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GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Drafted by: HR in consultation with Judicium

Reviewed: July 2022

Next Review: September 2023

Introduction

It is our policy to ensure that all employees have access to a procedure to help deal with any grievances relating to your employment fairly and without unreasonable delay.

We aim to investigate any formal grievance you raise, hold a meeting to discuss it with you, inform you in writing of the outcome, and give you a right of appeal if you are not satisfied. Information and proceedings relating to a grievance will remain confidential as far as possible.

This procedure applies to employees of the Woodside High School only (which will be referred to as "you" in this policy).

This procedure does not form part of your contract of employment, and we may vary or amend it at any time. It does however set out the school's current practices and you are strongly advised to familiarise yourself with its content.

Raising Grievances Informally

Most grievances can be resolved quickly and informally through discussion with your line manager, who in most cases, will be best placed to respond to the complaint. There may be occasions where it is inappropriate to raise the matter informally, in which case you should raise your grievance formally (as outlined below).

If you feel unable to speak to your line manager, for example, because the complaint concerns him or her, then you should speak informally to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

If informal discussions do not resolve the issue, you should follow the formal procedure.

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Mediation

The option of mediation to resolve the grievance can be considered at any stage of the grievance. If mediation fails, the grievance procedure will resume from the point it was postponed.

Using this Procedure

Issues that could cause grievances may include:

- terms and conditions of employment;
- health and safety;
- work relations;
- bullying and harassment;
- new working practices;
- working environment;
- organisational change; and
- discrimination.

This procedure should not be used to complain about pay, decisions taken in respect of performance under a capability procedure or dismissal or disciplinary action. If you are dissatisfied with any disciplinary action, you should submit an appeal under the appropriate procedure.

We have a separate Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy that may be useful if you have been the victim of bullying or harassment or wish to report an incident of bullying or harassment involving other people.

We operate a separate Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure to enable employees to report illegal activities, wrongdoing, or malpractice. However, where you are directly affected by the matter in question, or where you feel you have been victimised for an act of whistleblowing, you may raise the matter under this procedure.

Written grievances will be placed on your personnel file along with a record of any decisions taken and any notes or other documents compiled during the grievance process. These will be processed lawfully in accordance with Data Protection principles.

If you have a complaint or concern, you should follow the procedures below.

Right to be Accompanied

You have the right to be accompanied at any formal meeting (including an appeal meeting) by a single companion who is either:

- a work colleague;
- an accredited trade union representative; or
- an official employed by a trade union.

If you wish to bring a companion, you should inform us as soon as possible, so that arrangements can be made in good time. You, and any companion, should make every effort to attend the meeting.

A representative has the right to:

- explain and sum up your case;
- respond to any views expressed at the hearing; and
- confer with you during the hearing.

A representative may not:

- answer questions on your behalf;
- address the hearing if you do not wish the representative to do so; or
- prevent the school from explaining its case.

If the representative cannot attend on the date we have set for the meeting(s), then the school may agree to postpone the meeting for up to five working days (or longer if both you and we agree).

The right to be accompanied does not apply to informal grievance meetings or investigation meetings.

Overlapping grievance and disciplinary cases

If the grievance is raised during a disciplinary process, it may be appropriate to either:

- temporarily suspend the disciplinary process in order to deal with the grievance;
- deal with both issues concurrently; or
- take alternative action.

You will be informed in writing of the way in which we propose to deal with the issues.

Formal Written Grievances

If your grievance cannot be resolved informally, or it is inappropriate to do so, you should raise the matter formally in writing and submit it to the Headteacher, indicating that it is a formal grievance. If the grievance concerns the Headteacher you should submit it to the Chair of Governors instead. The written grievance should contain a brief description of the nature of your complaint, including any relevant facts, dates, and names of individuals involved, together with the resolution you are seeking. In some situations, we may ask you to provide further information.

Grievance Meetings

We will arrange a grievance meeting with you, normally within 10 working days of receiving your written grievance (unless it is felt an investigation into the complaint would be beneficial before such a meeting takes place).

The purpose of a grievance meeting is to enable you to explain your grievance and how you think it should be resolved, as well as to assist us in reaching a decision based on the available evidence and the representations you have made. The meeting may be adjourned if it is felt that further investigations are necessary or more time is needed to consider the grievance. The School will decide on the appropriate person to conduct the grievance meeting with you and to determine the outcome of your grievance, taking into account the nature of your complaint and any person/s to whom the complaint relates.

The grievance meeting may be conducted by your line manager or Head of Department. If the complaint concerns your line manager or Head of Department, the hearing may be conducted by another member of the Senior Leadership Team or the Headteacher. It may in some circumstances be appropriate for your meeting to be conducted by a governor or an external HR consultant.

You may be accompanied by an appropriate work colleague or an accredited trade union official at any formal grievance meeting, as detailed above.

Grievance Investigations

It may be necessary to carry out an investigation into your grievance. Where appropriate, the investigation may be initiated before holding the grievance meeting with you. In other cases, the grievance meeting may be held first before deciding what investigation (if any) to carry out.

If an investigation is necessary, the amount of any investigation required will depend on the nature of the allegations and will vary from case to case. The investigation may involve interviewing and taking statements from you and any witnesses, and/or reviewing relevant documents. You must co-operate fully and promptly in any investigation. This may include informing us of the names of any relevant witnesses, disclosing any relevant documents to us and attending interviews, as part of our investigation.

An investigation may be carried out either by the person appointed to conduct your grievance meeting and determine your grievance or by someone else appointed by the school.

Grievance Outcome

Following your grievance meeting/s and any investigation carried out, the person appointed to determine the outcome of your grievance, will inform you in writing within a reasonable time of the outcome of your grievance and if appropriate any further action that the school intends to take to resolve the grievance.

Where appropriate we may hold a further meeting to give you this information in person, but the outcome will always be confirmed in writing as well.

The school will also remind you of your right to appeal.

Right to Appeal

If the grievance has not been resolved to your satisfaction you may appeal in writing to the Clerk of the Governing Body within 10 working days of the date of the grievance decision you are appealing against, setting out the grounds for and basis of the appeal in writing.

You will then be invited to attend an appeal meeting, normally within 10 working days of receiving your written appeal. Grievance appeals will usually be heard by a panel of three Governors.

The original person appointed to determine the outcome of your grievance may attend the appeal hearing on behalf of the school.

You may be accompanied by an appropriate work colleague or an accredited trade union official at any grievance appeal meeting, as detailed above.

All documents from the original grievance meeting and investigation (if applicable) will be sent to all parties attending the appeal prior to the appeal hearing, together with the outcome of the original grievance and notes of any further meetings. A copy of the letter of appeal and any new relevant evidence will also be sent to all parties in advance of the hearing.

No decisions will be made during the appeal hearing itself. The panel may consider it necessary to carry out further investigations before reaching any decisions.

The panel will confirm its final decision in writing without unreasonable delay.

The appeal decision is the final stage of the School's Grievance Procedure.

