



WREKIN

**WREKIN COLLEGE  
COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES**



## COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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**This policy and procedures are published on the school's website. A hard copy may be requested from the Head's PA.**

**This policy and guidelines needs to be read alongside other school documentation including:**

- Anti-Bullying and Child-on-Child Abuse Policies
- Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy
- Conducting Interviews, Searches and Confiscation Policy and Procedures (Pupils)
- Data Protection Policy (Confidentiality of Information)
- E-Safety and Online Safety Policies
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Health and Wellbeing Centre and First Aid Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Welfare and Health Policies - Pupils (includes alcohol and smoking/vaping Policies)
- Wellbeing and Mental Health Policies and Guidelines - Pupils (includes depression, self-harm, eating disorders and suicide intervention)
- Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

**Other relevant documentation:**

- [Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures](#) - DfE January 2020 (updated Jan 2021)
- Boarding Mission Statement (available on the school's website, in the Parents' Handbook and Pupil Handbook)
- Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards - September 2022
- Keeping Children Safe In Education - September 2023
- Parents' Handbook
- The School's Aims and Code of Conduct

**Contact details for**

- Concerns about a school
- Concerns about the safety or welfare of a child
- Queries relating to safeguarding

**Independent Schools Inspectorate: CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA.**

**Tel: 020 7600 0100 Email: concerns@isi.net (Independent Schools Inspectorate)**

**Appendix A of the Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards** states that the school should have an appropriate procedure on responding to complaints. **Appendix B** states that all complaints and their outcomes **MUST** be recorded.

**Standard 13 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, Securing Boarders' Views, states:** Boarders are actively encouraged to contribute their views to the operation of boarding provision. There should be clear and easily accessible systems for boarders to provide their views and raise concerns. Boarders' views are considered in decisions about the running of the school and boarding provision and boarders are provided with feedback about their expressed views. **Boarders are not penalised for raising a concern in good faith.**

**Standard 14 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, Complaints, states:**

14.1 The school has, and follows, an effective policy on recording and responding to parental complaints that is compliant with the relevant regulatory standards. The policy is clear on how to make a complaint, how it will be dealt with and the timescales for a response.

14.2 The school should also have a clear and easily accessible process for boarders to raise their own complaints about boarding provision. The school's procedures should be clear about how it will respond to complaints from boarders. Boarders are not penalised for raising a complaint in good faith.

14.3 The school's written record of complaints identifies those complaints relating to boarding provision, and action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). The school should keep a record of complaints made but later withdrawn. The school should keep under review any emerging patterns arising from complaints.

<b>Date document updated</b>	<b>Document updated by</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Location of saved file</b>	<b>Date of next review</b>
July 2016	SEC	3 policies combined, reviewed and amended.	Google Drive	July 2017
July 2017	SEC	No changes made	Google drive and Website	July 2018
July 2018	SEC/TF	Complete review and update: ref to KCSIE 2018	Google Drive and Website	July 2019
July 2019	SEC	Updated with ref to KCSIE 2019	Google Drive and Website from Sept 2019	July 2020
Apr 2023	AWr/TF	Updated with ref to new NMS and KCSIE 2022	Google Drive and Website	Apr 2024
Feb 2024	TSp/AWr	Updated with ref to KCSIE 2023; minor other tweaks; Complaints Procedure for Pupils removed to separate document	Google Drive and Website	Feb 2025



## PART 1: COMPLAINTS POLICY

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### Introduction

Wrekin prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils.

People who have contact with Wrekin have a right to expect that we will try to provide the best possible service for them.

However, for a whole variety of reasons things can sometimes go wrong.

Wherever possible we want to put things right as quickly as possible and try to prevent the same type of problem arising again.

Sometimes young people and their families feel uncomfortable about complaining, but it is only by letting us know that we can attempt to put things right.

### The Difference Between a Concern and a Complaint

A **concern** may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. A **complaint** may generally be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.' (DfE: Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2020, updated January 2021).

The school should seek clarification from the person expressing a concern/complaint to establish which it is so the school is able to act accordingly.

### What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is any matter about which someone is dissatisfied and seeks action by the school. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. We recognise that it is right and appropriate for someone to make a complaint if they believe that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done, or acted unreasonably or unfairly.

### Who can make a complaint?

Any person, including members of the general public, may make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides, unless separate statutory procedures apply.

**A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing.**

## Policy Statement

The aim of this policy and procedure is to ensure that a complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently, at the appropriate level, and that it is resolved as quickly as possible. The person raising a concern or making a complaint can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially, and that any complaints which they make will not rebound adversely on others. Those who raise a concern or complaint in good faith will not be penalised.

The school will seek to resolve every complaint in a positive manner. We recognise that a complaint which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment which is damaging to relationships and to the ethos of the school.

In order to monitor complaints and assess whether or not we are actually learning from them, we hope the following might help.

### **Any complaint is likely to fall into one of the following categories:**

- **Transport** – this covers issues such as the general running of the school minibuses and the behaviour of pupils whilst on the mini-buses;
- **Bullying** – we keep a close eye on bullying throughout the school;
- **Practice** – perhaps the most common area for pupils and their parents to complain about is that of practice. Why was this done to my child? Why weren't they allowed to ..... ?
- **Communication** – complaints are often owing to misunderstandings essentially because people do not talk to each other or are not informed of things because someone else thought that the other person already knew;
- **Accommodation** – this covers issues such as the heating and hot water, or the state of the fabric of the school;
- **Food** – perhaps the most important area for some of our pupils. If complaints and suggestions are not made, menus cannot be modified to suit more people.

