



POLICY DOCUMENT

S04: PARENTS¹ COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Number of Complaints Requiring a Formal Resolution:
During Academic Year 2021/22 = 1
During Academic Year 2022/23 = 0
During Academic Year 2023/24 = 0

The school has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. If parents do have a complaint relating to the school or the services that it provides, however, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with the following procedures which are published in the Parents Handbook that is given to all parents initially and updated annually on the website. The procedure is also published for staff on the internal computer system and a copy of the boarders' complaints procedure is given to each boy in the school annually (see Annex). An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated save in exceptional circumstances. In order that a proper and timely investigation can take place as required, concerns and complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as set out below as soon as possible.

RAISING A CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

Stage 1--Informal Resolution

- In practice most complaints and concerns can be resolved quickly and informally and we do our very best to do so.
- If parents have a complaint, they should contact the relevant teacher or the Headmaster by phone, letter/e-mail or in person by appointment. In many cases the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. Staff and the headmaster will respond to initial complaints raised within 3-5 days.
- If the complaint or concern is of a serious nature it may be appropriate to address it to the Headmaster.

Stage 2--Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Headmaster, who will decide the appropriate course of action to take. The complaint should set out:
 - a) the complainant's name and contact numbers/addresses and the name of the pupil if relevant;
 - b) details of the complaint including relevant details, times/dates, names of witnesses, if appropriate, and any relevant documents; and
 - c) clearly what actions the School is expected to take to resolve the complaint.

¹ For the purposes of this policy the term 'Parents' included legal guardians and/or carers



- The Headmaster will meet with the parents concerned, within 7 days of receiving the complaint, to clarify their concerns, discuss the matter and if possible reach an informal resolution. Parents may be accompanied by a friend to assist them in explaining the nature of their concerns.
- If no resolution of the complaint is possible it may be necessary for the Headmaster to carry out further investigations. The Headmaster will carry out this investigation and respond in writing to parents within 14 days.
- The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, he will make a decision and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.

If parents are not satisfied with the Headmaster's decision or the manner in which the procedure has been followed, they should, within ten School days of receiving the Headmaster's decision, write to the Clerk to the Governors setting out any perceived failures in the procedure. Stage 3 will then be invoked.

Note: If the Headmaster is the subject of a concern or complaint, parents should contact the Chairman of the Governors. He, or a Governor nominated by him, will then follow the above procedures (informal/formal).

Stage 3--Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should write to the Clerk to the Governors who has been delegated by the Governing Body to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- The Complaints Review Panel will consist of *at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint*, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Governing Body. The Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 days but always within 28 days of receipt of the request.
- If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall where possible be supplied to all parties not later than 7 days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend.



- If possible the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately 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 that they consider relevant, the Panel will within 14 days of the hearing reach a decision and may make recommendations. A copy of the findings and recommendations of the Panel will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given or sent to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, and will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chairman of Governors and the Headmaster. The decision of the Panel will be final.

If, after all the above procedures have been exhausted, parents remain concerned about the quality of care, they may raise the matter with ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate), Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA; telephone 020 7600 0100 or if it relates to a Safeguarding issue to the Local Authority Designated Officer (for contact details see Annex to Safeguarding Policy).

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. A written record will be kept of all complaints and whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing. In addition, the action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether or not they are upheld) will be recorded. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Education Act requests access to them or where any other legal obligation prevails; records will be kept for a minimum of 7 years unless the matter involves safeguarding implications in which case the period will be longer.

This procedure is intended to comply with the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 as amended and made under s94 of the Education & Skills Act 2008.



ANNEX - Boys' Complaints Procedure

An updated version of this document will be given to you at the start of each year:

This leaflet is for your use. Please read it carefully. It explains what you should do if you feel worried about something, or what you can do if you wish to make a formal complaint.

If you do not understand anything in this leaflet, ask a member of staff, your parents or a friend to explain it to you.

If you are unhappy or if you are worried about something at School it is very important that you talk about it to someone. There are many people to whom you can turn. You will probably have close friends who may be able to help or you could go to one of the senior choristers. One of the matrons, your Form Teacher, your Tutor or the Mrs Neophytou are probably the most obvious adults to whom you might turn. You can also talk to any other member of staff you know and to whom you find it easy to talk. The Headmaster is almost always on hand and he too would be happy to have a chat.

