



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Westfield has always prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to our girls. However, if you do have a concern about any aspect of your daughter's life in school you can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure. Westfield makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on our website and in the school office during the school day and we will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and the form in which it is published or available. This policy applies to the whole school including the Early Years Foundation Stage

In accordance with paragraph 24(3)(g) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, Westfield will make available, on request, to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) for the purposes of section 162A(1) of the Education Act 2002 (as subsequently amended), details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year. The electronic register is kept and updated by the Deputy Head.

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. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your daughter and you can be assured that your daughter will not be penalised for a complaint that you, or your child, raises in good faith.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged in writing within five working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. There is always a member of the Senior Leadership Team available during the school holidays if the Headmaster is unavailable. 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 (see below) within 28 school days if the complaint is lodged during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods but within 28 school days.

If a complaint goes to Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, the school will aim to complete this within a further 20 school days if the appeal is lodged during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods but always within 20 school days.

Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, we will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. 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
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)

- Name 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)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph (k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required by the ISI under Section 162(A) of the Education Act 2002 (as amended), or under other legal authority.

Stage 0 – Initial Concern raised

- If you have a concern you should normally contact your daughter’s Form Tutor, or the subject teacher involved, in the first instance. If the concern is about the form tutor, please contact the Deputy Head via the school office. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means.
- If the initial concern cannot be immediately resolved, either the parent or the member of staff may choose to make it an informal complaint in accordance with Stage 1 of this process.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If the concern is pastoral and the Form Tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult the Head of Faculty in Junior House or the Deputy Head or Head of Sixth Form in Senior House. If the concern is academic, the subject teacher will consult their Head of Faculty.
- If your concern could not be resolved straightaway, the Form Tutor or subject teacher involved will make a written record of the concerns and the date on which they were received and pass this to the Deputy Head for record keeping.
- Concerns initially raised with the Head of Faculty in Junior House or the Deputy Head in Senior House will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor.
- The Form Tutor, or relevant Senior Leader if deemed appropriate, will respond to your concern within one week during term time and as soon as possible during the holidays but always within 5 school days. If you are unhappy with the proposed resolution, then you will be advised to proceed with your complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then you should put your complaint in writing to the Headmaster within seven days of receipt of the informal resolution. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action.
- In most cases, the Headmaster will either meet with or speak to the parents concerned, normally within seven 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 the Headmaster to carry out further investigations.
- The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- 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 you will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision. This will usually be within 10 working days of speaking to the parents concerned.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Headmaster and for all the relevant documents. The Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff and will, in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will also give reasons for their decision.
- If you are still not satisfied with the decision, you should proceed to stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Appeal/Panel Hearing

- If you seek to invoke stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) you will be referred to an independent Convenor who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel. The Convenor is an individual who is independent of the management and running of the school and has not been involved in the matters detailed within the complaint. The Chair of Governors holds a list of appropriate persons who have agreed to act in this role.
- The matter will then be referred by the Convenor to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The panel will aim to meet within 15 school days and the panel will consist of two Governors not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint plus the independent Convenor. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chair of the Board 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 five school days prior to the hearing.
- You may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve your 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 they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 5 school days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to you informing you of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to you, the Headmaster, the Governors and, where relevant, the person complained of.

During school holidays, if a complaint is received, this will be dealt with as expeditiously as possible by the Headmaster or the member of the Senior Leadership Team who is on call if the Headmaster is unavailable.

You can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations, where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection, or where any other legal obligation prevails.

WRITTEN COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE STATUTORY FRAMEWORK FOR THE EYFS

Westfield will investigate written complaints relating to their fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements and notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.

Westfield will provide 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 for at least three years.

If a parent wishes to make a complaint to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) this can be done by telephoning ISI 020 7600 0100 or by writing to:

Independent Schools Inspectorate
CAP House
9-12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA
Email: concerns@isi.net

Contact details for Ofsted:
Email: enquires@ofsted.gov.uk
Telephone: 0300 1234 234

We received three formal complaints in the academic year 2023-24.