



Complaints Policy

Policy Title:	Complaints Policy
Last Review:	December 2025
Next Review:	August 2026
Responsibility:	Headmaster
Other relevant policies:	Data Protection Policy Privacy Notice Pupil Behaviour Policy Pupil Exclusion Policy Retention of Records Policy Safeguarding Child Protection Policy Use of Pupil Restraint Policy

West House has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint requiring action by the School, they can expect it to be treated in accordance with the procedures laid out hereafter.

Availability and Scope

This policy applies to the whole school, including EYFS, and is available to view via the school website. Hard copies are available to view in the school office and parents may request that a hard copy be sent home free of charge. The policy does not apply to parents of prospective pupils and is not available to parents of former pupils unless the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still registered at the school. Therefore, it does not cover exclusions subject to the above.

The school will be mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in the application of this policy.

“Parent(s)” means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil about whom the complaint relates.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

1. It is hoped that most issues raised by parents will be resolved quickly and informally. These will usually take the form of a telephone call, a note in a pupil's planner or reading record book, an email, or a word with a member of staff.
2. Matters raised informally by parents, which require a response but not action at a school level, will normally be handled by the Form Teacher/Tutor or Key Worker, who will be encouraged to exercise their professional judgement. No formal record will be retained.
3. Any matter raised informally but requiring action at a school level, whether it is presented as a concern or a complaint, will fall within the scope of this policy and, as such, will be referred to the Headmaster and recorded as detailed below.
4. Initially, the Headmaster may delegate the task of addressing the matter to a member of the Senior Leadership Team who will carry out the investigation and seek an informal resolution. A record will be kept on the 'Informal Complaints Record Sheet' and will include the date on which the complaint was received, details of any investigation and the date on which parents were informed of the outcome.
5. In the vast majority of cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway and normally within 48 hours, to the parents' satisfaction.
6. The Informal Complaint Sheet will be retained in the Parental Complaints File.

7. Should the matter not be resolved within two days, or in the event that the Member of the Senior Leadership Team and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure, at which point the complaint will be treated as 'formal'.
8. If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors whose contact details are available from the Bursar on request.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

1. If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster within seven working days of being advised to proceed to this stage. The Headmaster may require further information from the parents to help clarify the scope and nature of their concerns. The Headmaster may in some circumstances deem it appropriate to nominate a staff member to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Headmaster (or their nominee) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
2. The Headmaster will acknowledge the complaint upon receipt and, in most cases, will speak to the parents concerned, within seven working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage and, if this is achieved, the resolution will be recorded as 'informal' with the written agreement of the parents.
3. It may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations. The Headmaster (or their nominee) will determine who should carry out any investigation and this may be someone external to the school. Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint and retained in the Parental Complaints File.
4. Once the Headmaster (or their nominee) 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 Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision. Parents will be informed of the decision within 14 days of the complaint being made (during term time) and as soon as is reasonably practicable during the holiday period. When a resolution is achieved under such circumstances, it will be recorded as formal.
5. If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the references to the Headmaster (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to determine the complaint against the Headmaster.
6. If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should inform the Headmaster in writing (an email is sufficient) within seven working days of the decision and state that they wish to proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

1. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they should do so to the Bursar (Clerk to the Governors) within seven days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal. The Complaints Panel will be appointed within seven days of the parents invoking Stage 3.
2. To the extent the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated due to extenuating circumstances which have impeded the parents from taking action, the parents should request an extension in writing. Such a request should be made out to the Clerk to the Governors in advance of the original deadline, setting out the further time period requested and the reason for this. This will be considered.
3. The Clerk to the Governors who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors, with one Panel member appointed to act as Chair of the Panel. The Clerk to the Governors, on

behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 days of the panel being appointed (during term time).

4. 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 four days prior to the hearing.
5. The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied by one other person if they wish. The stage 2 decision-taker shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate and the companion should not be a lawyer. The identity of the companions should be confirmed to the Clerk to the Governors as soon as possible and by no later than two working days before the hearing. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend. Should the parents not exercise their right to attend the hearing, it will go ahead in their absence. A note-taker will attend the hearing to take a note. This will not be a verbatim note but an accurate reflection of what was discussed. Notes of the hearing will be shared with attendees as soon as practicable after the hearing. To the extent there is any disagreement about the content of those notes or further comments from the parties, these will be considered by and, where possible, resolved by the Chair. A copy of any comments on the notes will be appended to the notes.
6. The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
7. 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.
8. After due consideration of the merits of the complaint and all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and decide whether to:
 - i. Dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
 - ii. Uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
 - iii. Make recommendations.
9. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it within five working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Stage 2 decision-taker. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster, retained in the Parental Complaints File.
10. Any complaint about a decision taken by the Headmaster to exclude or require the removal of the pupil according to the school's Terms and Conditions and the Pupil Exclusion Policy will be governed by this Stage 3 of the School's Complaints Procedure. There may be circumstances in which the School consider it necessary and appropriate to deviate from the Stage 3 procedure in the context of appeals for exclusion and required removal, and the School will inform the parents of this.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

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 within 14 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 14 working days.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays and half term. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay. It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff

absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay. The School expects parents to engage in the process in a reasonable, constructive and responsive manner to help ensure matters can be dealt with in a timely way and in line with the targets set out in this Procedure.

Persistent Correspondence

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, it will be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

Complaints Relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage

Parents with children within the Early Years Foundation Stage should follow the procedures laid out above. However, they should also be aware of the following points specifically relating to EYFS:

- A record of complaints will be kept by the school for at least three years.
- Written complaints about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements will be investigated and the complainant notified of the outcome within 28 days.
- Should parents believe that the school is not meeting the EYFS requirements and wish to make a complaint to Ofsted (Tel: 0300 123 4666, Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (Tel: 0207 6000 100, Email: info@isi.net), they may do so. Full details of procedures and contact details appear in the entrance to the main Early Years building ('Field House').
- The school will inform parents about an inspection once it has been notified. Once the final inspection report has been provided, it will be supplied to the parents of children who attend the setting regularly.
- On request, the school will provide Ofsted and ISI with a written record of all complaints received during a specific period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Retention of Records Policy.

Confidentiality and Record Keeping

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

In the case of all complaints, a written record is retained in the Parental Complaints File, along with a note of the stage at which the complaint was resolved. The record will include the action taken by the school as a result of a complaint (regardless of whether or not it was upheld).

The school processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- 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 and contact details 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)
- Notes/minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the school's Data Protection policy.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice, Data Protection Policy and Retention of Records Policy. All records relating to complaints shall be treated as confidential. In addition to where requested by the Secretary of State or an inspector (see above), there may be other circumstances where disclosure of the substance of a complaint or particular confidential records relating to it is required, for example, where there is a legal, regulatory, safeguarding or data protection obligation (e.g., in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

Complaints which do not have safeguarding implications will be retained for a minimum of seven years. Records concerning allegations of abuse will be preserved for the term of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age or for ten years from the date of the allegation if it is longer.

A record of the number of formal complaints received during the academic year is maintained in the Parental Complaints File and is made available to parents on request via the school office. There were four complaints registered under the formal procedure during 2024 - 2025.

Monitoring and Review

The Headmaster will carry out an annual review of this policy. He will inform the Board of Governors of the outcome of the review and any formal complaints received on at least an annual basis.