



FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction

Whitgift has long prided itself on the quality of 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 in accordance with this procedure.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. During Term Time, a response should be received, where possible, within 2 working days.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son's Head of Year who, if appropriate, will liaise with Heads of Department, Heads of Upper and Lower School or the Deputy Headmaster. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Head of Year cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Second Master.
- Complaints made directly to the Headmaster or Second Master will usually be referred to the relevant Head of Year unless the Headmaster or Second Master deems it appropriate for him to deal with the matter personally.
- The Head of Year 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 ten working days or in the event that the Head of Year 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.
- Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated.

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 Headmaster. The receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged in writing and a copy of the Complaints Procedure will be

enclosed with this acknowledgement. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

- Should the Headmaster have concerns as to the validity of the complaint he reserves the right to refer the matter to the Chairman of the Governors.
- The Headmaster, or the Second Master if appropriate, will speak to the parents concerned within ten 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 the Headmaster or the Second Master to carry out further investigations.
- The Headmaster or the Second Master will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headmaster 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 Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.
- If the 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 will be referred to the Clerk to the Foundation, who has been appointed by the Governors of the Court of the Whitgift Foundation to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- 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 the Governors of the Court of the Whitgift Foundation. The Clerk to the Foundation, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and certainly within twenty-eight days of receipt of the complaint by the Clerk.
- 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 by the Clerk to the Foundation to all parties not later than seven days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or a friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

- 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 the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision, which it shall complete within fourteen days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings will be sent in writing to the parents, the Headmaster, the Governors of the Court of the Whitgift Foundation and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint was made.

Written record

A written record is kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. A written record is also kept of any action taken by the School as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). The complaints record is held by the Second Master and has any complaint which reached the Headmaster, Second Master or Deputy Headmaster whether informal or formal.

In the last academic year, there were no formal complaints which went to a panel hearing.

Confidentiality

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. 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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Contact details for Chairman of Governors:

The Chairman of the Court of Governors of the Whitgift Foundation is
Mr Christopher Houlding, Chartered FCSI.

Address:

c/o the Clerk
The Whitgift Foundation
North End
Croydon CR9 1SS

Tel 020 8680 8499

Reviewed by The Second Master and The Assistant Head (Academic): August 2015

Next review: August 2016