



# West Kirby Grammar School

## Complaints Policy

### Policy Statement

The policy of the School is to treat all concerns and complaints seriously and confidentially, in accordance with School procedures.

### Aims

West Kirby Grammar School endeavours to provide high standards of teaching and pastoral care. However, if parents or others do have a complaint, they can expect to be treated by the School in accordance with this procedure.

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 generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

This policy applies to concerns or complaints raised by parents and people who are not parents of attending pupils.

Please note that this procedure is not used for admissions, child protection or exclusion matters, which have their own processes.

## PRACTICE & PROCEDURE

### Raising Concerns and/or Complaints Process

#### Stage 1 – Informal

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. If parents have a concern/complaint, they should normally contact their daughter/son's Form Tutor, or subject teacher if appropriate. If a parent considers their complaint to require immediate senior staff intervention, their complaint should be directed to Mrs Cliffe (if the matter is of a pastoral nature) or Mr Clarke (if the matter is of an academic nature).

Following contact with the School, complaints or concerns from those who are not parents/carers, will be directed to the most appropriate member of staff.

At this stage the complaint may be made in writing, by email or by asking for an appointment. An opportunity will be arranged for informal discussion of concerns with an appropriate member of staff.

In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means, to the parent's/complainants satisfaction. If, however, the matter is not resolved to the parent's satisfaction, parents will be referred to Stage 2.



# West Kirby Grammar School

## Complaints Policy

### Stage 2 – Formal

Those who wish to pursue a formal complaint at Stage 2 should put their complaint and desired outcome in writing to the Headteacher. Within five term time working days of receipt, a response will be issued explaining how and by whom the complaint is to be investigated.

A date for a meeting with the senior member of staff investigating the complaint will be agreed.

The senior member of staff will seek to:

- establish the facts i.e. who is involved, what has happened and how the complaint has been addressed to date
- clarify the precise nature of the complaint and what is unresolved
- meet with the complainant to clarify what they feel needs to be done to resolve the issue(s)
- interview those concerned to establish all points of view
- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning to ensure that the facts emerge
- keep a record of all interviews

Where a complaint relates to the Headteacher, correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk to the Governors and a non-staff Governor will undertake these tasks.

A full response to the complaint will be issued within 10 term time working days following the Stage 2 meeting with parents. A written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received will be made and kept on file. If the matter is not resolved, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint to Stage 3 of the procedure.

### Stage 3 – Complaints Appeal Panel of the Governing Body

A request to use this stage must be put in writing and sent to the Clerk to the Governing Body. Such a request must be sent within 10 term time working days of the response from Stage 2 being sent to the complainant, and must set out briefly the reasons why the complainant is not satisfied with the response.

The Appeal Panel will normally consist of three panel members. One of these panel members must be someone independent of the management and running of the School and the other two must be members of the Governing Body.

The Clerk will invite the School to put in writing its response to the complainant's reasons. The School will respond within 15 *term time* working days and at the end of that period, (whether or not the School has responded); the Clerk will convene a meeting of the Complaints Panel of the Governing Body. That meeting will take place as soon as is reasonably practicable, given the need to find a date which is reasonably convenient for all



# West Kirby Grammar School

## Complaints Policy

parties. Whenever possible the meeting will take place within 15 school days of the end of the School's response time. The complainant is entitled to be accompanied if they wish.

At the meeting of the Governors' Appeal Panel, the person who investigated the original complaint (usually a member of the Leadership Team) will outline the process of the investigation and explain the outcome. At the end of this explanation, the parent/complainant will be invited to ask any questions. The parent/complainant will then be asked to add any comments of their own and, in particular to explain what they would like to be done in response to their complaint.

After the person who investigated the original complaint and the parents/complainants have spoken and answered any questions put to them by members of the panel, they will withdraw and the panel will consider its decision.

The panel will consider whether or not they are satisfied with the outcome of the original investigation together with any additional findings of the Stage 2 investigation. If they are satisfied that the outcome was wholly reasonable, the Chair will write to the parent/complainant explaining the panel's decision. A copy of this letter will also be sent to the member(s) of staff about whom the original complaint was made (if appropriate). If they decide that there are flaws in the way the investigation was conducted or in the outcome, they will set out their findings and consider whether or not it is appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology;
- an explanation;
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better;
- an assurance that the incident complained of will not recur – and an explanation of stages taken to ensure this;
- an undertaking to review School policies in the light of the complaint.

A written response to the complainant should be made as soon as possible but within a maximum of 15 term time working days from the date of the panel meeting.

