Widford Lodge

PREPARATORY SCHOOL

33a

Complaints Policy

This policy applies to all pupils in the school including those in the EYFS

Reviewed and Approved by the Proprietor: October 2025

Next Review: October 2026

WIDFORD LODGE SCHOOL

Complaints Procedure for Parents

Widford Lodge School has long prided itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. The School would much rather hear of concerns early and this policy covers any concerns and matters about which a parent of a current pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school. Concerns may be voiced to form teachers, teachers, subject leaders, members of the Senior Leadership Team and the Headteacher as appropriate, either formally or informally.

Parents can expect their concerns to be treated by the school in accordance with this procedure. This procedure for dealing with complaints is available on the website and on request to the parents of pupils and prospective pupils at the school.

A record is kept of any complaints received by the School, the actions taken as a result of the complaint and the stage at which the complaint was resolved. This is kept for at least seven years and longer if there is a safeguarding implication, as detailed in our data retention policy.

Widford Lodge School welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and takes seriously any concerns they may raise.

All formal written complaints, including those in relation to the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, will be investigated promptly and the complainant notified of the outcome of the investigation within the timeframes outlined in this policy, ie within 28 days of receipt of the complaint. The record of complaints is made available to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) and Ofsted on request.

EYFS parents may make a complaint directly to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) or to Ofsted in respect of our EYFS requirements, should they wish to do so. As with all written complaints, a record of any complaint in respect of the EYFS will be kept for at least three years.
Contact details for ISI and Ofsted can be found towards the end of the policy.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution:

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and **informally.**
- If parents have a concern or complaint, they should contact their son/daughter's EYFS Key Worker/Form Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parent's satisfaction. If the EYFS Key Worker/Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the EYFS/Pre-Prep/Prep leader, as appropriate.
- Complaints made directly to the EYFS Leaders, the Pre-Prep Leader or Prep Leader or to the Deputy Heads or Headteacher will usually be referred to the relevant teacher unless the line manager concerned deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally. In this event the line manager will attempt to resolve the matter in **five days** or as soon as is practicable. This time period may need to be extended during school holidays but will at least be dealt with within five days of the start of the new term.
- The relevant teacher will make a written record of all complaints and concerns and the date on which they were received, as well as the school's response to the complaints/concerns. Should a matter not be resolved within five days, or in the event that the relevant teacher and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution:

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents will be asked to put their complaint **in writing** to the Headteacher, who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate action to take. Parents will be asked to take action regarding to proceeding to this stage of the complaint process within 28 days of the school's response to stage 1, although it is recognised that there may be extenuating circumstances preventing this. Where a complaint is received during the school holidays, the time periods outlined in this section may need to be extended.
- In most cases, the Headteacher will speak to the parents concerned within forty-eight hours of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headteacher to carry out further investigations. These will be completed in seven days or as soon as is practicable.
- The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headteacher is satisfied, so far as is practicable, that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headteacher will give reasons for the decision.
- The written decision will be issued within fourteen days of the Headteacher receiving the complaint. If for any reason this is not possible, the Headteacher will write to the parents within the fourteen day period referred to above, stating the

reason or reasons why she is unable to issue her decision and informing the parents when she will do so, which will be within twenty-eight days of receipt of the complaint in any event.

- If parents are not satisfied with the decision, they may take the opportunity to proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3: Panel Hearing:

- Upon receipt of the written decision, if parents seek to invoke Stage 3 of this procedure, following a failure of earlier resolution, they are to write to the Headteacher informing her of their decision to do so within 28 days, whereupon the matter will be referred to a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the Proprietor.
- The panel will consist of at least three persons who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One of these shall be independent of the management and running of the school. A list of those people who may form this panel can be gained on request from the Proprietor, Louise Gear.
- Louise Gear on behalf of the panel will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within fourteen days.
- Louise Gear will ensure that the panel has clear terms of reference, direction regarding decision making and specific timescales. The panel hearing will be a full-merits hearing of the complaint.
- If the convenor of the panel and/or the panel members deem it necessary, they may require (in writing) that further particulars of the complaint or any other related matter be supplied to all parties in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than five days before the hearing. Any such further particulars received within five days before the hearing shall be disregarded and inadmissible to the panel because it may not be possible to provide copies to all parties within that timescale.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The panel hearing will go ahead as described in this policy if the parent does not attend; the school will ensure that the arrangements for the panel hearing are reasonable in order to facilitate the parents exercising their right of attendance.
- If possible the panel will resolve the parent's complaint at the hearing without the need for further investigation. However should the panel decide at the hearing that further investigation is required, the panel shall decide how such investigation should be carried out and by when it should be concluded. The panel will reconvene and, after due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, will reach a decision and may make recommendations. This procedure will be completed within fourteen days of the first hearing wherever possible but within twenty-eight days in any event unless otherwise agreed with the parents. The panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision together with the reasons. The decision of the panel will be final.
- The panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be: a) provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
  b) available for inspection on the school premises by the Proprietor and the Headteacher.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, whether they were resolved at the informal or formal stages or proceeded to a panel hearing and what action the school has taken as a result of these complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld. This record will be kept for a minimum of seven years and longer if there is a safeguarding implication, as detailed in our data retention policy. All written records of complaints will be made available to ISI on request.

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 s109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

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

Number of complaints

2025-2026 – 1 formal complaint was received.

This policy is reviewed at least annually and is included in the School's policy review schedule.

ISI Contact Details

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

By email: info@isi.net By telephone: 0207 600 0100

Ofsted Contact Details

By post: Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

By email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk; By telephone: 0300 123 4666

Appendix

Complaints involving a teacher

In the event that a complaint involves or relates to a teacher, then the teacher will be kept fully informed in writing of the procedure being adopted in relation to the management of the complaint and supplied with copies of all documentation.

In the event of a panel hearing, the teacher will have the right to make representations to the panel.