**The number of formal complaints received during the preceding academic year is published at the end of this document.**

## Recording Formal Complaints

The school will keep a written record of all formal complaints (i.e. those not resolved at stage 1 - informal resolution - see page 6) and whether they are resolved at stage 2 or proceed to a panel hearing. These written records will usually contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue – and particularly if the complaint relates to the boarding provision at the school
- 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)
- At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept of other complaints.

The school will keep a written record of action taken as a result of all formal complaints (regardless of whether they were upheld). 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.



## PART 2: COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE - PARENTS

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Complaints are often owing to misunderstandings. The parent should tell someone at the school what the problem is and how they think the issue could be resolved.

The school will try to find a solution to the problem in a way that is acceptable to all those involved. Many problems can be sorted out like this. However, if it is not possible to resolve the complaint this way the parent may then wish to formally complain.

### Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

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

1. If a parent has a problem they should normally contact their child's Housemaster/Housemistress (HsM) or the relevant Head of Department in the first instance. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parent's satisfaction.
2. If the HsM or Head of Department, cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for them to consult with the relevant Deputy Head or the Head.
3. If contact regarding a problem is made directly to a Deputy Head or Head, it will usually be referred to the relevant HsM or Head of Department, unless it is deemed appropriate for a Deputy Head.
4. The HsM or Head of Department, **will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received.**
5. **The parent can expect a written or spoken response in 14 days** (or as soon as reasonable if during a school or public holiday period).
6. **Should the matter not be resolved within a further 14 days** (or as soon as reasonable if during a school or public holiday period), or if the HsM or Head of Department or parent feels that there has not been a satisfactory resolution, then the parent will be advised to proceed to the formal stage for complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

### Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the problem cannot be resolved on an informal basis, **then the parent should put their complaint in**

**writing to the Head.** The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

All complaints not resolved at Stage 1 will be kept on record in a 'formal complaint' file.

In most cases, the Head will meet with or speak to the parent concerned, **normally within 14 days of receiving the complaint** (or as soon as reasonable if during a school or public holiday period), to clarify the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached or sought at this stage.

- It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations by asking a member of the SMT to investigate and this may take time.
- A **written record** of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint and will be kept by the investigator.
- Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parent will be informed of this decision in writing.
- The Head will also give reasons for their decision to the parent.

**If the complaint is against the Head**, the Chair of Governors should be contacted directly. The Chair of Governors may decide to appoint a different member of the governing board to investigate the matter. They will require a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair 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 Chair 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 as soon as is reasonably possible and **normally within 15 working days of receiving the complaint** (or as soon as reasonable if during a school or public holiday period).

The Chair will give reasons for their decision.

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

### **Stage 3 - Panel Hearing**

If a parent wishes to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to the Convenor, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.

1. The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration.
2. The panel will consist of at least three persons, not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.
3. **One of these panel members will be independent of the management and running of the school.** The Board of Governors shall appoint each panel member.
4. The Convenor, on behalf of the panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and **normally within 15 working days** (or as soon as reasonable if during a school or public holiday period).
5. If the panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied to all parties not later than 7 days prior to the hearing.
6. **The parent may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person.** This may be a relative, teacher or friend. It is not expected that legal representation will be appropriate at this

stage.

7. If possible the panel will resolve the parent's complaint immediately without need of further investigation.
8. Where further investigation is required, the panel will decide how it should be carried out.
9. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the panel will reach a decision and make recommendations, which it shall **complete within 10 working days of the hearing** (or as soon as reasonable if during a school or public holiday period).
10. The panel will **write to the parent** informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. **The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to the parent, the Head, the Governors and, where relevant, the persons complained of.**
11. The decision of the Panel will be final.
12. A copy of the appeal panel's findings and recommendations is available for inspection on the school premises by the governors and Head.

**Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.**

Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 3 (f) of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection, or where any other legal obligation prevails.

## External Review of Complaint

If the complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction you may wish to involve an external body to review the issues.

Most external reviews will expect complaints to have been taken through the stages outlined above prior to their involvement.

Other organisations have acted as reviewers of complaints and the school would welcome any source of independent experience and advice that would lead to a successful resolution.

Some complaints are so serious that it would not be right for the school to try to make things right without telling people outside that there was a problem.

Under some laws that affect boarding schools some complaints have to be notified to ISI and Ofsted.

Parents and pupils may wish to contact the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) regarding a complaint concerning their welfare - see page 3 of this document for contact details.

**The number of formal complaints received at Wrekin during the academic year 2022-23: 1**



## **Barring from the School Premises**

‘Although fulfilling a public function, schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Headteachers and governing bodies will therefore need to act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community.’ DfE Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2020 (updated January 2021).

However unlikely the scenario is, if a parent’s behaviour is a cause for real concern, the school will ask them to leave the school premises. In serious cases, the Head can notify them in writing that their implied licence to be on school premises has been temporarily revoked subject to any representations that the parent may wish to make. The school will give the parent opportunity to formally express their views on the decision to bar in writing.

The decision to bar will then be reviewed, taking into account any representations made by the parent, and either confirmed or lifted. If the decision is confirmed the parent will then be notified in writing, explaining how long the bar will be in place.

Anyone wishing to complain about being barred can do so, by letter or email, to the Head or Chair of Governors. However, complaints about barring cannot be escalated to the DfE. Once the school’s own complaints procedure has been completed, the only remaining avenue of appeal is through the Courts; independent legal advice must therefore be sought.