

Wells Cathedral School is proud of the quality of its teaching, pastoral and boarding care. Nonetheless, complaints from parents and pupils can and do arise from time to time.

The purpose of the formal complaints procedure is to give those who have exhausted the obvious ways (talking and seeking advice) of tackling something which seems to them to be inappropriate, harmful or threatening, a route by which to bring the complaint to the attention of a senior person who can address it and do something about it. The aim will always be to resolve the problem which has led to the complaint and to learn lessons for the future in a positive and confidential manner.

Written procedures for members of the teaching or non-teaching staff to state a grievance are promulgated separately.

This policy provides guidelines for handling complaints. The policy applies to all sections of the school. The procedures set out below may be adapted as appropriate to meet the policy aims and circumstances of each case. Certain parts of the procedures can only be carried out during term time.

The school received two formal complaints during the 2017-18 academic year.

Complaints Procedure

Complaints made with the school are dealt with via a three-stage process.

Stage One: Informal Resolution

1.1 It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally. Examples might include dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care, or about allocation of privileges or responsibilities, or about a timetable clash or some other aspect of the School's systems or equipment, or a billing error. The School will acknowledge a written notification by email, letter or telephone within ten normal school working days¹ of receipt of the original complaint during term time.

1.2 If parents have a complaint concerning education matters they should normally contact their child's teacher or tutor as appropriate. In many cases, the matter will be resolved quickly by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the teacher or tutor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for the teacher/tutor to consult the Head of Department, Head of Faculty, Head of Year or Houseparent, as appropriate, who will then deal with the matter.

1.3 If the complaint concerns a pastoral matter, parents should normally contact the appropriate Tutor or Houseparent.

1.4 If the complaint concerns a music-related matter, parents should normally contact the appropriate music teacher or the Director of Music.

1.5 A problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised first of all

¹ When we use the term "working days" we mean Monday to Friday during term time. It may take longer to process complaints received during holidays due to the availability of staff.

with the member of staff who imposed it and, if not resolved, with the Head of the Senior School or Head of the Junior School.

1.6 A query relating to financial matters (for example, fees) should be stated in writing to the Bursar.

1.7 Complaints made directly to a Head of Department or Houseparent may be referred to the relevant teacher or tutor unless it is felt appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.

1.8 On occasion, complaints may be dealt with by members of the Senior Leadership Team (including the Heads of the Senior and Junior Schools and Head Master) but still be resolved informally and successfully.

1.9 Should the matter not be resolved within 15 working days then parents may proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Policy.

Stage Two: Formal Resolution

2.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis as described in Stage 1, or if it has not been resolved within 15 working days, then the parents should put their complaint in writing² to the Head Master³, making it clear that they are raising a Formal Complaint. In the event that such notifications are received by another member of the Senior Leadership Team, these will be forwarded to the Head Master. He will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. This must be done even where the informal process has been conducted with the Head Master. If parents require assistance with their request, for example, because of a disability, the School will be happy to make appropriate arrangements⁴

2.2 In most cases, the Head Master will meet with or speak to the parents concerned, normally within five working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.

2.3 It may be necessary for the Head Master to carry out further investigations or to ask a senior member of staff to act as Investigator. The Investigator may ask for additional information from the complainant and may wish to speak to them personally and to others who may have knowledge of the circumstances including, if appropriate, the complainant's child.

2.4 Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential.

2.5 Once the Head Master 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. The Head Master will also give reasons for this decision. The Head Master's aim will be to inform any complainant of the outcome of an investigation and the resolution of the complaint within 28 working days from the first receipt of the complaint.

2.6 If parents are dissatisfied with the Head Master's decision under Stage 2 they may proceed to Stage 3 of this Policy.

² When we refer to notifications or requests in writing, both letter and email are acceptable.

³ In the absence of the Head Master, contact should be made via the person acting in the Head Master's capacity, or the Bursar.

⁴ Please note that the School will be very happy to arrange assistance if required, through the person coordinating complaints, in the event of any difficulty in submitting any request in writing required by this Policy

2.7 Where the complaint is in relation to EYFS provision, a response will be made to the complainant outlining the outcomes of the investigation within 28 days of receiving the complaint. Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept. All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential.

Stage Three – Panel Hearing

3.1 Request for a Panel Hearing

If the situation about which the complaint is made is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, then he or she can ask for it to be referred in writing to the Chairman of Governors, via the Bursar (as Clerk to the Governors), within 10 working days of receipt of the Head Master's response (or longer by agreement). The application must state the grounds for the review, specifying the unresolved issues, and the outcome sought.

3.2 Review Panel

The Bursar (Clerk to the Governors) will convene a panel of at least three people (usually two Governors who have not been directly involved with the matter complained about and an independent adviser who is not directly connected with the management or running or governance of the school). The panel will not normally include the Chair of Governors.

3.3 Review Meeting

This will be set up within 10 working days of the issue being referred to the Chairman. At the review meeting with the panel, the pupil and parent may be accompanied by another adult, however this does not entitle the parent to legal representation at the meeting. The Clerk to the Governors must be given 7 working days notice if the friend or relation is legally qualified. If possible the panel will resolve the parent's complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the panel will decide how this should be carried out, and unless there is an unforeseen delay, complainants will be notified of the outcome of an investigation within 28 working days of the review meeting. Panel meetings will not normally take place during school holidays.

3.4 Where no further investigation is required, within 10 working days of the review meeting (or longer by agreement) the complainant, Head Master, and where relevant the person complained about, will be sent a copy of any findings and recommendations by electronic or delivery mail. An additional copy of the findings and recommendations will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head Master.

3.5 In all cases the decision of the panel will be final. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

3.6 A written record of all of all formal complaints, whether resolved following a formal resolution, or whether they have proceeded to as panel hearing, is retained by the Head Master and categorised according to their nature (eg boarding). A record is also kept of the actions taken by the School as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure (Stage 2 or beyond) during the preceding year will be made available upon request from the Head Master's PA. 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 2008 Act requests access to them. Records of EYFS complaints will, as required, be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

An individual complaint should be made through the school's complaints procedure or through Ofsted if it is in relation to EYFS (Ofsted, National Business Unit, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD - Tel: 030 0123 1231). ISI (ISI, Cap House, 9 - 12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

Tel: 020 7600 0100) and DfE (Tel: 01325 735 304) may be contacted in connection with statutory Regulations or Standards.

Copies of this policy are available on request, or from the school website.

Head Master
September 2018
Date of Next review: September 2020