



## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

**Policy adopted by the Governing Body of The Wordsley School**

**Date adopted by the Governing Body**

**20<sup>th</sup> July 2023 – FGB3 meeting**

**Signed by the Chair of Governors**

**I Grosvenor**

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## 1. Aims

At The Wordsley School, we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which students are encouraged to flourish, both academically and socially, in-line with our school's clear mission, vision and values. We recognise that in a school community consisting of over 800 pupils, 100 staff and 1500 parents/carers, sometimes there will be concerns that need to be addressed, in order for all parties to move forward. This policy aims to support parents/carers by offering clarity regarding how to respond when they have a concern, and also how to respond when a concern remains unresolved and they wish to make a complaint.

## 2. Scope

This policy is for parents/carers of pupils who are on-roll at the school.

## 3. Exceptions

Exceptions to this policy include:

- (a) Complaints which are vexatious
- (b) Complaints related to admissions (*Refer to Dudley LA Admission Service*)
- (c) Complaints related to statutory assessment of Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities. (*Refer to Dudley School Admissions Service*)
- (d) Complaints related to exclusions. (*Refer to Department for Education – Discipline*)
- (e) Complaints made more than six months after the incident(s) in question

## 4. Confidentiality

Notwithstanding, the school's duty to safeguard pupils and staff, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, September 2021), the school will treat all correspondence, statements and records in strict confidence, only disclosing information to those who are directly involved in the matter.

## 5. Record keeping

We keep a record of all complaints that have proceeded to Stage 2 or 3. This record identifies the status of the complaint as Stage 2 or Stage 3 and records any actions taken by the school as a result. We see this as a helpful way of identifying areas where the school is achieving well and can guide us to improve upon these areas, even more. Records are stored in-line with General Data Protection Regulations.

## 6. Conduct during the complaints procedure

It is a requirement that all parties involved in the complaints process act with respect and courtesy towards each other at all times, and behave in a non-adversarial manner. Failure to adhere to these expectations may result in unnecessary delays to the timeframe for the complaint to be considered, or in exceptional circumstances, termination of the complaints process.

## 7. The complaints process

### Informal stage

#### a) Level 1

It is hoped that most concerns can be resolved quickly and informally by discussion with the member of staff concerned. To do this, parents/carers may wish to make an appointment to speak with the member of staff concerned over the telephone or in person at the school. In order to arrange this, the parent/carer should make contact with the school Reception.

### Formal stage

#### b) Level 2

A concern that remains unresolved after being considered at level 1, will be deemed a complaint and should be escalated to level 2 by the complainant. Any concern escalated to level 2, when an attempt to resolve the concern at level 1 **has not** been made, will be responded to at level 1. In addition to this, a concern escalated to level 2 at a time that is greater than two working weeks after the concern was responded to at level 1, will be responded to as a new concern at level 1.

In order to make a complaint at level 2, the complainant should write to the Headteacher (letter or email to [info@wordsley.dudley.sch.uk](mailto:info@wordsley.dudley.sch.uk)) and clearly state:

- i) The nature of the complaint.
- ii) A summary of what was attempted to resolve the concern at level 1.
- iii) The preferred outcome for the complainant.

Whilst the school acknowledges the importance of responding to complaints in a swift manner and will often do so very rapidly, the maximum timescales for the complaint to be handled are as follows:

- The complaint will be acknowledged within five working days of the complaint being received.
- The complaint should be responded to within ten working days of the complaint being received. The response at level 2 will be from a school leader, other than the Headteacher, and will normally be the line manager of the member of staff who responded to the concern at level 1.

- Where a meeting is deemed necessary, it should be arranged to take place at a time which still allows the complaint to be responded to in full within the ten day period.
- Any complaint received at level 2 should be responded to in writing (email or letter) and a copy of the response should be placed on the relevant pupil(s)' school file.
- If the issue is complex, the timescale for the complaint to be responded to may need to be extended and in this case, the school will inform the parent/carer of the anticipated timescale.

### c) Level 3

A complaint that remains unresolved after being considered at level 2 should be escalated to level 3 by the complainant. Any concern escalated to level 3, when an attempt to resolve the concern at level 2 **has not** been made, will be responded to at level 2. In addition to this, a concern escalated to level 3 at a time that is greater than four working weeks after the concern was responded to at level 2, will be responded to at level 1 as a new concern.

In order to make a complaint at level 3, the complainant should write to the Headteacher (letter or email to [info@wordsley.dudley.sch.uk](mailto:info@wordsley.dudley.sch.uk)) and clearly state:

- i) The nature of the complaint.
- ii) A summary of what was attempted to resolve the concern at level 2.
- iii) The preferred outcome for the complainant.

Whilst the school acknowledges the importance of responding to complaints in a swift manner and will often do so very rapidly, the maximum timescales for the complaint to be handled are as follows:

- The complaint will be acknowledged within five working days of the complaint being received.
- The complaint should be responded to within fifteen working days of the complaint being received. The response at level 3 will be from the Headteacher.
- Where a meeting is deemed necessary, it should be arranged to take place at a time which still allows the complaint to be responded to in full within the fifteen day period.
- Any complaint received at level 3 should be responded to in writing (email or letter) and a copy of the response should be placed on the relevant pupil(s)' school file.
- If the issue is complex, the timescale for the complaint to be responded to may need to be extended and in this case, the school will inform the parent/carer of the anticipated timescale.

### d) Level 4

A complaint that remains unresolved after being considered at level 3 should be escalated to level 4 by the complainant. Any concern escalated to level 4, when an attempt to resolve the concern at level 3 **has not** been made, will be responded to at level 3. In addition to this, a concern escalated to level 4 at a time that is greater than four

working weeks after the concern was responded to at level 3, will be responded to at level 1 as a new concern.

In order to make a complaint at level 4, the complainant should write to the school's Complaints Administrator Mrs C Harrison (letter or email to [info@wordsley.dudley.sch.uk](mailto:info@wordsley.dudley.sch.uk)) and clearly state:

- i) The nature of the complaint.
- ii) A summary of what was attempted to resolve the concern at level 3.
- iii) The preferred outcome for the complainant.

Whilst the school acknowledges the importance of responding to complaints in a swift manner and will often do so very rapidly, the maximum timescales for the complaint to be handled are as follows:

- The complaint will be acknowledged within five working days of the complaint being received.
- The Chair of Governors will appoint a panel of three impartial governors (excluding staff governors) to form a complaints panel to hear the complaint.
- The panel will convene a complaints hearing and the panel will aim to conduct the hearing within fifteen school days of the complaint being received, providing ten working days notice of the date of the hearing.
- Any written submissions from the school or the complainant, which are to be considered by the panel at the hearing, should be sent to the school's Complaints Administrator, at least seven working days prior to the complaints hearing.
- At least five working days prior to the hearing, the school's Complaints Administrator will circulate an information pack to all attendees, which includes an agenda for the hearing, any written submissions received from the school or the complainant and any relevant school policies.
- Following the hearing, the Complaints Panel will deliberate and will arrive at a decision to either uphold or quash the complaint. This decision, along with clear justification for making the decision and any recommendations for the school, will be communicated in writing to the school and the complainant, within five working days of the hearing and a copy of the response should be placed on the relevant pupil(s)' school file.

## **8) Further recourse beyond the complaints policy**

### **a) Department for Education**

Should the complainant be dissatisfied with the outcome following consideration at level 4, their next recourse is to contact the Department for Education (DfE).

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of any complaints, nor overturn the decision reached through using the school's complaints policy, however, they may investigate whether The Wordsley School have adhered to relevant education legislation or statutory policies, in reaching their decision.

## **b) Ofsted**

Should a parent/carer wish to make a complaint to the Education Inspectorate (Ofsted), please note that the complaint must relate to the school as a whole, and in order for Ofsted to consider the complaint, the complainant must have exhausted the school's complaints procedure first.

In addition to the above, Ofsted cannot:

- consider issues about individual pupils
- investigate specific incidents
- judge how well a school responded to a complaint
- mediate or resolve disputes between you and the school
- consider complaints if there are other legal ways to pursue them (for example, complaints about admissions or providing education for individual pupils with special educational needs)