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# Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy

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WEST MIDLANDS EDUCATION AND SKILLS

## Availability of the Complaints Policy

This policy is available on request to students, the parents and prospective students of West Midlands Education & Skills. While students may raise concerns and complaints under this policy, the school will involve parents should this occur. (Throughout this policy, the term 'parents' means all those having parental responsibility for a child.)

Copies are available from:

Karen Yoshida (Head Teacher)  
West Midlands Education & Skills  
St Patricks Presbytery  
Blue Lane East  
Walsall  
WS2 8HN

A copy of this policy is also available from West Midlands Education & Skills' main office, and on our website:

## Dealing with Complaints – Initial concerns

West Midlands Education & Skills is clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints. These key messages deal with complaints but the underlying principle is that concerns ought to be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure need not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally.

## Dealing with Complaints – Formal procedures

The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

## Framework of Principles

West Midlands Education & Skills' Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy will:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- be easily accessible and publicised
- be simple to understand and use
- be impartial

- be non-adversarial
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
- respect people's desire for confidentiality
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- provide information to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved

## Summary of Procedures

Stage 1 – Informal discussion

Stage 2 – Complaint heard by Principal following investigation by Complaints Officer

Stage 3 – Complaint heard by Governing Body Complaints Panel

## Investigating Complaints

The person investigating the complaint will:

- establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved
- clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary)
- clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- conduct the interview with an open mind
- keep notes of the interview.

## Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure West Midlands Education & Skills will consider ways to resolve a complaint. It might acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be 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 event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again

- an undertaking to review academy policies in light of the complaint.

## Stages of the Complaints Process

Stage 1 – Informal local resolution of the concern with a staff member. This can be by telephone, in person or in writing. On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation, or discussion with others, in which case an informal but informed response will be issued to the complainant within two days. If no resolution is achieved at stage 1, the complainant will be able to progress the complaint to Stage 2 within 7 working days.

### Stage 2 – Complaint heard by the Head of School

The complaint will be received in writing and will be logged, including the date it was received. West Midlands Education & Skills will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 2 working days of receiving it. An opportunity will be given for the complainant to meet the Complaints Officer to provide any supplementary information. The complainant may be accompanied by a friend, relative or representative.

The Complaints Officer will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If a complaint has been made against a student, the student will also be interviewed, normally in the presence of their parents. If a complaint has been made about a member of staff, the needs of that person should be borne in mind. Written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation will be kept.

Once the facts have been established the Complaints Officer will present the findings to the Head of School and arrange to meet the complainant (who may be accompanied) to discuss /resolve the matter directly. This meeting will normally take place within 7 working days.

The aim is to resolve the matter as speedily as possible.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the result at Stage 2, the complainant will be able to progress the complaint to Stage 3 within 10 working days of receiving the outcome of Stage 2.

### Stage 3 – Governors Appeals Panel

If there is a requirement to progress to Stage 3 the complaint must be received in writing and sent to the Chair of Governors, c/o West Midlands Education & Skills, St Patricks Presbytery, Blue Lane East, Walsall, WS2 8HN. The Chair will then arrange for the complaint to be investigated and considered and will reply to the complainant within 5 working days stating the progress made and the next steps. When the complaint has been fully investigated this will be communicated in writing.

The Chair or nominated Governor will convene an Appeals Panel. The Panel will consist of three people not directly involved in the matter detailed in the complaint and at least one member of the Panel will be independent of the management and running of West Midlands Education & Skills. This process will allow for the complainant to attend the hearing, which will be as informal as possible, accompanied if they so wish. The hearing will take place within 15 working days of the receipt of the written request for Stage 3 investigation. All parties will be notified of the Panel's decision in writing within 5 working days after the date of the hearing.

The Panel will make findings and recommendations, and a copy of the findings and recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. The findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Head of School. In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of the Head of School, the Chair of Governors will be informed of the complaint. The Chair of Governors will arrange for the matter to be investigated.

In cases where the matter concerns the conduct of a member of the Governing Body the member will be informed of the complaint.

## Recording Complaints

West Midlands Education & Skills will maintain a log of all complaints received. A full written record of the progress and final outcomes of all complaints will be maintained. These will be kept in a secure locked cabinet, accessible only to the Head of School and the Deputy Head of School. All correspondence, statement and records of complaint are kept confidential. They are available for inspectors conducting inspection under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, or to the Secretary of State, should they ask for access to such records.

## Guidance notes for Parents/carers and the community

### If you have a compliments, comment, concern or complaint

We would like you to let us know. Please raise any issues regarding the school or its staff directly with the school, all members of staff are familiar with the procedure and are able to assist you.

Compliment – We like to hear when we have done a good job so that we can share what we do well with the staff and children to ensure we continually improve.

Comment – We welcome suggestions for improving our work.

Concern – A concern is an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought. Please tell us of any concern you may have as soon as possible so that we can try to resolve it for you as soon as possible. Please be assured that no matter what you want to talk to us about, our support for you and your child will not be affected in any way.

Complaint – A complaint is a concern which has not been satisfactorily resolved. If you feel we have not dealt with your concern, please tell us as soon as possible that you wish to make a formal complaint, as it may prove difficult to investigate an issue that happened some time ago. If it is determined that staff disciplinary proceedings are required as the complainant you are entitled to be informed that action is being taken, but you are unable to participate in the proceedings or receive any details.

If you would like to give a compliment or pass comment on any aspect of your experience with West Midlands Education & Skills, please complete this pro - forma (available on both the school's website or from the office) and return it to:

West Midlands Education & Skills, St Patricks Presbytery, Blue Lane East, Walsall, WS2 8HN.

Thank You

Date of Incident if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person/s involved: \_\_\_\_\_

The programme/service I am using: \_\_\_\_\_

My name and address:

My preferred contact details: