



Complaints Policy

Signed by:

Chair of Resources

Date:

Committee with oversight for this policy	Resources Committee
Policy to be approved by	Full Governing Board
Policy last ratified and adopted by Full Governing Board	November 2018
Policy / Document due for review	November 2021

Overview

Since September 2003 Governing Boards have been required to have in place a procedure to deal with complaints relating to the school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides. The law also requires that the procedure to be publicised.

General Principles of Complaints

Woodlands is clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage should avoid any development into formal complaints. The structure for dealing with complaints set out below begins with a less formal but immediate approach but has scope to deal with any complainant who is not satisfied with the initial solutions offered.

The principles of these procedures is to –

- Be easily accessible, simple to use and easy to understand.
- Promote an 'open door' policy where a parent can express their concerns to any member of staff.
- Encourage resolution of concerns by informal means wherever possible.
- Resolve issues swiftly to established timescales, impartially and in the spirit of co-operation.
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary.
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality.
- Provide an effective response and appropriate redress where necessary.
- Ensure that the Governing Board regularly monitors complaints received by the school.

Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Discussion with the Class Teacher

In the first instance, parents should phone the school office to make an appointment to meet with the class teacher and discuss the concern. It is hoped that the majority of concerns will be dealt with at this stage.

The school office can be contacted by phone on: **020 998 2497**
or by email on: **office@woodlands.ealing.sch.uk**

Stage 2 – Phase Leader

If initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied the next stage is to request a meeting with Phase Leader. Below you will find a table of the current Phase Leaders within the school and the year groups they are responsible for:

NAME	ROLE	Year Group Responsibility
Mrs Jane Sherbourne	EYFS Phase Leader	Nursery & Reception
Miss Jolline Topley	Lower School Phase Leader	Y1, Y2, Y3
Mrs Nazia Dharsani	Upper School Phase Leader	Y4, Y5, Y6

Should you wish to meet with a Phase Leader it is important that you contact the school office so that an appointment can be arranged.

Both the class teacher and the respective Phase Leader will be present at the meeting to discuss the ongoing concern. The Phase Leader will also make other members of the Senior Leadership Team aware of the complaint.

Stage 3 – Pastoral Lead

Where attempts at stage 2 prove to be unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied the next stage is to meet with Assistant Headteachers or Pastoral Wellbeing Leader who will attempt to resolve the issue. At this point the AHT or Pastoral Wellbeing Leader will take detailed notes of the meeting and keep the Headteacher informed.

An appointment must be made to meet the Pastoral Lead via the school office.

NAME	Role
Mrs Huma Mock	Head of Pastoral Wellbeing
Mrs Sonia Magan	AHT Teaching and Learning
Miss Catherine Hasker	AHT Inclusion

Stage 4 – Headteacher

Where a resolution has been unsuccessful at Stage 3 the next step is to meet with one of the Headteachers. Meetings at this point may also involve the staff contacted at stages 1, 2, and 3. The Headteacher will notify the Governing Board of any complaints raised at stage 4.

NAME	Role
Ms Harinder Rana	Headteacher

An appointment must be made to meet the Headteachers via the school office.

Stage 5 – Complaint to the Chair of Governors

In most cases, complaints are resolved at school level. However, where it is not possible to resolve the complaint at Stage 4, the parent/carer should address a written complaint to the chair of governors if they wish to pursue it further. The chair will acknowledge the complaint within five school days. The complaint should be sent to

office@woodlands.ealing.sch.uk.

NAME	Role
Mrs Shirley Kenworthy Wright	Chair of Governing Board

The chair can commission an external professional (e.g. Local Authority Adviser) either to investigate the complaint on his/her behalf or to mediate between the school and the complainant. The results of any investigation would be available to the chair of governors who would communicate them to the parent/carer within 20 school days of receiving the complaint.

The chair will ensure all complaints received, investigations made and responses given are added to the complaints file.

The chair of governors will inform the Governing Board of any formal complaint received but make a statement only about the nature of the complaint. No discussion about the complaint will take place at this stage amongst governors in case the complainant decides to proceed to Stage 6.

Stage 6 – Formal Governing Board Complaints Panel

In the event of the parent/carer still not being satisfied, s/he should put the complaint in writing formally to the Governing Board for consideration by a complaints panel which will be delegated the power to make a final decision on the complaint on behalf of the whole Governing Board.

The complaints panel will be convened within 30 school days and will be made up of three governors who have not previously been involved with the complaint, do not know the complainant personally and have no vested interests in matters of persons connected to the

complaint. If required, the Chair can choose to include a governor from another school on the panel to ensure impartiality. Staff or teacher governors will not normally be panel members.

A clerk will be appointed to the panel who will set the date, time and venue of the hearing, collate and circulate written material to all parties in advance, meet and welcome the parties as they arrive, record the proceedings and notify all parties of the panel's decision.

The panel will nominate a chair 10 school days before the panel sits, both parties will submit written evidence which will be circulated to all parties. At the hearing, the panel will interview the headteacher and the complainant, both of whom are entitled to be accompanied by a 'friend' who can speak on their behalf. The panel will reach its decision within 48 hours when the panel chair will notify the complainant, the headteacher and the chair of governors of its decision.

The panel can:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- decide on appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure problems of a similar nature do not recur

A timetable and guidelines for Complaints Panel procedures are available separately in an appendix and will be issued immediately to any complainant wishing to pursue a Stage 6 complaint.

The decision of the Complaints Panel is final. If the complainant is still not satisfied, the final stage of appeal is to the Secretary of State for Education. Complainants should write to:

The School Complaints Unit (SCU), DfE, 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Manchester M1 2WD.

The SCU will examine if the complaints policy and any other relevant policies were followed in accordance with the provisions set out. SCU also examines policies to determine if they adhere to education legislation. However, the department will not re-investigate the substance of the complaint.

APPENDIX

Guidelines for Stage 6 Procedures

Timescale after Stage 6 Complaint is received:

Within 15 school days	a panel is set up and the date and conduct of the hearing is agreed and confirmed in writing.
Within 30 school days	the panel sits and hears evidence addressed only to the original complaint.
10 school days before hearing	all written evidence must be submitted and circulated to both parties and to panel members.
5 school days before hearing	the panel must be notified of any witnesses being called
48 hours after the hearing	panel informs both parties of its decision in writing.

Plan and Conduct of Panel Hearing:

1. Introduction by Chair of Panel
2. Complainant presents case* (20 minutes)
3. Panel asks questions (10 minutes)
4. School presents case* (20 minutes)
5. Panel asks questions (10 minutes)
6. Headteacher makes final statement (10 minutes)
7. Complainant makes final statement (10 minutes)
8. Panel reaches its decision in private. It may ask for more evidence if it is required in order to reach a fair verdict.

The total duration of the hearing should be no more than 1½ hours plus time for the panel to reach its decision.

The panel chair notifies the complainant, Headteacher and Chair of Governors in writing of its decision within 48 hours.

NB. Complainant and school representative (Headteacher/Chair) should not question each other directly except via the panel and at the panel's discretion

*Witnesses can be called on and questioned by the panel but must be notified to the panel 5 school days before the hearing.