It might be that there are times when you feel that you cannot talk easily about something with an immediate member of staff; this is quite natural and there are many other people who will be happy to help. You may talk, telephone or write to any of the following:

Your parents (of course!)

Fr. Mark Birch (Chaplain)

Mrs. Streeting (Someone completely independent of the School, though she is a school nurse in London and lives very locally)

Dr. Lynn Chukuezi (School Doctor)

Childline (0800 1111)

Their addresses and telephone numbers are given at the end of this leaflet.

If you think that something is not as it should be at School and you feel that you need to make a complaint, again it is important to talk to someone about it at the earliest opportunity. There may be times when you think that something is not fair. Often this can easily be cleared up by talking to a member of staff to whom you feel you can easily turn. You may take a friend with you if you wish.

If you feel that you need to take the matter further, you should see the Headmaster if you have not already spoken to him. Once again, you may take a friend or another member of staff with you. If you still feel that the matter is not satisfactorily sorted out you should write formally to the Headmaster outlining your concern. If you need help writing the letter you can always ask a member of staff, another adult or a friend to help you.

The Headmaster will make a record of your letter in a special book and he will write to you indicating that the matter will be dealt with within two days of his receiving your letter.

You will then be asked to talk the matter through with the Headmaster and another senior



member of staff. You can have a friend with you who may be another pupil, Matron or any other member of staff. If within two more days you really feel that the matter has not been resolved you could contact any of the people whose names and addresses are listed at the end of this leaflet.

If your concern is about the Headmaster, you should speak to your parents who will advise you what to do.

Whoever you contact can speak to you at School - again you can have a friend with you - and will advise you about the course that seems most sensible. At that stage it will be up to you to make a decision, acting on his or her advice, whether or not to take the matter further. A written record is kept of all complaints and their outcomes which the Headmaster and one of the governors will review regularly. You will never be punished for making a reasonable complaint.

We all want to make sure that problems are dealt with quickly but we won't be able to do that if we don't know what they are. It is really important that anyone who has something on his mind is able to speak up. All sorts of things might make you worried; usually a chat will clear them up.

People outside School to whom you can turn:

1. Your parents
2. Fr Mark Birch. You can either see him when he comes to visit for ensembles or speak to him after prayers one Wednesday morning or after Evensong. Alternatively, you may email him: mark.birch@westminster-abbey.org or telephone him at home: 020 7654 8584 and 07469 152627
3. Dr. Lynn Chukuezi. She is your GP. You can either speak to her when she visits the School for her regular surgery (ask Matron for a confidential appointment) or you can telephone her at her surgery. The number is: 0844 477 8740
4. Mrs. Jessica Streeting. Mrs Streeting is our Independent Listener which means she does not work at or for the school. She does know all about it, however, as one of her sons used to be a chorister at WACS She lives in Deans Yard just across the Green from School. Her email address is: jessicastreeting@hotmail.co.uk and her mobile phone number is 07810 487272
5. The Dean, who is Chairman of Governors. You can see him at Evensong or telephone him on his private line: 020 7654 4801 or email him at: david.hoyle@westminster-abbey.org
6. One of the other Governors. Perhaps Canon Anthony Ball, who is Rector of St Margaret's, or Robert Gullifer who is the Governor responsible for Safeguarding would be good choices. Canon Ball's email address is: anthony.ball@westminster-abbey.org telephone 020 7654 4806 and Mr Gullifer's e-mail address is robert.gullifer@newcollegeschool.org .
7. The Abbey's Safeguarding Officer, Juliette Curtin (or during her maternity leave, Louise Wilcox) on 020 7654 4877 or 07394 562778 or Louise.Wilcox@westminster-abbey.org .
8. Child Line. Telephone 0800 1111

Westminster Abbey

Choir School



9. The Children's Commissioner: 0800 528 0731

10. ISI/LADO. Finally, if you really think that something is wrong, you could get in touch with the school inspectors: ISI, Ground Floor, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA; telephone 020 7600 0100 or the Local Authority Designated Officer for Child Protection who is: Kembra Healy (LADO@westminster.gov.uk) 020 7641 7665.

(Updated September 2022)