# COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

## FOR PARENTS POLICY

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<th>Revision Date</th>
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Robert Hannington  
Chair of Governors
### Complaints Procedure for Parents

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Complaints Procedure for Parents

Introduction

Lord Wandsworth College (the ‘College’) has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. Parents are encouraged to be in close liaison with staff and Houseparents and Tutors over their children’s education so that we can all work together for each pupil’s benefit. If any parent has a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the College with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure.

The College makes its Complaints Procedure available on the College's website and from Reception. The College will ensure that parents who request the Complaints Procedure will be made aware of how the most recent version can be accessed in both paper and electronic form.

The College will also make available on request to parents of pupils and prospective pupils, the ISI Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, the number of complaints registered under the Complaints Procedure during the preceding College year.

Scope of Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints and potential complaints by parents, except those that are dealt with under the policies listed below:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Policy</th>
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<tr>
<td>Disciplinary and Grievance (For Staff) Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaints Procedure for Pupils</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If a parent commences legal proceedings against the College in relation to their complaint, the College reserves the right to suspend or terminate the operation of the relevant process under the Complaints Procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

(For the avoidance of doubt, exam grade appeals are to be dealt with in accordance with exam board guidance in place at the time.)

Making a complaint

Who can make a complaint under this procedure?

This Complaints Procedure is limited to parties to the Contract (as defined in the College’s Terms and Conditions).

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Chair of Governors
Complaints Procedure for Parents

This procedure is not available for use by prospective parents. It is not available to past pupils unless the matter giving rise to the complaint arose during the Contract and the complaint is raised during the Contract or within 14 days of the Contract terminating (in relation to the permanent exclusion of a pupil, this policy will apply (see the ‘Exclusions’ section of the Good Behaviour, Discipline, Rewards and Sanctions (including Exclusions) Policy).

Complaints may also be raised by a third party acting on behalf of a party to the Contract if they have written authority from a Party to the Contract to do so.

What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression or statement of dissatisfaction about actions taken, or lack of action taken, by the College regarding any matter about which a parent is unhappy and in relation to which they seek action by the College.

Complaints may be made about the College as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. They are likely to arise if a parent believes that a wrongdoing has occurred, there has been a failure to do something that should have been done, or someone has acted unfairly.

Timeframe for making a complaint

A complaint must be raised as soon as possible and within 14 days of the relevant event or issue in any event or, where a series of associated events or issues have occurred, within 14 days of the last of these (save for a complaint arising from the exclusion of a pupil which, as per the Good Behaviour, Discipline, Rewards and Sanctions (including Exclusions) Policy, must be made within 10 days of the day on which the pupil is excluded). Complaints outside this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints made outside of term time will be considered to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Who should a complaint be made to?

In the first instance, a complaint should be made to a pupil’s Tutor or Houseparent. If the Tutor or Houseparent cannot resolve the complaint, it may be necessary for them to consult a department head, the Senior DeputyHead, or the Headmaster.

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Complaints Procedure for Parents

If a complaint is made directly to a department head, the Senior Deputy Head, or the Headmaster then it will usually be referred to the relevant Tutor or Houseparent unless the individual deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally or, if necessary, escalate further.

If a parent has difficulty raising the complaint with their child’s Tutor or Houseparent for whatever reason, a department head will refer them to another suitable member of staff.

If the complaint is about the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors in writing c/o the Clerk to the Governors.

Treatment of complaints

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be taken seriously and treated confidentially. No pupil will be prejudiced or penalised in any way for a complaint made by a parent in good faith pursuant to the Complaints Procedure. Complaints will be handled in a fair and appropriate manner.

The College will make and retain a written record of all complaints, and detailed notes of their resolution (including any meetings and interviews and / or investigations) and the date on which they were received.

Resolution of complaints

Timeframe for dealing with complaints

The College will aim to acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint if received during term time and as soon as reasonably practicable during holiday periods. Within that acknowledgement, the College will set out how it intends to deal with the complaint and the timeframe within which a parent can expect to hear further from the College.

It is in everyone’s interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible, and the College’s staff will work hard to ensure that this happens. At all stages of the complaints process, the College will endeavour to keep the complainant updated as to timeframes for responses and next steps. Please note that, for the purposes of the Complaints Procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays. Outside of term time, all complaints will be dealt with as soon as reasonably practicable.

