

Waldorf UK

Complaints Policy of Waldorf UK [Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship Ltd (SWSF)]

Waldorf UK views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint. We consider our complaint's procedure to be a tool supporting conflict resolution.

In dealing with a complaint we will take into account Principles of Good Complaints Handling published by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

<https://www.ombudsman.org.uk/sites/default/files/page/0188-Principles-of-Good-Complaint-Handling-bookletweb.pdf>

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.
- To make sure everyone at Waldorf UK knows what to do if a complaint is received.
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired.
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or grievance made regarding any aspect of Waldorf UK but usually related to the following:

- failure to follow our own policies and procedures.
- failure to follow statutory or legal duties.
- disappointment regarding a realistic or reasonable expectation of practice.
- inappropriate staff or trustee conduct.

Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from any person or organisation who has a legitimate interest in Waldorf UK.

A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing. When made verbally, we will require details and the basis of the complaint is followed up in writing. This is to help ensure clarity of the issues concerned and to help us to investigate and respond appropriately.

This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should use the Waldorf UK Discipline and Grievance policies.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the board of trustees.

(See procedure below)

Complaints' Procedure

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:

Written complaints may be sent to Waldorf UK at 35 Park Road, London NW1 6XT or by e-mail to admin@waldorfeducation.uk

Verbal complaints may be made by phone to 02045 2499333 or in person to any of Waldorf UK staff, volunteers or trustees or at any of our events or activities.

A copy of this complaints' procedure must be sent to all complainants.

Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded.

The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint.
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number.
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to Waldorf UK (for example: client, member)
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints' procedure.
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take.
- Ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see **Appendix 1**

Resolving Complaints

Stage One

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate.

Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the Company Secretary within one week.

On receiving the complaint, Company Secretary records it in the complaints log. If it has not already been resolved, they delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action. If the complaint is against the Executive Director, then the complaint will be investigated by a Board member.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given an opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged within 5 working days. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints' procedure should be attached.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within 20 working days of the notification of the appointment of the person investigating the complaint. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Board level. Notification by the complainant must be done within 28 calendar days of the conclusion of stage one. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Chair for review (unless the complaint relates in any way to the Chair in which case it will be passed to another Trustee). If the complaint is against the Executive Director and already considered by a Board Member it will be passed to two members of the Board with no previous knowledge of the complaint.

The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within 5 working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The person (or persons) who receives Stage Two complaints may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within 25 working days of being submitted to stage 2. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution through CEDR. The costs for this will be shared equally by the SWSF and the complainant.

External Stage

The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage.

Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

Waldorf UK
[Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship].
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Appendix 1 - Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry
- Show an interest in what is being said
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation
e.g "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
- Don't promise things you can't deliver
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told
- Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal

Appendix 1a - Notification of Complaint Form.

Formal Complaint Notification

Your name and contact details:

<p>Please set out the issues of your complaint. Be as specific as possible, giving dates, sequence of events etc.:</p>
<p>Are you attaching paperwork? If so, please list it here:</p>
<p>What do you feel needs to be done to resolve this matter?</p>

Signed: Date:

Please return this form to admin@waldorfeducation.uk or Waldorf Uk 35 Park Road, London NW1 6QT. .