**** Watchorn Complaints Policy 2024

The school aims to provide quality teaching and pastoral care to all its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint or concern, they can expect it to be treated by the school promptly and carefully, and in accordance with this procedure.

In accordance with paragraphs 32 (1) (b) and (3) (f) of Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the school will make this procedure available to parents and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). This procedure is published on the school website.

What constitutes a concern or a complaint?

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

It is in everyone’s interest that concerns, and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaint’s procedure. Watchorn Christian School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Parents should be confident that their son or daughter will not be penalised for a concern or complaint that they raise in good faith.

Raising a concern

We want parents of the school to feel comfortable to raise concerns with any member of staff. Being a small independent school allows for a concern to be treated with importance, there is no designated time given to raising a concern, not to replying to one. At your raising of a concern you will be asked if the concern is a complaint or a concern, if it is deemed a complaint you will then follow stage 1 Informal stage, if it is deemed a concern it will be dealt with in line with details relating to raising concerns. However, if the concern, escalates to a complaint please follow stage 1 Informal contact of the complaints policy.

Scope and Application

This policy applies only to complaints by parents. The School has separate procedure to cover concerns or complaints that a boarder may have.

This policy applies to complaints from each of the following:

* a Parent or Parents of current pupils;
* a Parent or Parents of former pupils if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was registered at the School; References to a Parent, in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of a pupil.
* The School will not normally investigate anonymous complaints.
* Requests for financial awards, such as claims for compensation, damages or fee refunds, are beyond the scope of the School’s complaints procedures.
* All parents should be aware that regardless of the nature of a complaint and whether or not it is upheld, parents are not entitled to details of any related sanctions imposed on staff, pupils or parents for reasons of data protection and confidentiality.
* All concerns relating to child protection or child welfare will be referred by the recipient to the School’s Designated Safeguarding Lead.
* This policy does not apply to exclusions, to which the School's Exclusion Policy applies. Appendix4 provides detail of the School's position in relation to unreasonable complaints.

Informal contact – Stage 1

If you have a complaint, please speak first to your child’s teacher. If you feel it appropriate, you may bypass the teacher, and contact the Headteacher directly. If your complaint is about the Headteacher, you should contact the Chair of Trustees.

Response

The member of staff who receives the complaint will either:
1. Discuss the complaint with you immediately, or
2. Make a firm arrangement to discuss the complaint with you within 5 school days, or
3. Refer the complaint to a member of staff who can deal with it and follow up to ensure that the referral has been successful within 5 school days.

Complaints will normally be resolved at this stage. If appropriate, a plan to fix the problem will be initiated, along with an agreed review date. At this time, you should check that your complaint has been fully addressed. You should also be informed about how to escalate your complaint if you find it necessary.

Written response – Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the response to your complaint, you should put your complaint in writing to the Headteacher. Your written complaint should be acknowledged within 5 school days. This acknowledgement should include a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This should normally be no later than 14 school days after acknowledgement of the complaint. If the target date is impossible to meet, a letter should be sent explaining the reason for the delay, giving a revised target date. Written complaints should have a written response.

Your complaint will then be formally investigated. You may be called upon to provide more details of the circumstances of the complaint if this is necessary.

The written response you receive should include a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this should include any action the school will take to resolve the complaint.

Panel hearing – Stage 3

If, after having put your complaint to the Headteacher you are not satisfied, you may appeal. Your appeal should be in writing to the Chair of Trustees, also outlining why your complaint has not been resolved so far and your desired outcome. You should receive a written acknowledgement of your appeal within five school days.

An appeal panel of two or three Trustees and a person independent of the management and running of the school will be assembled to hear your complaint. The panel will be convened within 28 school days of your complaint to the Chair of Trustees. You may be accompanied if you wish. Panel members should have had no involvement with the complaint up to this stage. The aim of the appeal panel will be to achieve reconciliation between you and the school. They will review the complaint, if necessary, interview those involved, and endeavour to find a solution.

The panel’s findings and recommendations will be documented, and a copy will be sent to you, the Headteacher and the Chair of Trustees, and the person about whom the complaint was made within 14 school days of the panel hearing.

Records

All details of written complaints that have been made should be recorded in the School Complaints Book. This should include meetings, letters and telephone conversations, together with resolutions, action plans and review dates as appropriate, and should indicate whether complaints were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing. The records should detail action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).

All records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State for Education or a body conducting a government approved school inspection may request access to them.

Policy Reviewed: 4th DECEMBER 2024
Formal complaints since last review: 1

Review Date: 4th December 2025