



WELLESLEY PREP SCHOOL

Complaints Procedure

This policy applies to all parts of Wellesley Prep School including the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Updated: September 2026
Review: September 2028

INTRODUCTION

Wellesley Prep 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.

The school has established this procedure with the intention of meeting the concerns of parents before they develop into complaints and of resolving complaints that do arise as effectively as possible.

As a school we would prefer parents to raise any concerns they may have about the education and development of their child, or about any aspect of the running of the school or any part of it, at the earliest opportunity. Addressing a concern before it becomes a complaint is in the best interests of pupils, parents and the school, but it can only happen if the school is aware of the concern.

Wellesley Prep School makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and prospective pupils in the school office during the school day and will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is available and the form in which it is available.

In accordance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, the School will make available to parents of current and prospective pupils details of this Complaints Procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year. This information will also be provided to the Department for Education or an appropriate inspection body on request.

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

For the purposes of this procedure, "parent" means a person with parental responsibility for a current or prospective pupil to whom the complaint relates.

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, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

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 School is required to share information relating to a concern or a complaint in order to comply with its legal or regulatory obligations.

The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise in good faith.

The vast majority of concerns will be dealt with informally and the formal complaints procedure need not be triggered. The complaints procedure is triggered at the request of a parent when a concern is not resolved to the parent's satisfaction through the informal channels set out in stage 1 below.

All concerns and complaints will be handled sensitively and, as far as reasonably

practicable, confidentially. Information will be shared only with those who need it in order to investigate, respond to or otherwise deal with the matter, or where disclosure is required by law or necessary for safeguarding or other regulatory purposes.

Scope of this Procedure

This procedure applies to complaints from parents of current or prospective pupils relating to the education or welfare of their child, or to the School's provision, services, decisions or actions.

Some matters are dealt with under separate procedures and may not be appropriate for consideration under this Complaints Procedure. These may include:

- safeguarding concerns;
- staff grievances or disciplinary matters;
- whistleblowing concerns;
- admissions decisions;
- matters relating to exclusions or suspensions where another procedure applies;
- complaints relating to third-party providers operating independently of the School; and
- matters which are the subject of legal proceedings or an investigation by an external authority.

Where a concern falls more appropriately under another procedure, the School will explain this to the complainant and, where appropriate, provide information about the relevant process.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

Written complaints will be acknowledged within 7 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods (or at least within 7 working days of the school returning from holiday).

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 working days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

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

STAGE 1 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION

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

Parents should normally raise a concern with their child's form teacher or another appropriate member of staff. Where the concern relates to that member of staff, or where it would otherwise be inappropriate to raise the matter with them, the parent may raise the concern with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

The member of staff handling the concern will make an appropriate written record of the concern and any action taken. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 working days, or in the event that the form teacher 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 procedure.

If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chairman of Governors whose contact details are available from the School Office on request.

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 require further information from the parents to help clarify the scope and nature of their concerns. 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 will speak to the parents concerned, within 7 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss and resolve 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 School.

It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations.

The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Head 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 will also give reasons for the decision.

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) then the matter will be referred to the Chairman of Governors who will appoint a Complaints Panel. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution)

they should do so in writing to the clerk to the Panel within 14 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. 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 clerk to the Panel 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 School reserves the right to conclude the complaint process and not progress the matter to Stage 3.

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 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 Chairman of Governors. The Chairman of Governors will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 14 working school days of receiving the complaint.

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 no later than 7 days prior to the hearing.

The parents can attend and may 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 and the companion should not be a lawyer. The identity of the companions should be confirmed to the clerk to the Panel as soon as possible and by no later than **2 working days** before the hearing. The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.

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.

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 immediately 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 all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations.

The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it within 7 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 within 14 working days of the hearing, and, where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chairman of Governors and Head.

A copy of the findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and Head.

Persistent correspondence

The School will not normally reconsider the same complaint once all stages of this procedure have been completed, unless new and material information becomes available or there are other exceptional circumstances.

Where a complainant continues to raise substantially the same matter repeatedly, the School may limit further correspondence, provided that the complainant is informed of the reasons for this decision.

RECORDING COMPLAINTS

Following resolution of a formal complaint, the school will keep a written record of all formal complaints and whether they were resolved at the formal stage or proceeded to a panel hearing. The school will also keep a record of the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are 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).
- 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*, 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*. 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.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual formal complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

COMPLAINTS REGARDING EYFS

Parents of pupils in the Early Years should follow the School's Complaints Procedure in the first instance.

Parents may also raise concerns directly with the appropriate regulatory body where they believe that the School is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where the nature of the concern makes this appropriate.

Up-to-date information about raising concerns with the relevant regulatory bodies is available through the School Office or on the websites of the relevant organisations.