

POLICY

Wirral Grammar School for Boys



Policy	Complaints, Compliments and Comments
Responsible Manager	Simon Ascroft
Approval Date	November 2025
Review Date	November 2027
Approved by	Headteacher

Aim

This policy covers complaints, compliments and concerns/comments of a general nature raised by parents/carers.

At Wirral Grammar School for Boys (WGSB), we are committed to providing a high quality service for all students. We would like to hear from parents/carers if:

- They are happy with the service we provide and would like to compliment the staff and students.
- They have any suggestions about how we can improve the quality of our provision at school.
- They have a complaint or concern. All complaints will be taken seriously and given full and proper consideration. Where things go wrong, we aim to resolve concerns wherever possible without the need for a formal written complaint.

Staff within WGSB deal with specific complaints as part of their day-to- day management role in accordance with the Complaints Policy.

The majority of complaints are handled in an informal manner and are resolved quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the complainant.

However, there are occasions when complainants behave in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing concerns. The consequences are that the actions of the complainants begin to impact negatively on the day-to-day running of the School and directly or indirectly the overall well- being of the children or staff in the school. In these exceptional circumstances WGSB may take action in accordance with this policy.

The aims of this policy are to:

- Uphold the standards of courtesy and reasonableness that should characterise all communication between WGSB and persons who wish to express a concern or pursue a complaint.
- Support the well-being of students, staff and everyone else who has legitimate interest in the work of the School, including trustees and parents/carers
- Deal fairly, honestly, openly and transparently with those who make persistent or vexatious complaints and those who harass members of staff in school while ensuring that other stakeholders suffer no detriment.

POLICY

Wirral Grammar School for Boys



School Imposed Sanctions and the Importance of Confidentiality

The sanctions applied by the school are always the decision of the school and in accordance with the behaviour policy. Where a parent raises a concern about the conduct of another boy towards their own son, it is for the school to investigate the allegation and act accordingly. Parents cannot specify the sanction that they think should apply and nor is there any entitlement for them to be informed about any sanction that has been applied. At all times the school has a duty of confidentiality in matters of discipline and dialogue about the sanction can only take place with the parent of the child to whom the sanction has been applied.

Policy Implementation and Procedures

1. Expressing Approval

When things go well, it is helpful if parents/carers express their approval. Maintenance of high levels of staff commitment, morale and motivation are important in ensuring the provision of the best possible education for all students. Parents/carers can express their approval through an email via schooloffice@wirralgrammarboys.com, in writing or by speaking personally to the staff concerned or the Headteacher.

2. Raising A Concern – Informal Stage

Concerns can be raised with the school at any time and will often generate a quick response. Due to the teaching demands on many staff, this is not necessarily immediate, but will be as soon as is practically possible. Parents are requested to contact their son's Form Tutor in the first instance. Concerns can be raised via email or by phone or if required, a face-to-face meeting.

Some concerns will require an investigation or discussion with others, in which case, it may take a few days to deal with the concern fully. The vast majority of concerns are dealt with in this way. If you feel that your concern has not been addressed at this point, then you should take your concern to 'Stage 1' of the formal complaint process.

Most concerns will be successfully resolved at this informal stage. Depending on the nature of the concern, the member of staff spoken to may refer it to a more senior colleague who will initiate appropriate action.

3. Parents' Expectations of WGSB

Parents/carers/members of the public who raise either informal concerns or formal complaints with the School can expect WGSB to:

- (a) Regularly communicate to parents/carers
- (b) Respond within a reasonable time
- (c) Be available for consultation within reasonable time limits bearing in mind the needs of the students within the school and the nature of the complaint
- (d) Respond with courtesy and respect

POLICY

Wirral Grammar School for Boys



- (e) Attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with WGSB complaints procedure, other policies and practice and keep complainants informed of progress towards a resolution of the issues raised.

4. WGSB Expectations of Parents/Carers/Members of the Public

WGSB can expect parents/carers/members of the public who wish to raise problems with the School to:

- (a) Treat all staff with courtesy and respect
- (b) Respect the needs and well-being of students and staff
- (c) Avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence to people or property
- (d) Avoid any aggression or verbal abuse
- (e) Recognise the time constraints under which members of staff work and allow WGSB a reasonable time to respond
- (f) Recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time
- (g) (in the case of a complaint) follow the Complaints Procedure.

5. Making A Formal Complaint - Procedure

If the parent/carer is not satisfied that their concern has been resolved informally, they should follow the below five stages:-

Stage 1 - The concern is raised more formally with a member of the school Leadership Team

Stage 2 – A more formal complaint is directed in writing to the Senior Deputy Headteacher

Stage 3 – Complaint is received by the Headteacher

Stage 4 – Complaint is received by the Chair of the Governing Body.

Stage 5 – The Role of the Department for Education

Stage 1 - A More Formal Procedure Addressed to a member of the Leadership Team

This stage involves a more formal procedure where the concern is addressed (via email or letter) to a member of the Leadership Team who has a role that is relevant to the area of your concern. Stage 1 only applies if having raised the concern with the Form Tutor/Head of Year/Subject Teacher, it remains unresolved.

Leadership Team areas of responsibility are as follows:

- Mrs L Ahern: Assistant Headteacher (Head of Sixth Form)
- Mr P Harrison: Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral)
- Mrs D Rogers: Assistant Headteacher (Academic Registry and Teaching & Learning)
- Mrs M Sagar: School Business Manager
- Mr M Hynes: Head of Mathematics Faculty
- Mrs G Abernethy: Head of English Faculty
- Mr D Ingram: Head of Performance & Creative Faculty
- Mr A Walker: Head of Inclusion Faculty

POLICY

Wirral Grammar School for Boys



- Mr D Webb: Head of Science Faculty
- Mr B Taylor: Head of Humanities Faculty
- Mr J Hughes: Head of Personal Development Faculty
- Mr C Wilson: Head of Business, Economics, IT, Languages and Law Faculty

The member of the Leadership Team involved will acknowledge your written concern and will subsequently respond within ten working days. He or she may ask you to come into school to meet with them. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of 'Stage 1', you may take your concern to 'Stage 2'.

Stage 2 - A More Formal Procedure Where the Concern is Addressed By The Senior Deputy Headteacher

If the matter has not been resolved at the School Leadership referral stage, it may be addressed to the Senior Deputy Headteacher who has a broader responsibility for school organisation and standards. In contacting the Senior Deputy Headteacher in writing, you should let him know why you are still not satisfied. The Senior Deputy Headteacher will conduct an investigation and will respond to your concerns within ten working days. He will invite you to attend a meeting at which he will share his findings with you.

- Mr A White: Senior Deputy Headteacher (School Organisation and Standards)

Stage 3 - Complaint is received by the Headteacher

If having taken your concern to Form Tutor/Head of Year/Subject Teacher, School Leadership and Senior Deputy Headteacher, you may take your concerns to the Headteacher. In our experience, very few concerns remain unresolved by the time that they reach this stage. Stage 3 follows the same structure as stages 1 and 2 but in this case the Headteacher will conduct a further investigation and will contact you within ten working days to meet with him at the end of this process.

Stage 4 - Complaint is received by the Chair of Governors.

At this stage, following all other stages, the concern should be put in writing to the Chair of Governors. The letter should explain why the previous stages have not addressed the concern fully and specify exactly what the areas of concern are.

If you have a complaint about the Headteacher, this should be put in writing to the Chair of Governors.

Stating your concern(s) in this way will facilitate a structured response. If necessary, the Chair of Governors will convene a Complaints Panel Meeting comprising of two or three Governors. The hearing will be arranged within ten working days, allowing for the availability of Governors. Where possible, Panel Meetings take place during the school day (between 9.00am and 4.00pm). The Chair of Governors will make the structure of the meeting clear, and it will require the attendance of the parents/carers/member of the public that will address the panel and explain why the matter has not

POLICY

Wirral Grammar School for Boys



been addressed at the previous stages. A school representative will also be required to attend and a response from the school will be required prior to the meeting.

Following this stage, there is a final entitlement to 'appeal' and this appeal hearing will take place before a separate panel of School Governors.

Stage 5 - The Role of the Department for Education (DfE)

Should the complainant still remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint after Stage 3, the complainant is able to refer the matter to the DfE, who will consider whether the school followed an appropriate procedure in dealing with the complaint.

If you have a complaint about school Governors, this should be referred directly to the DfE.

