

COMPLIMENTS CONCERNS & COMPLAINTS POLICY



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1. Aims

Wey Education aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from clients and parents of pupils at both InterHigh and Academy 21, and others.


When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- be impartial and non-adversarial
- facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- respect complainants’ desire for confidentiality
- treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- ensure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- consider how the complaint can feed into school and organisational improvement evaluation processes

We try to resolve concerns or complaints by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.

Wey Education will aim to give the complainant the opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full.





To support this, we will ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the Wey Education and InterHigh / Academy 21 websites.

Throughout the process, we will be sensitive to the needs of all parties involved, and make any reasonable adjustments needed to accommodate individuals.

2. Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements set out in part 7 of the schedule to [the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), which states that we must have and make available a written procedure to deal with complaints from parents of pupils at the school.

It is also based on guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on [creating a complaints procedure that complies with the above regulations](#), and refers to [good practice guidance on setting up complaints procedures](#) from the Department for Education (DfE).

3. Definitions and scope

3.1 Definitions

- a **compliment** is defined, by Wey Education, as an expression (by parents / carers / clients) of particular satisfaction with a facet of our service – feedback of this kind helps us know what is working well

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- A **concern** is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”. Most issues raised by parents and pupils are concerns rather than complaints. The Directors at Wey Education and the Senior Education Team are committed to resolving such concerns swiftly and effectively without recourse to the formal procedures outlined below.
- A **complaint** is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”

3.2 Scope

This policy covers concerns and complaints that are raised by parents and carers of students at Interhigh / Academy 21; that is those in relation to the provision of education, the related administration and information technology as well as Finance. Wey Education intends to resolve complaints informally where possible, at the earliest possible stage. There may be occasions when complainants would like to raise their concerns formally. This policy outlines the procedure relating to handling such complaints.

This policy does **not** cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of special educational needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Exclusions
- Whistle-blowing
- Staff grievance
- Staff code of conduct



Please see our separate policies for procedures relating to these types of complaint.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The respondent / complainant

It should be noted that a respondent may well wish to provide Wey Education with:

- complimentary feedback about a facet(s) of our provision and its impact.

Complainants will get a more effective and timely response to their concern / complaint if they:

- follow these procedures and *strictly adhere to the response stages outlined in this policy*
- co-operate with the school throughout the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- treat all those involved with respect
- do not publish details about the complaint on social media

4.2 Policy Administrator

The Policy Administrator will:

- be the contact point for the complainant and the school, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before a review meeting or an appeal panel hearing
- arrange the complaints hearing (if required) at Stage 2
- record the outcome of review meetings / appeal hearings and communicate these as per this policy

4.3 Concerns / Complaints Management

Concerns / Complaints covered by this policy will be:

- managed by the Policy Administrator
- investigated by the relevant remit team managers (s); e.g. Education, Finance, Operations, Information Technology (IT) for concerns raised at Stage 1
- overseen by the relevant remit senior managers (e.g. Finance, Operations, IT or Associate Dean Interhigh for Education) for concerns raised at Stage 2
- led by the CEO / Chair of the Appeal Panel (Company Board) for complaints at Stage 3.

4.4 Appeals Panel of Wey Directors

The Appeals Panel will:

- consist of Directors of Wey Education with one appointee designated Chair of the Panel
- include at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, including one who is independent of the management and running of the school
- where the complaint is about a member/ members of the Company Board, involve three people independent of the management of Wey Education
- chair and attend the Appeals Panel meeting at Stage 3 ensuring that everyone is treated with respect throughout
- enable the complainant to present their case in person if they wish
- make sure all parties see the relevant information and understand the purpose of the committee

5. Principles for investigation

When investigating a complaint, we will try to clarify:

- what has happened
- who was involved
- what the complainant feels would put things right

5.1 Time scales

The complainant must raise the complaint within three months of the incident. If the complaint is about a series of related incidents, they must raise the complaint within three months of the last incident.

We will consider exceptions to this time frame in circumstances where there were valid reasons for not making a complaint at that time and the complaint can still be investigated in a fair manner for all involved.

When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been received on the next school day.

If at any point we cannot meet the time scales we have set out in this policy, we will:

- Set new time limits with the complainant
- Send the complainant details of the new deadline and explain the delay

6. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the Senior Education Team / Company Board)

6.1 Stage 1: informal concern


Wey Education will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly. It may be the case that the provision or clarification of information will resolve the issue.

