

WATFORD GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR BOYS



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Headmaster's signature

6/7/2021

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. A. ...', written over a horizontal line.

Chair of Governors' signature

6/7/2021

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Stephen A. Wake', written over a horizontal line.

. Introduction

The aim of this policy is to ensure that a complaint by a parent is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, it is fair to those concerned and it helps to promote parents' and students' confidence in our ability to safeguard and promote welfare. We will try to resolve every complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing our systems and procedures in the light of circumstances.

We need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. We recognise that a difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment, which could be damaging to relationships and also to our school culture. We intend that parents and students should never feel – or be made to feel – that a complaint will be taken amiss or will adversely affect a student or his/her opportunities at school. The policy, however, distinguishes between a complaint which can be resolved informally and a formal complaint which will require investigation.

2. Application

This policy applies to all complaints other than those relating to:

- Admissions to the school
- Teacher Assessed Grades in the 2021 series of qualifications for GCSE and A level
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation
- Whistleblowing
- Exclusion of a child from school
- Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures
- Statutory assessment of SEND
- Content of the National Curriculum
- Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school facilities or premises.

Complaints made by any person who is not a parent or carer of a student at the school will be dealt with using Stage 2 only of the procedure outlined below. Further stages will not apply.

3. Timescales

We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Complaints are best dealt with as soon as possible after issues arise. If a parent has not brought a complaint to the attention of the School within 6 months of the issue arising, the Chairman of Governors shall have the discretion, which will be exercised reasonably, not to allow a complaint to be pursued. Timescales for each stage of the Complaints Procedure are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. For the purposes of this policy, a "working day" is defined as a weekday during term time, when the School is open. The definition of "working day" excludes weekends and Bank Holidays. For the avoidance of doubt, term dates are published on the School's website, and information about term dates is made available to parents and students periodically.

Stage 1: Informal concerns and complaints

We expect that most concerns and complaints, where a parent seeks intervention, reconsideration or some other action to be taken, can be resolved informally. It is a precondition to the operation of this policy that the complainant shall have made reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution and shall have acted in relation to the matter in a reasonable and measured way, consistent with the School's communication protocols. The Chairman of Governors shall have discretion, which will be exercised reasonably, not to allow a complaint to be pursued where this precondition has not been met.

Please raise the concern or complaint initially as follows:

1. **Teaching and Learning** – if the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, please speak or write to the Head of Department or Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Co-ordinator as appropriate.
2. **Pastoral care** – for matters outside the classroom, please speak or write to the relevant Head of Year or Assistant Headteacher as appropriate.

- 3. Disciplinary matters** – a problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised first of all with the member of staff who imposed it then, if not resolved, with the relevant Head of Year or Assistant Headteacher.
- 4. Financial and administrative matters** – a query relating to charges or to other administrative matters should be raised either with the Finance Office or with the Finance Director.

Should an informal concern or complaint be raised with a member of staff other than those designated at item 1 to 4 above, he or she is asked to redirect it to the appropriate individual under this policy.

Unresolved complaints: A complaint which has not been resolved by informal means within twenty working days from the receipt of the complaint can be notified as a formal complaint in accordance with Stage 2 below.

Record of complaints: In the case of complaints raised under Stage 1 of this procedure, the only record will be file notes by the person dealing with the complaint and/or file correspondence between the complainant and the respondent.

Complaints made against the Headmaster will be dealt with initially by the Chairman of Governors in line with Stage 2 below. Letters to the Chairman of Governors should be addressed for his attention in a sealed envelope c/o Watford Grammar School for Boys.

If the matter is not resolved, a Review Panel will be convened (see Stage 3 below). Complaints against the Chairman of Governors or any individual governor should be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

Stage 2: Formal complaints

- 1. Notification:** An unresolved complaint under Stage 1, or a complaint which needs investigation, should be set out in writing with full details and sent with all relevant documents and your full contact details for the attention of the Headmaster, or the Chairman of Governors if the complaint relates to the Headmaster. Should a formal written complaint be received by another member of the School's staff, he or she will immediately pass it to either the Headmaster or the Chairman of Governors as appropriate. The School's Complaints Form (Appendix 1) should be used. If you require support with this process, please signal this at an early stage so that the School can meet its obligations under the Equality Act (2010).
- 2. Acknowledgement:** Your complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing normally within five working days of receipt during term time and where reasonably possible during the holidays. The acknowledgement will indicate the action that is being taken and the likely timescale for resolution.
- 3. Investigation and resolution:** The Headmaster may deal with the matter personally or may ask a senior member of staff to act as "investigator". The investigator may request additional information from you and will probably wish to speak to you personally and to others who have knowledge of the circumstances. Following appropriate investigation, the Headmaster or his nominated investigator will then notify you in writing of the decision and the reasons for it.
- 4. Outcome:** The aim of the Headmaster would be to inform any complainant of the outcome of an investigation and the resolution to the complaint within one calendar month from the receipt of the complaint. Please note that any complaint received during a School closure period or within one month of the end of term or half term is likely to take longer to resolve owing to the presence of school holidays and the unavailability of personnel.
- 5. Record of complaints.** The Headmaster is responsible for keeping a log of all complaints received by or referred to them under this stage of the procedure. The log should provide a brief written summary of the name of the complainant, the date the complaint was received, the matter complained of, and the manner and date of its resolution. Written records will also be kept of any meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Stage 3: Reference to the Review Panel

- 1. Notification:** Only if you have been through the earlier stages of this procedure, and are dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 2 that has been notified to you, may you request a final hearing by a Review Panel. To request a hearing before the Review Panel, please write to the Clerk to the Governors within five working days of the decision. Your request will only be considered if you have completed the relevant

procedures at Stages 1&2. Please ensure that copies of all relevant documents accompany your letter to the Clerk to the Governors, and state all the grounds for your complaint and the outcome that you desire. The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge your request in writing within five working days.

2. **Review Panel:** The review will be undertaken by a panel of at least three members appointed on behalf of the Governing Body and selected by the Clerk to the Governors. The Panel members will not have previously been directly involved in the matter and one member will be independent of the management and running of the School.
3. **Convening the Panel:** The Clerk to the Governors will convene the Review Panel as soon as is reasonably practicable but the Panel will not normally sit during School holidays.
4. **Notice:** Every effort will be made to enable the Panel hearing to take place within ten working days of the receipt of your request. As soon as reasonably practical and in any event at least five working days before the hearing, the Clerk to the Governors will send you written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing, together with brief details of the Panel members who will be present.
5. **Attendance:** You will be asked to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by one other person such as a relative, teacher, or friend, who should not be legally qualified. Your child aged 13+ may attend part or all of the hearing at the discretion of the Chair. The Clerk to the Governors or nominated deputy will also attend the hearing in order to keep a record of the proceedings. Copies of additional documents you wish the Panel to consider should be sent to the Clerk to the Governors at least three clear days prior to the hearing.
6. **Hearing:** The Chair of the Review Panel will conduct the hearing in such a way as to ensure that all those present have the opportunity of asking questions and making comments in an appropriate manner. The hearing is not a legal proceeding and the Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and/or may take written statements into account.
7. **Adjournment:** The Chair may at his/her discretion adjourn the hearing for further investigation of any relevant issue. This may include an adjournment to take legal advice.
8. **Decision:** After due consideration of the matters discussed at the hearing, the Panel shall reach a decision unless there is no agreed position. The Panel's decision, findings and any recommendations may be notified orally at the hearing or subsequently and shall be confirmed in writing to you by electronic mail, aiming to do so within ten working days. If you do not wish to receive the decision by electronic mail, a copy will be given or posted to you. The decisions, findings and any recommendations will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Governing Body. Once the complaints process is concluded (or a complaint has been terminated due to undue delay or failure to lodge a complaint within the stated timescales) the matter is closed. If the complainant is still not satisfied then they may contact the Department for Education. There is an online procedure at <https://form.education.gov.uk>
9. **Serial and Persistent Complaints:** There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaint procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant contacts the school making substantially the same points, the Chairman of Governors will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed. Where the conduct of a serial or persistent complainant is causing a significant level of disruption to the running of the school, a limit on the number of contacts per term can be imposed. Ultimately, if a complainant persists to the point that the school considers the behaviour to constitute harassment, legal advice will be sought.

Confidentiality: A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at Stages 1, 2 or proceed to a panel hearing. The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year will be supplied to parents on request. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 25(k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, that is where access is requested by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required in the course of a school's inspection or under other legal authority. In accordance with data protection principles, details of formal complaints will be retained for 6 years or for the period of time that the student is on roll at the School, whichever is the longer. In exceptional circumstances some details will be retained for a further period as necessary.

Please complete and return to the Headmaster who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Student's name:

Your relationship to the student:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint.

**What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.
(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?**

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date: