



# Walthamstow School For Girls

*“Neglect not the gift that is in thee”*

## Policy Document

# Complaints Policy and Procedure

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<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>SECTION 1: OUTLINE OF POLICY</b>	
1 Introduction	3
<b>SECTION 2: AIMS OF POLICY</b>	
2 Aims of Policy	4
<b>SECTION 3: OUTLINE OF PROCEDURES</b>	
3 Outline of Procedure – Stages of Complaint	4
<b>SECTION 4: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	
4. Rights and Responsibilities when Dealing with Complaints	6
<b>SECTION 5: COMPLAINTS NOT IN SCOPE</b>	
5. Complaints not in Scope of the Procedure	7

**I. INTRODUCTION**

- I.1 Walthamstow School for Girls works hard to ensure that all students are offered a quality education. However, if a parent/carer feels unhappy about a situation that has arisen relating to the school and its activities, then they have a right to make a complaint.
- I.2 This policy has been developed in accordance with the statutory provisions and legislation established by the Equality Act 2010.

Walthamstow School for Girls will deal with concerns, difficulties and complaints in accordance with its duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not, by having regard to the need to:
  - remove or minimise disadvantages connected to a relevant protected characteristic; and
  - take steps to meet the different needs of those sharing a relevant protected characteristic; and
  - encourage those who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in school life and activities in which participation is disproportionately low
- Foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not, by having regard to the need to:
  - tackle prejudice; and
  - promote understanding

“Relevant protected characteristics” include sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity and (in the case of persons who are not students) marriage and civil partnership, and age.

In addition, Walthamstow School for Girls will comply with its duty to make the following reasonable adjustments for persons with a disability:

- where a provision, criterion or practice places a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared to a person who is not disabled, reasonable steps must be taken to avoid that disadvantage
- where a disabled person would, but for the provision of an auxiliary aid, be placed at a substantial disadvantage compared with a person who is not disabled, reasonable steps must be taken to provide the auxiliary aid

An auxiliary aid can be a piece of equipment or a service.

If a complainant or other person involved in the complaints procedure requires an interpreter, a signer or any other assistance at meetings or at a Complaint Panel Hearing, they should let Walthamstow School for Girls know immediately.

**SECTION 2****AIMS OF THE POLICY****2.1 Policy Aim and Statement**

- 2.1.1 This Complaints Policy helps underpin the mission statement of Walthamstow School for Girls. Its aim is to ensure that a concern, difficulty or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level and resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice, fair to those concerned and helps to promote parents' and students' confidence in the school's ability to safeguard and promote welfare. We will try to resolve every concern, difficulty or complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing the systems and procedures at Walthamstow School for Girls in light of the matters raised. The Governing Body will review and analyse complaints received in order to identify any trends and to enable any learning from these incidents.
- 2.1.2 Walthamstow School for Girls needs to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction. We recognise that a concern or difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment which can be damaging to the relationship between the school and the parent/student and can also have a detrimental effect upon the school's ethos and culture. Parents and students should never feel – or be made to feel – that raising a concern, difficulty or complaint will adversely affect the student's future at Walthamstow School for Girls.

**SECTION 3****OUTLINE OF PROCEDURES****3 PROCEDURE****3.1 Stage 1: Your initial contact with the school (informal)**

- 3.1.1 If a parent or carer wishes to discuss a concern about an individual subject in the curriculum they are welcome to make an appointment to see the relevant Head of Faculty

OR

- 3.1.2 If a parent or carer wishes to discuss a concern of a general/pastoral issue they should make an appointment to see the form tutor or relevant Student Progress Leader.
- 3.1.3 Alternatively parents or carers may book an appointment for the Headteacher's Surgery on Monday evenings to inform the Headteacher of their concern. If appropriate, the Headteacher will then arrange an appointment for the parent or carer with the relevant member of staff.
- 3.1.4 The complainant should be updated on the school's enquiries (within 10 working days) and will have an opportunity to have their matter considered further once a response has been made.
- 3.1.5 If the complainant is still dissatisfied following this informal approach, the concern will become a formal complaint and the school will deal with it at the next stage.

**3.2 Stage 2: Complaint referred to Senior Leadership (formal)**

- 3.2.1 If a parent or carer is not satisfied after an initial meeting with the Head of Faculty/Tutor/Head of Year, they should make an appointment with the relevant senior member of staff as advised by the school. If the parent/carer wishes, they can ask someone to accompany them to help explain the reasons for their complaint.

**3.3 Stage 3: Complaint heard by Headteacher (formal)**

3.3.1 Following the interview, if a parent or carer is still not satisfied they should then put their concerns in writing to the Headteacher and outline previous efforts to resolve the matter. It would be helpful at this stage if the complainant could state what actions they feel might resolve the problem.

### 3.3.2 **Formal Complaint against a member of Staff**

If a member of staff, a parent or carer wishes to make a formal complaint about a member of staff, this should be addressed in writing, or personally, to the Headteacher. The member of staff about whom the complaint/allegation is made will be informed of the complaint/allegation and invited to respond. The outcome of the investigation will be formally communicated to the complainant and the member of staff.

### 3.4 **Stage 4: Complaint heard by Chair of Governors (formal)**

3.4.1 Should a complainant be dissatisfied with the response they receive, or if their complaint is about the Headteacher, they should contact the Chair of Governors about the issue via the School Office.

3.4.2 Complaints against the Chair of Governors or any individual Governor should be made by writing to the Clerk of the Governing Body.

### 3.5 **Stage 4: Consideration by a Complaints Review Panel (formal)**

3.5.1 If the concern has already been through Stages 1, 2 and 3, and the complainant is not happy with the outcome, the Chair of Governors will instruct the Clerk to set up a Complaints Review Panel to consider it. This is a formal process.

3.5.2 The purpose of this arrangement is to give the complainant an opportunity to have their complaint heard in front of a panel of Governors who have no prior knowledge of the details of the complaint and who can, therefore, consider it without prejudice.

3.5.3 The aim of a Complaints Review Panel is to resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the school and the parent.

The Complaints Review Panel operates according to the following formal procedures:

- i. The Clerk to the Governing Body will aim to arrange for the panel meeting to take place within 20 working days.
- ii. The complainant will be asked whether they wish to provide any further written documentation in support of their complaint. This can include witness statements, or the complainant could ask witnesses to give evidence in person.
- iii. The Headteacher will prepare a written report for the panel. Other members of staff directly involved in matters raised will also be asked to prepare reports or statements.
- iv. The clerk will inform the parent, Headteacher, any relevant witnesses and members of the panel by letter, at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting. All parties will receive the same written documentation. The complainant is entitled to be accompanied to the meeting. With the agreement of the Chair of the panel, the Headteacher may invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to attend the meeting.
- v. No evidence or witnesses previously undisclosed should be introduced into the meeting by any of the participants. If either party wishes to do so, the meeting will be adjourned so that the other party has a fair opportunity to consider and respond to the new evidence.
- vi. The Chair of the panel will ensure that the meeting is properly minuted. The complainant can request a copy of the minutes, this is at the panel's discretion.
- vii. During the meeting, you can expect there to be opportunities for:

- you to explain your complaint
  - you to hear the school's response from the Headteacher
  - you to question the Headteacher about the complaint
  - you to be questioned by the Headteacher about the complaint
  - the panel members to be able to question you and the Headteacher
  - any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the Chair's approval) and all parties to have the right to question all witnesses
  - you and the Headteacher to make a final statement
- viii. In closing the meeting, the Chair will explain that the panel will now consider its decision and that written notice of the decision will be sent to the Headteacher and yourself within 10 working days. All participants other than the panel and the Clerk will then leave.
- ix. The panel will then consider the complaint and all the evidence presented in order to:
- reach a unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint
  - decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
  - recommend, where appropriate, to the Governing Body changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that similar problems do not happen again
- x. The Clerk will send you and the Headteacher a written statement outlining the decision of the panel within 10 working days.
- xi. The final stage of the appeal is to the Secretary of State for Education at <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/state-schools>

## SECTION 4

## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### 4. Rights and Responsibilities when dealing with complaints

Parents/carers and school staff must both recognise that they have rights and responsibilities when dealing with complaints.

- 4.1 The parent/carer has a responsibility to present their complaint in a calm manner.
- 4.2 The school has a responsibility to listen carefully, look into all complaints and give feedback within 10 working days to the parent/carer.
- 4.3 Neither parent/carer nor member of staff should behave in an inappropriate manner, i.e.
- shouting or behaving aggressively
  - harassing or bullying
  - using abusive or threatening language
  - using physical contact
- 4.4 Any necessary correspondence from parents/carers or the school should be written in a non-threatening tone.
- 4.5 If a parent/carer behaves inappropriately (see 4.3) the member of staff should calmly stop the interview, explain the reason, leave the room and report the matter to an available member of the Leadership Team.
- 4.6 If a member of staff does not feel it would be appropriate to see a parent/carer alone, they should arrange a time when their line manager may be present.

## SECTION 5

## COMPLAINTS NOT IN SCOPE OF THE PROCEDURE

### EXCEPTIONS

### WHO TO CONTACT

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions to schools</li> <li>• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)</li> <li>• School re-organisation proposals</li> <li>• Matters likely to require a Child Protection investigation.</li> </ul>	<p>Concerns should be raised direct with local authorities.</p> <p>For school admissions, it will depend on who is the admitting authority (either the school or the LA). Complaints about admission appeals for maintained schools are dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of children from school</li> </ul>	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: <a href="http://www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions">www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions</a>.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whistleblowing</li> </ul>	<p>Schools have an internal whistleblowing procedure for their employees and voluntary staff.</p> <p>Other concerns can be raised direct with Ofsted by telephone on: 0300 123 3155, via email at: <a href="mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk">whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk</a> or by writing to:</p> <p>WBHL, Ofsted  Piccadilly Gate  Store Street  Manchester MI 2WD</p> <p>The Department of Education is also a prescribed body for whistleblowing in education.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff grievances and disciplinary procedures</li> </ul>	<p>These matters will invoke the school's Internal Grievance Procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities</li> </ul>	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. They should be contacted directly.</p>