



WOODSIDE SCHOOL

Complaints procedure for all Woodside School

**Independent School Standards: paragraphs 32(3), 33
and 34**

Last external review	September 2024
Next external review	September 2025
Latest update	September 2024

INTRODUCTION

- We believe that our school provide a high quality of therapeutic education, and we work hard to build positive relationships with all our families.
- However, we acknowledge that sometimes parents and carers may become aware of matters which cause them concern.
- To encourage resolution of such situations we have adopted this simple and clear complaints procedure.
- Our schools aim to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them as swiftly as possible.
- We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding and, in all cases, we put the interests of the pupil above all other issues.
- Written records will be kept of all complaints including the stage at which they were resolved and all correspondence, statements and records of complaints will be kept confidential.

The procedure is devised with the intention that it will:

- usually be possible to resolve problems by informal means (before or at stage one of the procedure)
- be simple to use and understand
- treat complaints confidentially
- allow problems to be handled swiftly
- address all points causing concern
- inform future practice so that the problem is unlikely to recur
- reaffirm the partnership between families and staff as they work together for the good of the pupils in the schools
- ensure that the schools' attitude to a pupil would never be affected by a complaint
- discourage anonymous, serial, unreasonable and/or vexatious complaints
- ensure that all staff have opportunities to discuss and understand the schools' response to concerns and complaints made by families or other persons
- ensure that any person complained against has equal rights with the person making the complaint.

USERS OF THIS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- This complaints procedure is only for the use of parents and carers of pupils currently enrolled at an Woodside School.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

If you are a parent or carer of a pupil currently placed in one of our schools, and have a concern or a complaint you wish to raise, it is your right to do so, as per the following procedure.

STAGE 1 (INFORMAL) SHARING YOUR CONCERN

- If you are concerned about anything at our schools you should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with your child's class teacher or their trusted adult. Most matters of concern can be dealt with in this way.
- We always want to know if there is a problem, so that we can take action before the problem seriously affects the pupil's welfare and/or progress.
- After hearing the concern we shall act as quickly as we can. Please allow time for any action we may take to be effective. It may be possible to see the key adult or teacher straight away but usually it is better to make an appointment so that you can sit and talk things through.

STAGE 2 (FORMAL) MAKING A COMPLAINT TO A TEACHING ASSISTANT

- If you are still unhappy, ask for an appointment with the relevant assistant teacher at your child's site.
- If you wish to do so, it is helpful if you can give a brief outline of your concern when you make the appointment. It may be useful to complete the complaints form (at the end of this document) at this point. After your discussion with the assistant teacher you may have to wait a short time while investigations are carried out.
- Every effort will be made to resolve the situation as quickly as possible; the assistant teacher will keep you updated and will send you a written response within seven school days.

STAGE 3 (FORMAL) MAKING A COMPLAINT TO THE HEAD TEACHER

- If you are still unhappy, ask for an appointment with the Head Teacher.
- If you wish to do so, it is helpful if you can give a brief outline of your concern when you make the appointment. It may be useful to complete the complaints form (at the end of this document) at this

point.

- After your discussion you may have to wait a short time while investigations are carried out.
- Every effort will be made to resolve the situation as quickly as possible; you will be kept updated and will receive a written response within seven school days.

STAGE 4 (FORMAL) MAKING A COMPLAINT TO THE DDSL

- Only if the complaint is still unresolved should a formal complaint be made to the DDSL. This complaint should be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint and how it has been handled so far at stages 1, 2 & 3.
- You should send this written complaint via email for the DDSL's attention to akhiel@sevahomes.co.uk
- The DDSL may offer a meeting if this is likely to be useful and helpful.
- Every effort will be made to resolve the situation as quickly as possible; you will be kept updated and will be sent a written response within seven school days.

STAGE 5 (FORMAL) MAKING A COMPLAINT TO THE DSL

- Only if the complaint is still unresolved should a formal complaint be made to the DSL. This complaint must be made in writing, stating the nature of the complaint and how it has been handled so far at stages 1, 2, 3 & 4.
- The complainant should send this written complaint for the DSL's attention via email to mark@sevahomes.co.uk
- The DSL will investigate and write to you with a formal written response within ten school days.

STAGE 6 (FORMAL) MAKING A COMPLAINT TO THE COMPLAINTS PANEL

- If the complaint has regrettably still not been resolved at stages 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, you may ask for your complaint to be heard by our complaints panel, which will include three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, and at least one of the three will be completely independent of Woodside Schools.

- The complaints panel will consider all written complaints within twenty school days of receipt. The panel will arrange a meeting to discuss the complaint, and

will invite you to attend the meeting, so that the complaint can be explained in more detail.

- The complainant is welcome to be accompanied by a family member or friend to the meeting. The schools will always give the complainant at least five days' notice of the meeting.
- After hearing all the evidence, the complaints panel will consider their decision and inform the complainant, and where relevant the person complained about, about their key findings and recommendations. These will be provided in writing within five school days.
- The complaints panel will do all they can at this stage to resolve the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction. Their overall decision, findings and recommendations will be final.
- A copy of the decision, findings and recommendations will be made available for inspection at the schools by the proprietors and senior leaders.

SUMMARY OF TIMESCALES

Stage	Description	Response
1	INFORMAL: SHARING YOUR CONCERN A discussion with a relevant member of staff, e.g. teacher or trusted (key) adult	As soon as possible, within 2 school days.
2	FORMAL: MAKING A COMPLAINT TO AN ASSISTANT TEACHER A meeting and/or written complaint to the relevant assistant teacher	Acknowledged on the day of receipt, responded to within a maximum of 7 school days.
3	FORMAL: MAKING A COMPLAINT TO THE HEAD TEACHER A meeting and/or written complaint	Acknowledged on the day of receipt, responded to within a maximum of 7 school days.
4	FORMAL: MAKING A COMPLAINT TO THE DDSL A written complaint to akhiel@sevahomes.co.uk	Acknowledged on the day of receipt, responded to within a maximum of 7 school days.
5	FORMAL: MAKING A COMPLAINT TO THE DSL A written complaint to mark@sevahomes.co.uk	Acknowledged on the day of receipt, responded to within a maximum of 10 school days.
6	FORMAL: MAKING A COMPLAINT TO THE COMPLAINTS PANEL Attendance at a complaints panel hearing	Hearing arranged within 20 school days, providing the complainant with 5 school days' notice. Findings and recommendations sent within 5 school days of the hearing.

UNREASONABLE, SERIAL AND/OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

- We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and will not ordinarily limit the contact complainants have with our schools. However, we do not expect any of our staff to tolerate unreasonable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from such behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive and/or threatening. [Such unreasonable or persistent contact may not necessarily be directly associated with, or resulting from, formal complaints].

- We define 'unreasonable' behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as (these examples are not exhaustive), if the complainant:
 1. refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
 2. refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
 3. refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
 4. insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure
 5. introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
 6. raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
 7. makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
 8. changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
 9. repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
 10. refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the schools' complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed
 11. seeks an unrealistic outcome

12. makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and/or complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email (e.g. the sending of multiple emails, including from different email addresses and outside of school hours) and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
13. uses threats to intimidate
14. uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
15. knowingly provides falsified information
16. publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

- Complainants should try to limit their communication while the complaint is being progressed. It is unhelpful if repeated correspondence is sent, as it could delay the outcome being reached.
- Whenever possible, the relevant senior leader will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking. If the behaviour then continues, the relevant senior leader will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it.
- For complainants making excessive contact, and therefore causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan.
- In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from visiting and/or contacting our schools.

RECORDS OF COMPLAINTS

- All complaints are recorded on the relevant school's complaints log.
- The detail of the complaint is recorded, as is whether the complaint is resolved at stage 1, or at any stage of the formal complaints procedure.
- Any actions taken as a result of a complaint (regardless of whether the complaint has been upheld or not) are also recorded on this log.
- All information (correspondence, statements, records) relating to all

individual complaints is kept confidential, accessed only by proprietors, senior leaders and inspectors.

COMPLAINTS FORM

Please email this completed form to akhiel@sevahomes.co.uk.

When we receive a complaint, we aim to acknowledge its receipt on the same day.

Your full name and relationship to the pupil:

The pupil's full name and date of birth:

The Woodside School your child attends:

Your address including postcode:

Your email address:

Your mobile number:

Please give details of your complaint:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?

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 only

Date acknowledgement
sent: By whom:

Complaint referred to:
Date: