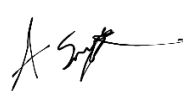
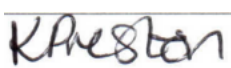


Policy/Procedure Name:	COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE		
Last Update:	May 2025	Next Update Due:	May 2026

Author	Alex Smythe
Signature of Authorised Individual	
Signature of the Director	

[Part 7 Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#) requires that all Independent schools implement an effective complaints procedure.

Who can make a complaint to Willow Park School?

This policy is primarily for parents of children that attend Willow Park school, for them to highlight their concerns to the directors regarding the provision of their child's education. Although this complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to Willow Park School regarding the provision of the facilities of education that we provide.

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 be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction' however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'. It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the Complaints Procedure.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, Willow Park School will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, Willow Park School will refer you to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand, however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Willow Park School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

Willow Park School we will address complaints:

- With the pupil at the heart of decision making.
- Recognising the pupil's individual difficulties needs and challenges.
- Without prejudice.
- To resolve the complaint in a timely fashion.
- To ensure a fair investigation into the complaint.

- Keeping information on record available for Inspection and Directors.
- Reviewing complaints and outcomes to further develop our school.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Willow Park School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

- Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs should be raised with your local authority.
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation

Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Exclusion of children from school

Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.

Whistleblowing

The school has a robust whistleblowing procedure which can be located on the school website

The Complaints Process

Our aim is to ensure the highest quality of education, behaviour and emotional support for children. However, there will be times where there are genuine concerns regarding the child's experience at the school. We pride ourselves in ensuring there is a positive relationship with families and carers as placements work best when all parties are working in conjunction. The moment where it is felt this is not the case, we recommend contacting the school and speaking to the staff where, in most instances, the matter will be resolved promptly and reasonably. At this point, the complaint will be resolved on an informal basis.

We operate a 3 tier process for complaints:

- Informal (stage 1a and Stage 1b)
- Formal
- Panel

Stage 1 Informal procedure

- Stage 1a - In the first instance please contact a member of staff informally to discuss your concerns. Staff will respond promptly to all concerns raised (within 3 working days). This stage may involve a further meetings/discussions to explore the concern in greater depth and may involve other members of staff.

- **Stage 1b** - If you feel the initial concern has not been resolved or is of a significant nature you should contact the Head teacher (jibaldwin@willowparkschool.warwickshire.sch.uk) in order that your concerns can be investigated further. The Head teacher will do so within 5 working days of the concern being raised with them.

In total, the timescale for resolving concerns at stage 1 of the procedure is 8 working days

If you are still not satisfied at this stage, you may choose to raise your unresolved concern as a complaint and move to Stage 2 of the process.

Stage 2 Formal Complaint

If you have communicated your concern to a member of staff and the Head teacher but are unable to reach a resolution with which you are happy, please contact the Principal of Willow Park School (asmythe@willowparkschool.warwickshire.sch.uk).

An investigation will be completed, reviewing all information and discussions with parties involved. A formal written reply with the outcome of the investigation will be shared with the complainant within 10 working days of the complaint being received.

If you are not satisfied fully with the response from the Principal, you can contact the Directors and request for a panel to hear your complaint at stage 3.

Stage 3 Panel

If stages 1 and 2 of the policy have been conducted and the complainant remains dissatisfied with the conclusions of the Principal, a review of the complaint will be heard by a panel appointed by or on behalf of the school's proprietor. This panel typically consists of three people, and at least one member will be independent of the management and running of the school. Any Directors involved at this stage will not have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. Independent panel members will be acquired from Directors of Wolfdale School, Leicester.

The panel will review the process and outcome of how the complaint was managed and, at this stage, they may consider further investigation into the matter. The Panel hearing will be scheduled within 20 working days of the Panel's receipt of the complaint.

The Complainant will be invited to the Panel hearing. Though attendance is not mandatory, the hearing will continue in line with this policy. The complainant can be accompanied to the hearing by one other person including family member or friend.

The panel will make their decision following their review of the complaint. The review, findings, outcome and recommendations of this process will be shared, in writing, with the complainant, person complained about (where relevant) and Principal within 7 working days.

The decision of the Complaints Review Panel will be final. The information from the Panel's review, findings, outcome, recommendations and hearing will be available for inspection on school premises.

The Panel aims not to have the requirement for Legal representation. If you feel you require this, we recommend sending this request to the Directors prior to the hearing.

Complaints at stage 3 can be made to the directors of Willow Park School:

Oliver Preston or Kimberley Preston

07380 956651

01788 524683

Email: kpreston@willowparkschool.warwickshire.sch.uk

Time Limit for Lodging Complaints

Complaints about incidents should be lodged within three months of the occurrence. Complaints submitted after this period may not be considered unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Next Steps

Willow Park School expect the complainants to have exhausted the internal complaints procedure of the school before taking further action.

If a complainant is unhappy with the outcome of their complaint to the school or the school refuses to deal with their complaint, they can escalate their complaint to the body responsible for inspecting the school. In this case, the responsible body is Ofsted.

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact Ofsted.

Complaints can be taken directly to OFSTED using the contacts below:

- Telephone: 0300 123 4666
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/complaints>
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

The Department for Education (DfE) cannot investigate individual complaints about independent schools, but it has certain powers as a regulator if the school is not meeting standards set by DfE for:

- education
- pupil welfare and health and safety
- school premises
- staff suitability
- making information available to parents
- spiritual, moral, social or cultural development of pupils

DfE will consider any reports of a major failure to meet the standards. It can arrange an emergency inspection to look at pupil welfare and health and safety, and make sure serious failings are dealt with.

DfE can ask the school inspectorates to take minor complaints into account when the school is next inspected.

You can complain to the DfE by filling in the [school complaints form](#).

Storage and access

The information and outcome of your complaint whether it is formal or requiring Panel will be stored securely with restricted access within the school's ICT system. This will include the written records of the complaint, relevant correspondence, recommendations and actions completed by the school regardless of whether the complaint is upheld. All records are kept confidential relating to complaints and access to this information is limited to:

- Inspectors including Ofsted and Local Authority
- Directors
- Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.
- Parties involved in the complaint

Anonymous Complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Principal or Directors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Vexatious Complaints

Willow Park School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially. Where the school considers that a complainant is carrying out unreasonable behaviour, e.g. making unduly frequent and/or repeated complaints, the school is entitled to take such action as it thinks appropriate to manage such behaviour. This may include (but is not limited to) placing limits on contact with staff or opting not to invoke this complaints procedure further.

Definition: A vexatious complaint is one that is pursued, regardless of its merits, solely to harass, annoy, or subdue somebody; something that is unreasonable, without foundation, frivolous, repetitive, burdensome, or unwarranted.

Identification: School leaders will distinguish between complainants raising genuine concerns and those being difficult. This involves careful consideration of the merits of the case rather than the attitude of the complainant.

Criteria: A complainant may be regarded as vexatious if they:

- Persist in pursuing a complaint that has already been investigated and provides no new or material information.
- Seek to prolong contact by continually changing the substance of a complaint or raising further concerns while the complaint is being addressed.
- Fail to clearly identify the substance of a complaint despite reasonable efforts to assist them.
- Complain solely about trivial matters out of proportion to their significance.
- Make excessive contact with the school or impose unreasonable demands on resources.
- Operate a scatter-gun approach by lodging the same complaint with several bodies for investigation

Response: If a complaint is deemed vexatious, the school will:

- Inform the complainant in writing that their complaint is considered vexatious and explain why.
- Outline any restrictions on future contact, such as limiting communication to specific channels or times.

- Continue to monitor the situation to ensure the well-being of staff and students is not compromised

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Equality Statement

At Willow Park School, we actively seek to encourage equity and equality through our teaching and our employment practices. As such, we seek to advance the equality of opportunity between people who share any of the following characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

The use of stereotypes under any of the above headings will always be challenged.

Inclusion

Our school is an inclusive school. We aim to make all pupils feel included in all our activities. We try to make all our teaching fully inclusive. We recognise the entitlement of all pupils to a balanced, broadly-based curriculum. We have systems in place for early identification of barriers to their learning and participation so that they can engage in school activities with all other pupils. We acknowledge the need for high expectations for and of all children.

Complaint Form – Stage 2

Please complete and return to Alex Smythe who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name (if relevant):

Your relationship to the pupil (if relevant):

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: