



The  
Westgate School

#equippedforlife

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS**

## **Introduction**

We believe that The Westgate School will provide an excellent education for all of our children. However, the school is required to have procedures in place in case there are any complaints made by parents. This document sets out the procedures in place that the school will follow in such cases.

## **Aims and Objectives**

At The Westgate School we aim:

- to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint;
- to give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible;
- to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, put the interests of the child above all other issues;
- to provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed and then resolved.

## **Summary of procedures**

If we believe there is a problem with your child's progress, behaviour or welfare, we will contact you to discuss the matter and we will seek your help to put things right. If you have concerns about any of these matters, your first point of contact is your child's form tutor for behaviour and welfare concerns or their subject teacher for concerns regarding progress.

When your child starts at The Westgate School, we will give you all of the contact details you need and, if there is a problem, you will be able to contact the school and make an appointment to see the teacher.

For more serious concerns, staff such as the Deputy Headteacher, Assistant Headteachers, Directors of Learning, Special Needs Co-ordinator or Pastoral Co-ordinator will contact you and you are also welcome to contact these people if you believe that they can help.

If, having taken these steps, you believe that there are still matters of concern, then you will be welcome to contact the Headteacher and, equally, the Headteacher will contact you if there are serious matters to discuss. However, we believe that in most cases, parents and teachers should be able to resolve any matters that arise.

If you are not happy with a particular aspect of your child's education and, having raised them with the appropriate staff, you believe your concerns have not been addressed, you are welcome to write to the Headteacher who will investigate your concerns and respond to them. If the issues are still not resolved, the Clerk to Governors or the Chair of Governors will ask you to make a formal complaint in writing and will provide details of how the written complaint is to be handled.

Full details of the complaints process can be found in the relevant sections of this document.

The address for any written communication is:

The Westgate School  
Cippenham Lane  
Slough  
SL1 5AH

## **Details of the Complaints Process:**

### **Stage 1 – Initial Approach**

If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our school, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter informally with their child's form tutor or Director of Learning. If the issue is subject related, they should contact the class teacher or relevant Curriculum Leader. Most matters can be dealt with in this way. All teachers, along with the Pastoral Team, work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school and making good progress; they always want to know if there is a problem so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress.

If the teacher first contacted cannot deal with the matter immediately, he / she should make a firm arrangement to deal with it at a future date or refer the matter to an Assistant Headteacher or the Deputy Headteacher. A record should be kept of the complainant's name, date and outline of the complaint.

The staff member dealing with the complaint will make sure that the complainant is clear about what will happen next (if anything). This should be put in writing if it seems the best way of making the next steps or outcomes clear.

If the complaint relates to the Headteacher and the parent feels unable to raise it with the Headteacher, they should contact the Chair of Governors who is obliged to investigate it. The Chair of Governors will do all he can to resolve the issue through an informal dialogue with the school. However, if a parent is unhappy with the outcome, he / she can make a formal complaint, as outlined below.

At any stage in this process, the person dealing with the complaint may invite a colleague to be present at a meeting with the complainant.

### **Stage 2 – Formal Complaint to the Headteacher or Chair of Governors.**

Only if an informal complaint fails to resolve the matter should a formal complaint be made to the Headteacher or, where the complaint is about the Headteacher, to the Chair of Governors. This must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint, how the school has handled it so far and their desired outcome. The parent should send this written complaint to the Headteacher.

The Headteacher must acknowledge all written complaints within three days of receipt, giving a brief explanation of the complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response. Ideally this should be within ten working days. If it is not possible to deal with the matter fully in this time, the complainant should be informed of when it is likely to be concluded.

The Headteacher will normally offer an opportunity for the complainant to meet with her. The complainant should, if he / she wishes, be allowed to be accompanied by a friend or relative who can speak on his / her behalf. Interpreting facilities will be made available if required. This meeting should be followed up with a letter summarising the outcome of the meeting and any evidence.

If necessary, the Headteacher will appoint an investigating officer who will interview any witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres around a student, the student should also be interviewed.

The complainant will be advised in writing that if they remain unhappy with the outcome, he / she may appeal to have a panel hearing. If this is the case, the complainant should notify the Chair of Governors within ten working days of receiving the letter detailing the outcome of the complainant.

### **Stage 3 – Appeal to a panel hearing**

The aim of the appeal is to resolve the complaint and to achieve a reconciliation between the school and the complainant. The panel will consist of two nominated governors and one member who is independent of the management and running of the school; this may be a governor from another school or academy in the area. A suitable clerk to the panel will be appointed.

The clerk will write acknowledging receipt of the written request, informing the complainant that it will be heard by a panel within fifteen working days of receipt.

The clerk will convene a meeting of the complaints panel at a time which is convenient for the complainant and the school.

The panel will elect a chairperson who should ensure that proper minutes of the meeting are taken.

The clerk will ensure that the complainant, Headteacher and any other witnesses are given at least five working days' notice in writing of the date, time and place of the hearing. The complainant will be informed of their right to be accompanied by a friend or relative who can act as an advocate. The chair will ensure that interpretation facilities for the hearing are offered and made available if requested. The chair will also ensure that the complainant is aware of their right to submit further written evidence to the panel.

The clerk will invite the Headteacher to attend the hearing and to submit a written report for the panel in response to the complaint. The Headteacher may also invite the Chair of Governors or any other members of staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant. Any involvement of other staff will be at the discretion of the chair of the panel.

All relevant documents should be received by all parties, including the complainant, at least five working days before the meeting of the panel.

The chair of the panel should try to ensure that the proceedings are as sufficiently informal as possible and that the complainant/s and other participants feel at ease.

At the conclusion of the representations and questions, the chair should explain that the panel will consider the issues and write to both the school and the complainant. All, except for the panel members will then withdraw and the panel will consider the evidence. This should include a judgement about the validity of the complaint; appropriate action to be taken by the school and / or the parent; and, where appropriate, recommendations on changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure similar problems do not arise in the future.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the handling of the complaint, the school will refer them to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) via the schools complaints form on the EFA website.

The school will ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes are kept confidentially on file in the school for the duration of the time that the student remains at the school. This will be separate from the student's personal records.

The broad outcomes of the panel can be reported to the next full governing body or appropriate committee, with the identity of all those taking part kept confidential. The governing body should monitor implementation of the recommendations.

### **Monitoring and Review of the Complaints Procedures**

The governors monitor the complaints procedure in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Headteacher or Headteacher's representative, logs all formal complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved.

The school's leadership team and governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process and make any modifications necessary to the policy.