**Ministerial and Public Communication Division
Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD**

Or via this weblink:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe>

In your letter please explain:

1. What your complaint to the governors was
2. What response they have made to it
3. Why you think that the governors have not followed a proper procedure in considering your complaint, and/or
4. Why you think that their consideration of it was unreasonable.

6. Who is a Persistent or Vexatious Complainant?

For the purpose of this policy, a persistent or vexatious complainant is a parent/carer or member of the public who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of the School, and whose behaviour is unreasonable. Such behaviour may be characterised by:

- (a) Actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious
- (b) Prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint
- (c) Uses Freedom of Information requests excessively and unreasonably
- (d) An insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes
- (e) An insistence upon pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner
- (f) An insistence on only dealing with the Headteacher on all occasions irrespective of the issue

POLICY

Wirral Grammar School for Boys



and the level of delegation in the school to deal with such matters

- (g) An insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of the school because it is unlawful.

For the purpose of this policy, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions as in (a) to (g) above in such a way that they:

- (a) Appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of staff and/or
- (b) Cause ongoing distress to individual member(s) of staff and/or
- (c) Have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of WGSB community and/or
- (d) Are pursued in a manner which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient. This could include situations where persistent demands and criticisms, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health.

7. WGSB Actions in Cases of Persistent or Vexatious Complaints or Harassment

In the first instance the School will verbally inform the complainant that his / her behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable / unacceptable and, if it is not modified, action may be taken in accordance with this policy. This will be confirmed in writing.

If the behaviour is not modified WGSB will take some or all of the following actions as necessary, having regard to the nature of the complainant's behaviour and the effect of this on the School community:

- (a) Inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered by the School to be unreasonable/unacceptable and, therefore, to fall under the terms of this policy (see Model Letter 2)
- (b) Inform the complainant that all meetings with a member of staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties (see Model Letter 2)
- (c) Inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication with the complainant to the School should be by letter only (see Model Letter 2)
- (d) (in the case of physical, or verbal aggression) take advice from HR / Legal Services (services available from the School) and consider warning the complainant about being banned from the school site; or proceed straight to a temporary ban
- (e) Consider taking advice on pursuing a case under Anti-Harassment legislation
- (f) Consider taking advice from the HR / Legal Services of the School about putting in place a specific procedure for dealing with complaints from the complainant, i.e. the complainant will not be able to deal directly with the Headteacher but only with a third person to be identified by the Full Governing Body, who will investigate, determine whether or not the concern / complaint is reasonable or vexatious and then advise them accordingly. Thus, based on the previous point, legitimate new complaints may still be considered even if the person making them is, or has been, subject to the Policy for Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints. However, WGSB will be advised by the HR / Legal Services of the School.

If a complainant's persistent complaining/harassing behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the school may resume the process identified above at

POLICY

Wirral Grammar School for Boys



an appropriate level. In these circumstances advice may be sought from the HR/Legal Services of the School.

Notes:

- ❖ **This policy does not apply where the complaint may lead to disciplinary proceedings against a teacher or child protection procedures. These matters have separate procedures.**
- ❖ **Whilst it is appreciated that matters may not come to light immediately, WGSB will be unable to effectively investigate and therefore resolve complaints relating to historical matters.**

Complainants have a responsibility to act with civility and rationality before, during and after they raise a complaint. WGSB can invoke its Vexatious Complaints Policy in the event that a complainant falls short of these expectations.

8. Withdrawal of Complaints

A complainant may withdraw their complaint at any stage of the process by notifying the school in writing. Upon receipt of such notification, the school will confirm the withdrawal in writing and close the complaint. A record of the complaint and its withdrawal will be retained in accordance with the school's data protection policy.

Where the original complaint raises safeguarding or child protection concerns, the school reserves the right to continue investigations or take appropriate action in line with statutory obligations, regardless of the withdrawal. Withdrawal of a complaint does not affect any separate disciplinary, legal, or regulatory processes that may have been initiated as a result of the original complaint.

Monitoring

The responsible manager named on the front of this policy is responsible for ensuring that this document is kept up to date and revised as appropriate, seeking management and/or FGB approval in advance of the review date so that a new version can be communicated to staff and stakeholders in a timely fashion.

POLICY

Wirral Grammar School for Boys



APPENDIX A

Associated Information and Guidance

Complaints and Compliments

Please complete this form and return it to the school office, marking it for the attention of appropriate member of staff – schooloffice@wirralgrammarboys.com Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

1	Name	
2	Address	
3	Telephone Number	
4	Email Address	
5	Name of Child	
6	Details of Compliment or Complaint - Please include the date or period of time to which complaint/compliment relates and confirm whether you have already expressed your concerns informally, and to whom and when.	
7	Do you have a suggestion for change? Please attach copies of any more information you have to back up your complaint such as letters or report.	

Signed: _____ Date : _____

POLICY

Wirral Grammar School for Boys



APPENDIX B

MODEL LETTER 1:

INITIAL LETTER INFORMING A COMPLAINANT THAT HIS/HER BEHAVIOUR IS CONSIDERED TO FALL BELOW A REASONABLE/ ACCEPTABLE STANDARD

RECORDED DELIVERY

Dear

This letter is to inform you that the WGSB considers your actions in *[describe actions, dates, behaviour]* on when you to be unreasonable/unacceptable *[delete as appropriate]*.

We would ask you to bear in mind the fact that such behaviour on the school site can be disruptive and distressing to students, staff and parents/carers *[delete if behaviour complained of did not occur on school site e.g. persistent use of e-mail, verbally abusive telephone calls]*.

We are aware that you have raised some concerns and would advise you that these are usually dealt with most effectively through the Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy.

At the moment we are dealing with these issues by *[describe actions being taken to resolve concern]*.

Please note that WGSB's Policy for Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints sets out standards of behaviour expected of all people in their dealings with the School.

These include: behaving reasonably; treating others with courtesy and respect; resolving complaints using the School's Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy; avoiding physical and verbal aggression at all times.

The Policy also indicates the steps that we may take if these standards are breached. These include making special arrangements for meetings and communication with the School; considering a ban from the school premises; considering legal action.

I would ask that you allow us time to resolve the issues according to the correct procedures and would assure you that we shall take every step to move this process forward as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

POLICY

Wirral Grammar School for Boys



APPENDIX C

MODEL LETTER 2:

INFORMING A COMPLAINANT THAT HIS/HER BEHAVIOUR IS NOW CONSIDERED TO FALL UNDER THE TERMS OF THE POLICY FOR DEALING WITH PERSISTENT OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS/ HARASSMENT RECORDED DELIVERY

Dear

You will recall that I wrote to you on [insert date] telling you that I felt your behaviour was unreasonable. I am now writing to inform you that in view of your behaviour on [date], when you [describe actions/behaviour] it has been decided that WGSB's Policy for Vexatious Complaints will apply from the date of this letter.

In the circumstances I have made the following arrangements for your future contact with the school:

[*Delete A or B as applicable]

*A For the foreseeable future, should you wish to meet with any member of staff, I would ask you to note:

- a. All routine communication, including any request for a meeting between you and the school, will be by letter only. Letters from you need to be addressed to at the school address; email correspondence will not be responded to.
- b. An appointment will be arranged and confirmed in writing as soon as possible.
- c. A third party from the school will be present.
- d. In the interests of all parties, formal notes of this meeting may be made.

*B For the foreseeable future, all meetings arising from any written communication with the school will not be conducted by a member of staff, but will be conducted by representing WGSB. I would ask you to note:

- a. All routine communication, including any request for a meeting between you and WGSB, will be by Letter only. Letters from you need to be addressed to at Wirral Grammar School for Boys, Cross Lane, Bebington, Wirral, CHG63 3AQ; email correspondence will not be responded to.
- b. An appointment will be arranged and confirmed in writing as soon as possible.
- c. A third party will be present.
- d. In the interests of all parties, formal notes of this meeting may be made.

Exceptionally, these arrangements do not apply to any emergency involving [insert name of student] – in which case you should contact WGSB in the usual way.

While these arrangements are in place, with respect to normal access to information available on Parents' Evenings, this will be provided in a summary written report.

POLICY

Wirral Grammar School for Boys



These arrangements take effect straightaway. If you wish to make a representation about the contents of this letter, which may include any expressions of regret on your part and any assurances that you are prepared to give about your future conduct, you can do so by writing to me at the school by [state ten working days from the date of the letter]. If on receipt of your comments I consider that the arrangements outlined above should continue, you will be supplied with details of how to review a circumstance of your case.

I do hope that the difficulties we are currently experiencing can soon be resolved.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher