



## **Woodcote House School**

### **Complaints Procedure for Parents**

#### **Introduction**

Woodcote House School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this procedure. Woodcote House School makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and in the Bursar's office during the school day, and Woodcote House School 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.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1)(b) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Woodcote House School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

#### **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 so 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 child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you, or your child, raises in good faith.

#### **The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure**

##### ***Stage 1 – Informal Resolution***

It is hoped that most concerns and complaints will be resolved quickly and informally. Parents have access to three channels:

1. **Form Tutor/Head of Boarding/Head of Pastoral/Matrons.** Parents may wish to use this route if they want to seek advice or discover if their concern is more generally felt. The Form Tutor/Head of Boarding/Head of Pastoral/Matrons would contact the Headmaster and either communicate the school's response himself/herself or leave it to the Headmaster to do so.
2. **The Deputy Headmaster** – Complaints made directly to the Deputy Head will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor unless the Deputy Head deems it appropriate for him to deal with the matter personally
3. **The Headmaster.** More serious complaints, or concerns about matters not covered by the Senior Staff, such as Pastoral or Boarding complaints, should be made directly to him.

If, however, the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Proprietor, Mr Nick Paterson.

Whichever channel is used, a written record of all concerns and complaints, and the date on which they were received will be kept and reviewed regularly by the Headmaster. Should the matter not be resolved within a week or in the event that the person approached and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2.

### ***Stage 2 – Formal Resolution***

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate action to take. In most cases the Headmaster will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within five 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 this 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 the parents informed of this decision in writing. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.

If the complaint is against the Head, the Proprietor will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Proprietor 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 Proprietor 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 Proprietor will give reasons for his decision.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3.

### ***Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing***

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3, following a failure to reach an earlier resolution, the matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in 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 Proprietor. He, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within a week. 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 2 days prior to the hearing. The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without further need for investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out. After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.

The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 5 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 Proprietor and the Head. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the Proprietor and the Head.

### **Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints**

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. They will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. 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 28 days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Stage 3, the Complaints Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 28 days, if the Complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

### **Recording Complaints**

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the informal stage, the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). 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 where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

September 2021