The Clerk to the Governors' Appeal Panel will ensure that a full record of the panel meeting, including copies of all the papers, are held on file. All these records are confidential to the parent/complainant, the panel members and the members of staff involved in the original complaint and its investigation except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

### **Referral to the Department for Education**

If a complainant has completed all of the procedures above i.e. Formal and Appeal and the complainant remains dissatisfied, they have the right to refer their complaint to the EFA. (See Appendix.) The EFA has a duty to consider all complaints raised but will only intervene where the Governing Body has acted unlawfully or unreasonably and where it is expedient



# West Kirby Grammar School

## Complaints Policy

or practical to do so. Before submitting your complaint, please read the EFA guidance on complaining about an academy.

### Appropriate behaviour

**The School:** As indicated throughout the policy, it is the School's wish to work collaboratively with parents or any other complainant to bring about an efficient and just resolution to any concern or complaint. The School wishes to work in accordance with this policy and review the policy annually to ensure it follows best practice and is modified in the light of experience.

**The Complainant:** We expect the tone of all complaints to be expressed in a courteous manner, in the knowledge that the School wishes to assist them.

The School's approach when faced with serial and/or persistent complainants will be guided by the following:

*Schools should do their best to be helpful to people who contact them with a complaint or concern or a request for information. However, in cases where a school is contacted repeatedly by an individual making the same points, or who asks them to reconsider their position, schools will need to act appropriately.*

*There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaint procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. It is important for schools to recognise when they really have done everything they can in response to a complaint. It is a poor use of schools' time and resources to reply to repeated letters, emails or telephone calls making substantially the same points. If a complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the Chair of Governors can inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed.*

*If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, then the correspondence may be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and the school may choose not to respond. However, schools must be careful that they do not mark a complaint as 'serial' before the complainant has completed the procedure.*

*However, where an individual's behaviour is causing a significant level of disruption, schools may wish to implement a tailored communications strategy such as restricting them to a single point of contact via an email address or by limiting the number of times they make contact; e.g. a fixed number of contacts per term.*

*Complainants have a right to have any new complaint heard and failure to respond at all to a complainant could mean that the school is failing to comply with its legal obligations. A school needs to ensure that they are acting reasonably and that any genuine complaint can still be heard.*

Extracts are taken from: *Best Practice Advice for Schools Complaints Procedures 2016*, Department for Education.



# West Kirby Grammar School

## Complaints Policy

### Monitoring Complaints

1. The Headteacher will report on the operation of the Complaints Procedure to the Governing Body once a year. This report will include:
  - the number of formal complaints that have been made
  - the number that have been satisfactorily dealt with at the point of the original investigation
  - the number of occasions on which the Appeal Panel has met
  - any significant amendments to School policy or practice as a result of the complaints made
  - any issues that have arisen in the operation of the complaints procedure.
  
2. The Headteacher's report will respect the confidentiality of the individual.
  
3. In the light of the Headteacher's report, the Governing Body will consider whether or not the complaints procedure should be amended in any way.

<b>Administration Use:</b>	
<b>Statutory/Non-Statutory:</b>	Statutory
<b>Website:</b>	Yes
<b>GB Committee:</b>	Full Governors
<b>Document Formulated:</b>	September 2018
<b>Review:</b>	Annually
<b>Date Reviewed by Committee:</b>	September 2019
<b>Reviewed Document Adopted by FGB:</b>	September 2019
<b>Next Review Date:</b>	September 2020

September 2018



# West Kirby Grammar School

## Complaints Policy

### Appendix

#### The Role of the EFA

The extract below is taken from Education Funding Agency (EFA) Guidance, *Creating academy complaints procedure*, Updated 27 January 2015.

The EFA can support academies to achieve a compliant procedure but it is the responsibility of academy trusts to make sure that their complaints procedure is fully compliant. Our responsibility is to ensure academies comply with their funding agreements.

If a complaint comes to us we will check whether the complaint has been dealt with properly by the academy. We will consider complaints about academies that fall into any of the following three areas:

1. where there is undue delay or the academy did not comply with its own complaints procedure when considering a complaint.
2. where the academy is in breach of its funding agreement with the Secretary of State
3. where an academy has failed to comply with any other legal obligation.

We will not overturn an academy's decision about a complaint. However, if we find an academy did not deal with a complaint properly we will request the complaint is looked at again and procedures meet the requirement set out in the Regulation.

If the academy's complaints procedure does not meet the Regulations, we will ask the academy to put this right. We may seek to enforce the decision under the terms of the funding agreement on behalf of the Secretary of State, if appropriate.