The complainant should raise the concern as soon as possible with the Policy Administrator using the Complaint, Compliment and Comment process on our website. The school will acknowledge informal concerns within two days and usually provide an informed response within ten school days. A Manager (in the relevant remit; (e.g. education / IT etc) will carry out this process. Most informal concerns will be satisfactorily resolved at this stage. However, if you are not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 1, there will be an opportunity within the process to consider moving to Stage 2 of this Complaints Procedure.

6.2 Stage 2: formal complaint

Formal complaints can be raised, via the Policy Administrator by using the Complaint, Compliment and Comment process on our website. If the complainant does not have access to the website, the complainant should write directly to the Policy Administrator and provide details such as relevant dates, times, and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents, and what they feel would resolve the complaint. These will be logged and managed in the same way as the website form process.

If complainants need assistance raising a formal complaint, they can contact the Policy Administrator. Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged within two working days.



A Senior Manager will arrange for investigation to occur and make the final determination on a response to the complainant. A written response will be issued within fifteen working days. In many cases, the written response will set out the actions that have been taken in relation to the issues identified.

The aim is to resolve the matter as speedily as possible. However, if you are dissatisfied with the result at this stage, you will need to let us know in writing that you wish to appeal the outcome within five working days in writing to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO will confirm in writing the decision on whether to convene the Appeals Panel within ten working days.

6.3 Stage 3: Appeals Panel

The Appeals Panel will convene to consider any complaints that have reached Stage 3, led by the Chair of the Appeals Panel of Directors (either the CEO or her delegate). The aim of the appeals panel hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between Wey and the complainant. The appeals panel will have heard a Stage 3 complaint within fifteen working days of its receipt. We will make every effort to ensure the location of this Appeals Panel session takes account of the complainant's home address. The complainant may be accompanied to this meeting and should inform the school of the identity of their companion in advance. This policy provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is – (i) provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and (ii) available for inspection by contacting the CEO by telephoning 044 (0)1873 813 90. The Appeals Panel will make its decisions and the Chair of the Appeals Panel will convey these in writing. All parties shall be notified of the Panel's decision in writing within three working days after the date of the hearing. The letter will also contain what you need to do as the complainant if you wish to take the matter further. The Appeals Panel hearing is the last stage of the complaints process. The Policy Administrator manages correspondence and record keeping


8. Unreasonably persistent complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- has made the same complaint before, and it has already been resolved by following the school's complaints procedure
- makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive
- knowingly provides false information
- insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure
- pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refused to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this procedure and the time frames it sets out
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on
- makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time
- seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

Steps we will take

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter



throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact Wey Education in a disruptive way, we may put communications strategies in place. We may:

- give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as [Citizens Advice](#)
- put any other strategy in place as necessary]

Stopping responding

We may stop responding to the complainant when all of these factors are met:

- we believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- we have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- the complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

Where we stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring communications with Wey Education personnel.

9.2 Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we had not previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete
- direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If there are new aspects, we will follow this procedure again.

9.3 Complaint campaigns

Where Wey Education receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the organisation, Wey Education may respond to these complaints by:

- publishing a single response on the school website
- sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with Wey Education's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

10. Record keeping

Wey Education will establish a concerns / complaints inbox and maintain a database and record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

This is except where the Secretary of State (or someone acting on their behalf at the DfE) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation/ Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and retention schedule. We will publish information on our website, annually and retrospectively, citing the number of complaints handled that reached the formal stage or above in the previous academic year. This policy provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with the formal procedure and (i) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure (Stage 2), or proceed to a panel hearing; and (ii) action taken by the school service as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld)

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the Company Board in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the Company Board is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the school will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the Board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

11. Learning lessons

The Company Board will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Senior Leadership Team, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.


12. Monitoring arrangements

The Company Board will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in ensuring that complaints are handled properly. The Senior Leadership Team, on behalf of the Company Board, will track the number and nature of complaints, and review underlying issues as stated in section 11.

This policy will be reviewed by Company Board every three years

13. Links with other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

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- Safeguarding policy and procedures
 - Admissions policy
 - Staff grievance procedures
 - Staff disciplinary procedures

Concerns / Complaints about Education: process

OVERVIEW