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Chair of Governors
Complaints Procedure for Parents

Resolution of complaints

At each stage of the procedure, the College will endeavour to resolve the complaint. If appropriate it will be acknowledged as soon as possible by the College whether the complaint is upheld in whole or in part.

In addition, the College may offer one or more of the following:

- An explanation
- A rejection of the complaint
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- An assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- An undertaking to review the College’s policies in light of the complaint
- An apology

Complaints against the Headmaster

If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the Chairman of Governors will request a full report from the Headmaster regarding the complaint and all relevant accompanying documents. The Chairman of Governors may also call for a briefing from members of staff and will endeavour to speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chairman of Governors has concluded his/her investigation, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing, including the reasoning for the decision.

Withdrawing a complaint

If a parent chooses to withdraw a complaint, the College will request this is confirmed in writing.

The 3 stage complaints procedure

Stage 1 – informal resolution by Tutor or Houseparent

The College hopes that most concerns and complaints can be resolved quickly and informally.

In the first instance therefore, the College would encourage parents, if they have any concerns or complaints, to contact their child’s Tutor or Houseparent, whether verbally or in writing.

Robert Hannington
Chair of Governors
Complaints Procedure for Parents

The member of staff contacted will deal with the complaint as soon as possible (whether alone or in consultation with other staff members, including the Senior Deputy Head and Headmaster if necessary) and the College will in any event endeavour to resolve Stage 1 complaints within 5 working days (and as soon as reasonably practicable outside of term time).

In many cases, the complaint will be capable of resolution at this juncture to the parents’ satisfaction.

Stage 2 – formal resolution by the Head

If the complaint cannot be informally resolved at Stage 1, then parents are able to escalate their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure.

A complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure must be made in writing to the Head. This should be done by a parent as soon as reasonably practicable and in any event within 5 working days of attempting to resolve a complaint via Stage 1.

The Headmaster will then deal with the complaint, either by way of meeting with the parents or in writing. If a complaint made pursuant to Stage 2 is initially resolved in a meeting between the Headmaster and parents, then the Head will always confirm the resolution of the complaint in writing to the parents. The College will endeavour to resolve Stage 2 complaints within 10 working days subject to the need for an investigation. If a Stage 2 complaint is made outside of term time it will be resolved as soon as reasonably practicable and the Head will ensure that parents remain updated throughout on timescales.

It may be necessary for the Head (or their nominee) to direct or to conduct further investigation as part of resolving a Stage 2 complaint. The Head will ensure that parents remain updated throughout this process on timescales and the expected date of resolution. The College will endeavour to resolve any investigations as soon as reasonably practicable.

Stage 3 – formal complaint to the Chair of Governors

Making a Stage 3 complaint

If the complaint cannot be informally resolved at Stage 2, then parents are able to escalate their complaint in accordance with Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure.

Robert Hannington
Chair of Governors
Complaints Procedure for Parents

A complaint in accordance with Stage 3 of the Complaints Procedure must be made in writing to the Chief Operating Officer, as Clerk to the Governors. This should be done by a parent as soon as reasonably practicable and in any event within 10 working days of the resolution of the complaint via Stage 2.

What should a Stage 3 complaint include?

A complaint made pursuant to Stage 3 must include the parents’ full grounds for appeal in writing and any supporting evidence which they wish to rely upon.

The Complaints Panel

The Chief Operating Officer, as Clerk to the Governors, will notify the Chair of Governors who will, unless the complaint is demonstrably without merit, decide how to deal with the complaint which will usually be by way of convening a Complaints Panel.

The Complaints Panel will usually consist of 3 individuals not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One of these individuals may be independent of the management and running of the College and will not be part of the College’s workforce or a member of its governing body, the others usually being current or former Governors.

Once formed, the Complaints Panel will appoint one panel member to act as Chair of the Complaints Panel (the Chair of Governors will often not be a member of the Complaints Panel to preserve independence). The Chief Operating Officer, as Clerk to the Governors, or such other individual as the Complaints Panel choose, will then be appointed as Clerk to the Complaints Panel for administration purposes.

If the Chair of Governors decides that the Complaints Panel process is not appropriate for the particular circumstances of the complaint he/she will notify the parents as to the way in which he/she proposes that the Stage 3 process should be conducted.

The Complaints Panel process

The Clerk to the Complaints Panel will endeavour to acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days of the Complaints Panel being appointed and set out how it is proposed that the process will be conducted. This will usually be by way of a formal hearing in person which will be scheduled for as soon as reasonably practicable and in any event not normally later than 20 working days after the Complaints Panel has been appointed. The Complaints Panel may, in their discretion, decide that it is appropriate for the hearing to proceed on the written submissions only without the need for a formal hearing.
Complaints Procedure for Parents

Prior to the Complaints Panel hearing, the Complaints Panel may require the parents or the College to provide further particulars of the complaint or grounds of appeal, a response to the complaint or grounds of appeal, or for further enquiries and/or investigations to be carried out.

A hearing bundle, containing all information relevant to the Complaints Panel hearing, shall be supplied to all parties as soon as reasonably practicable after it has been collated and, in any event, no later than 5 working days prior to the Complaints Panel hearing.

The Complaints Panel reserves the right to reasonably delay the Complaints Panel hearing to allow for the gathering of information for and/or provision of the hearing bundle.

Complaints Panel hearing

The Complaints Panel hearing will take place at a suitable time and location at the College, unless the Complaints Panel determine that the hearing should take place elsewhere.

The Clerk to the Complaints Panel will circulate a timetable for the Complaints Panel hearing no later than 5 working days prior to the Complaints Panel hearing. This timetable will include reference to, but not be limited to, submissions by the parents, submissions by the College and periods of questioning by the Complaints Panel.

Parents are expected to attend the hearing and, at the discretion of the Chair of the Complaints Panel, may be accompanied by another person if they wish, the details of whom should be provided to the Clerk to the Complaints Panel not later than 5 working days before the date the Complaints Panel hearing is scheduled for. If parents choose not to attend, the Complaints Panel hearing will at the discretion of the Complaints Panel take place in the parents’ absence.

The calling of witnesses to the Complaints Panel hearing is a decision for the Complaints Panel and will be determined following a consideration of the information available.

Resolution of complaints by the Complaints Panel

Following the Complaints Panel process the panel will make findings as to whether the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and accordingly decide whether to:

- Dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part; or
- Uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and/or
- Return the complaint in whole or part to be reconsidered by the Head.

Robert Hannington
Chair of Governors
Complaints Procedure for Parents

The Clerk to the Complaints Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it as soon as reasonably practicable following the Complaints Panel hearing, and normally within 5 working days of it (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Complaints Panel will be final.

**Permanent exclusion**

Any complaint against a decision taken by the Head to exclude or require the removal of the pupil under the College’s Terms and Conditions will be governed by Stage 3.

**Recording Complaints and Use of Personal Data**

Following resolution of a complaint, the College (Headmaster’s Office) will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the formal stage or proceed to a Complaints Panel and any action taken by the College as a result of the complaint (whether or not the complaint is upheld). Such written records will include:

Whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a Complaints Panel; and,

Action taken by the College as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

The College processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice and its Data Protection Policy. At the College’s discretion, records may be kept of informal/formal complaints, which may contain the information detailed below:

- 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 and any minutes of the Hearing, and
- The Complaints Panel’s written decision.

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

Robert Hannington
Chair of Governors
Complaints Procedure for Parents

Skills Act 2008 requests access to them, or where other legal obligations apply. The College is mindful of its obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998 (and from May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation) to keep such information for no longer than is necessary.

A copy of the Complaints Panel’s findings and recommendations (if any) will also be made available for visiting inspectors on the College premises.

The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding academic year is available by request from the Head’s office.

Contact Details

Headmaster, Adam Williams, Lord Wandsworth College. Tel: 01256 860348
Chair of Governors, Robert Hannington c/o Clerk to the Governors Tel: 01256 862201

The College is inspected by ISI. Parents and pupils have the right to contact an inspector if they have a complaint concerning a pupil's welfare. ISI will usually expect parents or pupils to have followed the College's complaints procedure before contacting them. However, you can report your concerns to ISI on: Tel: 020 7600 0100, concerns@isi.net or you can write to:

ISI Regional Office:
Independent Schools Inspectorate
Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

In cases of contractual disputes, parents may wish to consider Alternative Dispute Resolution (or ‘ADR’, the name given to different methods of dealing with disputes without going to court). Common ADR methods include mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication, such as provided by:

Ombudsman Services
The Brew House, Wilderspool Park, Greenall’s Avenue, Warrington, WA4 6HL

LWC is not obliged to enter into ADR but, in the event that a contractual dispute cannot be otherwise resolved, may agree to make use of ADR.

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