



Complaints Policy

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The Wessex Partnership Trust (WPT) encourages all those who interact with us to raise any concerns they may have with us. In this way we believe that misunderstandings can be rectified and problems can be addressed.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the WASP Centre as a whole, a specific department or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent or another person believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done or acted unfairly. Parents and carers can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially, subject to our Safeguarding Policies. You can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you or your child raises in good faith.

This procedure covers all complaints against WPT where there is no other avenue of complaint. It does not cover:

- Admissions
- Exclusions
- School Re-organisation Proposals
- National Curriculum
- SEND Assessments
- Safeguarding
- Employee Grievances
- Employee Conduct
- Whistleblowing
- External Service Providers

Purpose

This document outlines the way in which complaints made against the School will be handled, whether made by 'phone, letter or in person. Any complaints made are likely to be from parents, pupils or members of the public, and would probably be about the conduct of staff, the management of the school, the curriculum, internally assessed coursework or the behaviour of pupils. Complaints will always be taken seriously.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this Complaints Procedure.

Timescales

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.

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

Anonymous Complaints

It is not possible for WPT to deal with anonymous complaints, or with complaints which rely on second hand information. If you believe that someone else should complain then please encourage them to do so in order that the complaint can be dealt with properly.

Process

Raising a Concern – Stage 1

Any concern should initially be directed towards the member of staff involved, such as the subject teacher or tutor. If the above is not appropriate, the concern should be referred to another staff member (for example: Pastoral Leader, Subject Leader, Deputy Head, Headteacher). Concerns will be acknowledged by the recipient and passed on to the appropriate member of staff to investigate and respond.

Formal Complaint - Stage 2

If the response by the appropriate member of staff is considered by the complainant to be unsatisfactory, the complainant should refer the matter in writing to the Headteacher of the relevant school or Chair of Trust Board if the complaint is about the Headteacher. Complaints should be in writing and marked as 'Private and Confidential', complaints will be acknowledged as soon as possible (usually within 2 working days) and a full response provided (after investigation and within 14 school days).

Complainants should not approach individual Trustees to raise concerns and complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 3 of this Procedure.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3.

Formal Complaint - Stage 3

If the complainant seeks to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) the matter will then be referred to a Complaints Panel for consideration. A Panel will be appointed by WPT and will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, at least one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the relevant school. The Clerk to the Trust Board will, on behalf of the Panel, acknowledge the complaint and schedule a meeting to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 school days.

The Panel will require that all particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in writing in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties normally no later than 7 school days prior to the meeting. The staff member, department or school complained of may submit a response to the complaint which shall be supplied to all parties normally no later than 5 days before the meeting (dependent on receipt of complaint particulars).

The complainant may attend the meeting but will not be invited to provide any further particulars relating to the complaint during the meeting. The complainant may be accompanied at the meeting by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be appropriate. The Panel shall determine whether to invite a person to attend the meeting, or part of the meeting, to respond to the complaint.

The Panel will ask the complainant and any person invited to attend to respond to the complaint, such questions as the Panel deems appropriate. If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint 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 facts they consider relevant, the Panel will respond formally to the complaint and may make recommendations. The Panel can:

- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Dismiss the complaints in whole or in part

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the Panel will:

- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Panel will write to the complainant informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 7 school days of the meeting. The decision of the Panel will be final.

Responses to Complaints

The member of staff dealing with a complaint will investigate it as fully as reasonably possible and decide on what action, if any, needs to be taken. The member of staff will inform the complainant in writing, by telephone or in person of the outcome of the investigation. It is WPT's intention to respond in a way which demonstrates that we have taken the complaint seriously. It must be recognised that this action may not always be the outcome hoped for by the complainant, and that the school must act within the law, be that criminal, civil, employment or educational statute.

Where a complainant seeks to reopen a matter the same as, or similar to, a matter previously considered under this procedure WPT may decline to take any action in respect of that complaint.

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with this published Complaints Procedure or they have acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the ESFA after they have completed Stage 3. Further information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy/complain-about-an-academy>