

WOODHOUSE ACADEMY

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Reviewed: Autumn 2023
To be reviewed: Autumn 2025

Complaints expressed in person or on the phone in a loud, offensive and aggressive manner will not be tolerated by the school and will be dealt with under the Vexatious and Harassment Policy.

This means that, in these circumstances you will calmly be asked to leave or the phone call politely terminated. Contact with school staff and teachers will be arranged in line with the aforementioned policy.

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This policy should be read in conjunction with the LEA's leaflet for parents "*Your School – Compliments, Comments and Concerns*".

Introduction

The main purpose of the complaints policy is to provide a framework for solving problems and to give parents/carers a means to raise items of concern and have them addressed.

Parents/carers will be treated respectfully at all times, including during and after any concern or complaint has been investigated & closed.

All members of staff will be aware of the complaints policy and the processes and procedures that sit behind the policy. They will understand:

- The importance of attempting to resolve problems before they become formal complaints
- The importance of dealing with problems, concerns or complaints swiftly and respectfully

Expressing Concerns

Stage 1: Expressing Concerns/Informal

Initial concerns should be raised to the school in line with our 'communication into school' process. This is by email wherever possible or, where this is not possible, by

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telephoning the school reception. Where concerns are raised via telephone, unless a response is urgently required (has a time critical nature), a message will always be taken so that, at this informal stage, the school can consider the best way of dealing with the concerns raised according to the circumstances. It is preferable for all concerned that problems are resolved as soon as possible and therefore the school will appoint the staff member most suited to resolution to review the issue in the first instance. This may be the form tutor or one of our pastoral officers – dependent upon the nature of the concern. The staff member will then make contact to discuss the next best steps. We work on the basis of aiming to respond to concerns raised within two working days.

Stage 2: Informal Follow Up (Leadership Level)

If the concern remains unresolved following the stage 1 outcome, it will then be escalated to one of our key stage leads. They will look into the concern, determine if the right course of action has been taken and follow up as needed.

Stage 3: Secondary Follow Up (Senior Leadership Level)

If at the conclusion of the stage 2 process a resolution has not been found, this will then be directed to the senior leadership team and either the assistant principal or deputy principal will endeavour to resolve the concern. However, if a parent/carer is dissatisfied with the outcome from a senior leadership member dealing with the concern, the matter should be referred to the Formal Complaints Process as Stage 3 denotes the end of the informal stage.

Formal Complaints

Stage 4 – the Principal

In the event that an issue reaches the formal complaint stage of the process, an investigating officer will be appointed on behalf of the school. This will normally be a member of the SLT that has not been involved in the informal process. It should be assumed that the investigating officer has not been aware of the complaint prior to this point. Formal complaints should be made in writing to the school and the complainant will be supplied with a pro forma complaint form (appendix 1) to be completed, in order to ensure that details have been collected accurately and correctly. The school will record when the complaint is received. A complaint will then be acknowledged in writing by the investigating officer, usually within 2 working days of receiving the complaint. The acknowledgement will include an explanation of what will happen next and the time scales involved.

Details of a complaint will be kept confidential except in so far as they need to be shared with people who might contribute to their resolution.

Once the investigating officer has concluded their review, the response to the complaint will be as described in the paragraph "Outcomes" below.

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It should be noted that action through a complaints procedure may lead to action being initiated under other procedures. This may be disciplinary or child protection procedures and consideration should be given to this possibility at the earliest stage. In these cases, the investigations under the complaints procedure will be suspended until action under the other procedures (including appeals) has been concluded. The complainant should be advised if this is the case and also informed of the likely delay in the final resolution of their complaint. The governing body will not be included at this stage.

Stage 5 – Formal Complaint Appeals

Where a complaint cannot be resolved informally or by the stage 4 of the complaints process, this must then be escalated to the Principal who will hear the appeal. Appeals will only be accepted in writing and letters or emails must clearly outline the reason for appeal. The school will record when the appeal is received and will be acknowledged in writing by the Principal with a clear explanation of what will happen next and timeframes.

The Role of the Chair of Governors

If a complaint remains unresolved following an appeal to the principal, the complainant can write to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will review the nature of the complaint and the action taken and decide whether to refer the complaint to a complaints committee of the governing body. The purpose of this further review will only be to establish if the school correctly followed the relevant policies, processes and procedures in dealing with the complaint. If this course of action is followed, the chair shall present a full report to the committee and, if necessary, external advice may be sought.

The committee is to be made up of at least 3 governors, not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. The principal will not be included in the committee and at least one committee member will be independent of the management and running of the school.

The committee should meet at a time convenient to the members of the committee, the chair (who will present the report), the parent (in order that they may make representations in person and be accompanied if they wish) and any witnesses.

Outcomes (for stages 4 and 5)

In all cases where a complaint has been investigated, the complainant (and where relevant the person complained about) will be given a written response, by electronic mail or otherwise, covering:

- The complaint
- The scope of the investigation
- The conclusion of the investigation

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- Any action which has resulted

The committee may wish to offer the complainant the opportunity to discuss the response. A copy will be available for inspection by the governors and the Principal.

If the investigation upholds the complaint, redress should be appropriate to the complaint and may include:

- An appropriate expression of regret
- Providing the solution desired by the complaint
- Changing the procedures to avoid future problems

The school will take responsibility for:

- Deciding who can take remedial action
- Ensuring that the remedy is carried out
- Ensuring that any remedy is within the school's powers
- Ensuring the approach to remedies is reasonable and consistent

Where a complaint is not upheld the complainant must be given a response and informed of any further action that might be appropriate in their situation.

Stages 6 and 7 – The role of the Education & Skills Funding Agency and Department for Education & Skills

Parents do not have a general right of appeal should they disagree with the governors' decision. They may, however, raise the matter with the Education Funding Agency or Secretary of State if they consider the complaint wasn't investigated properly and fairly. If the school have followed a proper procedure and considered the complaint reasonably, neither the ESFA nor the DfES can reverse their decision.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES (when addressed to the governing body)

1. Parents should complete the complaints form as appropriate, giving details of the complaint and what they would like as an outcome of the investigation. A copy of the form should be kept.
2. School will forward the completed form to the chair of the governing body for consideration.
3. If considered appropriate, a complaints committee of the governing body will be established to investigate the complaint.
4. The complainant will be invited to meet the complaints committee to make the complaint in person.
5. After hearing the complaint and considering the relevant facts, the committee will make a decision and convey, in writing, to the complainant within 2 working days of the hearing.

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6. There is not a general right of appeal against the decision of the governors.
However, if parents feel that proper procedures were not followed or reasonable consideration given to the complaint, they can raise the matter with the ESFA.
7. Complaints to the ESFA can be made via the school complaints form (available via the website)

FUNDING AGENCY

They will consider complaints that fall into one of three areas:

- Where there is undue delay or the agency did not comply with its complaints procedure when considering a complaint.
- Where the Academy is in breach of its funding agreement with the Secretary of State.
- Where an Academy fails to comply with any other legal obligation.

PLEASE NOTE COMPLAINANTS SHOULD NOT CONTACT THE ESFA UNTIL THE PRINCIPAL OR GOVERNING BODY HAS CONSIDERED THE COMPLAINT.

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Appendix 1:

Appendix 1 Woodhouse Academy complaint form

Please complete and return to the school office office@woodhouseacademy.staffs.sch.uk who will acknowledge receipt of the form

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

E-Mail address:

Please give details of your complaint.

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.
(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

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Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: