



LORD
WANDSWORTH
COLLEGE

**COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE
FOR PARENTS POLICY**

Complaints Procedure for Parents

Staff member responsible	Revision Date	Approved By	Approval Date	Reason
DPI	Sept 2009	SMT	14/9/09	Total revision
SLB	Mar 2010	SMT	7/3/10	Updated – ISI
SLB	Mar 2011	SMT	9/3/11	Updated
SLB	Mar 2012	SMT	18/3/12	Panel Hearing amended
SLB	Sept 2013	SMT	14/9/13	Edited in line with revised ISSR
SLB	Feb 2014	SMT	12/2/14	Amended following A&SC review
SLB	June 2014	SMT	26/6/14	Amended following ISI Consultancy visit
SLB	March 2015	SMT	23/3/15	Amended in line with ISI inspection visit
RDG	Sept 2015	SLT	1/11/15	Reviewed
RDG	October 2016	Governors	7/12/16	Reviewed
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RDG	October 2017	Governors	6/12/17	Annual review incl HM Review
RDG	June 2018	SLT	13/6/18	Amended in line with GDPR regulations
SLB/RDG	October 2018	SLT	5/12/18	Annual review incl HM Review
AJW	December 2019	Governors	19/12/19	Reviewed ilw ISBA revision
AJW	October 2020	Governors	3/12/20	Reviewed
AJW/BWB	January 2022	Governors	2/2/22	Rewritten by CRS
AJW/BWB	December 2022	Governors	1/2/23	Reviewed no changes
AJW/BWB	March 2024	<i>Pending</i>	<i>Ratification</i>	Rewritten with ISBA template

Introduction

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Chair of Governors

Complaints Procedure for Parents

Lord Wandsworth College (the 'College') 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 College with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure.

The College makes its Complaints Procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the College's website and from Reception. The College will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available in both paper form and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding College year. In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent College Standards) Regulations 2014, the College will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Colleges Inspectorate (ISI), details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding College year.

Although this Procedure is made available to parents of prospective pupils, it is not available for use by them; it may only be used by parents of current pupils.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the College and the complaint is raised within 14 days of the contract with the College terminating.

The College 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 pupil about whom the complaint relates.

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:

Policy
Disciplinary and Grievance (For Staff) Policy
Complaints Procedure for Pupils

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.)

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the College as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the College is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the College has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

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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 Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. There may also be other circumstances in which the College is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.

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.

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.

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

Withdrawing a complaint

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

The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

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- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's Houseparent, Tutor or Head of Year. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the member of staff cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for them to consult the Head of Department, Deputy Head (Academic), Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Senior Deputy Head.
- Complaints made directly to the Head or members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will usually be referred to the relevant member of staff to unless Head or SLT member deems it appropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.

The member of staff will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 5 working days (or as soon as reasonably practicable outside term time) or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure.

- 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 Chief Operating Officer as Clerk to the Governors.

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 Head. The Head may in some circumstances deem it appropriate to nominate a staff member to hear the complaint and manage the Stage 2 complaint process. The Head (or their nominee) will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head (or their nominee) will meet or speak to the parents concerned, within 5 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out. The Head (or their nominee) will determine who should carry out any investigation and this may be someone external to the College.
- **Written records** will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head (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 Head (or their nominee) will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Head will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 15 working days of the complaint being put in writing.
- If the complaint is against the Head, 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 Head (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to determine the complaint against the Head.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the Chief Operating Officer, as Clerk to the Governors, within 10 working days of

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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. 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 to the Chief Operating Officer, as 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. In the event the parents are unable to provide their complaint within the time period stipulated (including to the extent applicable any extensions if agreed) the College reserves the right to conclude the complaint process and not progress the matter to Stage 3.

The Chief Operating Officer, as 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 College. The Complaints Panel will appoint one of the Panel members to act as the Chair of the Panel. The Chief Operating Officer, as Clerk to the Governors, or such individual as the Complaints Panel choose, will then be appointed as Clerk to the Complaints Panel for administration purposes.

- The Chief Operating Officer, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as is reasonably practical but normally within 20 working days.
- 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 or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing 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 Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- 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.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- 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:
 - dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
 - uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
 - return the complaint in whole or part to be reconsidered by the head: and
 - 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

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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 (if any) will also be available for inspection on the College premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head.

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 College's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 20 working days. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 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 College 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 College 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 College will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.

Persistent correspondence

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

Recording Complaints and use of personal data

Following resolution of a complaint, the College will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at Stage 1 (informal stage), the formal stage (Stage 2) or proceed to a Panel hearing (Stage 3) and any action taken by the College as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The College processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints the College (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)

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- 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 College'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 College's Data Protection Policy.

The College will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Data Protection 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 (eg, in response to a subject access request) which prevails over the requirement to maintain the records as confidential.

For the academic year 2023/24 the College received no formal complaints.

Lord Wandsworth College will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified 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.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Colleges must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the ISI:

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net

[ISI, 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

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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.