in the matters detailed in the complaint. The choice of Panel members will be confirmed by the Chairman of the Board of Governors, in response to the nature of the complaint.
- The Clerk to the Board of Governors will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable (normally within 10 working days of receipt of the written complaint to the Chair of Governors).
- 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.
- A parent can attend and be accompanied at the Panel hearing if they wish.
- If the parent wishes to be accompanied, one other person may accompany the parents to the hearing who may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate or permitted.
- All those attending the Hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners.
- If possible, the panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately 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 all facts considered relevant, the Panel will reach a decision within 5 working days and may make recommendations.
- A copy of the Panel's findings will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise to the complainant and if appropriate, the person who is the subject of the complaint. The findings will also be made available to the Chairman of the Board of Governors and the Head. A written record will be kept (for at least three years) of all formal complaints and will state whether the complaint has been resolved at Stage 2 or Stage 3.

- All 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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.
- Parents should note that, should they wish, they can refer their complaint to the Independent Schools Inspectorate. www.isi.net – 020 7600 0100

Alternative Dispute Resolution

The Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information Regulations 2015) requires the School to provide the complainant on conclusion of the final stage of the School's complaints procedure with the name and address of an alternative dispute resolution provider who has been certified by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute as competent to resolve consumer disputes. However, the School is not obliged to enter into alternative dispute resolution through an ADR provider and may not be willing to do so.

This section outlines special arrangements that must be adhered to by Windermere School with regard to Early Years children and Boarding students.

EYFS Children

1. Parents can make complaints also to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) and Ofsted.
 - Independent Schools Inspectorate
Ground Floor
CAP House
9 - 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA
Telephone 020 7600 0100 Fax
020 7776 8849 www.isi.net
 - Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate, Store
Street, Manchester.
M1 2WD
Tel: 0300 123 1231 enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
2. Parents can expect to receive notification of the outcome of an investigation 28 days after the complaint has been received by Windermere School.
3. Windermere School will be required to provide both ISI and Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all formal complaints made during a specified period, and the action taken as a result of each complaint.

Boarding Students

In accordance with the National Minimum Boarding Standards – Standard 14.

- The complaints procedure will be available to all staff and boarders in addition to parents.
- Boarders and their parents should note that they can contact Ofsted regarding any complaints concerning boarding welfare.
- A written record will be kept of all serious complaints and their outcomes for regular review by the Head and Senior Management Team.

- Complaints will be resolved either to the complainant's satisfaction or with an otherwise appropriate outcome that balances rights and responsibilities.
- Pupils will never be penalised for making a complaint in good faith.
- Parents, staff and pupils may appeal against any decision made by the school about their complaint. They should go to stage 3 of the process as set out previously.
- Please note that the decision of the Panel with regard to boarding students cannot be final, and that parents have the right to go beyond the school to Ofsted or the DfE:
 - Ofsted - enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk – 0300 123 4666
 - DfE - <http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus> - 0370 000 2288

EYFS Pupils

The role of the Office for Standards in Education, Early Years Directorate (Ofsted)

- Parents may approach Ofsted directly at any stage of this complaint's procedure. In addition, where there seems to be a possible breach of our registration requirements, it is essential to involve Ofsted as the registering and inspection body with a duty to ensure the Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are adhered to.
- The number to call Ofsted with regard to a complaint is: **0300 123 1231**
- These details are displayed in our Early Years Department and on our school website.
- If a child appears to be at risk or in the event of a child protection issue, our school follows the procedures set out in our Safeguarding – Child Protection Policy.

The number of formal complaints received in the academic year 2024-2025 was ONE.

SIXTH FORM COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

In addition to Windermere School's Complaints Procedure, this section outlines further arrangements that must be adhered to regarding the International Baccalaureate and Sixth Form pupils.

This information is available to parents or legal guardians on the parent section of Windermere School's website www.windermereschool.co.uk and on request from the school offices. The below procedures are available to all pupils on <https://www.windermereschool.co.uk/school-policies/>.

Introduction

In Sixth Form we offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, Career related Programme, Diploma Courses and BTEC. The Sixth Form is not academically selective and we aim to help pupils find the pathway most suitable for their ambitions.

If a parent or legal guardian has a complaint, it will be handled in accordance with the School's Complaint Procedure. If the parent, legal guardian or pupil requests for an appeal against the school and/or IB programme, the following procedure also applies.

Complaints and pupils' requests for appeals against IB programme decisions taken by the school

- If parents, legal guardians or pupils have a complaint against the school's decision regarding the IB programme, they should contact the IB Coordinator, who will respond within two working days in term time. If the IB Coordinator cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for the IB Coordinator to consult the subject teacher, tutor or Deputy Head Academic.
- In some cases, students or parents may complain or register their concerns directly to the Deputy Head Academic.
- The IB Coordinator may need to refer the matter to the International Baccalaureate Organisation.

Complaints and appeals against IB results

The IB offer an Enquiry Results Service for individual candidates in the following categories:

- Category 1: re-mark of externally assessed material per candidate/subject/level
- Category 2b: return of externally assessed material charged by subject/level for an individual candidate

Information regarding how to use the Enquiry Upon Results Service will be shared with parents, legal guardians and pupils prior to Results Day by the IB Coordinator.

Complaints and appeals against IB predicted grades

Teachers create predicted grades for each of our Sixth Form pupils in a way that follows the IB guidelines. The predicted grade should be based on all evidence of the candidate's work and teacher's knowledge of IB standards. The process of creating predicted grades does not therefore disadvantage or advantage any group of pupils or individuals

Pupils who believe they have cause to challenge their school-submitted predicted grade should contact the IB Coordinator with a detailed statement explaining why the enquiry has been requested.

The IB Coordinator will complete a school review and check the work used to determine the predicted grade and the relevant IB grade descriptors. The outcome will be communicated to the pupil.

If the pupil does not accept the findings of the school review, they can ask the IB Coordinator to refer the matter to the International Baccalaureate Organization.

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