

King Edward's Independent Schools Complaints Policy and Procedure

Introduction

This policy applies to all parents of pupils at KES and KEHS.

KEHS and KES have long prided themselves on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to their pupils, and the strong relations between home and school based on mutual respect and good communication. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the Schools in accordance with this policy. Our aim is to have an open organisation, climate and culture.

This policy is available on the KEHS website (www.kehs.org.uk) and the KES website (www.kes.org.uk) and is also available on request from the school office. In this policy "parents" includes current parents, carers and legal guardians, and may at the Schools' discretion include a parent whose child has recently left the School.

We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. When we refer to **school working days**, we mean Monday to Friday, when School is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website.

Application

This policy applies to complaints from parents of current pupils and to parents of former pupils if the complaint was raised when the pupil was registered at the School.

This procedure relates to complaints other than those relating to: whistleblowing, staff grievances and disciplinary procedures, matters likely to warrant a child protection investigation, applications for admission to the school, and complaints about services provided by third parties using school facilities or premises. Issues relating to exclusion or removal of pupils are dealt with through the review provisions of the Exclusions, Removal and Review Policy.

During the course of the investigation of a complaint, information may come to light that indicates potential misconduct or a capability issue. In such cases, further action may be taken under the schools' Employee Policies, once the complaint has been resolved.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

- If parents have a complaint, they should normally contact their child's Form Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him or her to consult a Head of Department, a Head of Year, a member of the Senior Leadership Team or the Head of School.
- Complaints made directly to a Head of Department, a Head of Year, or a member of the Senior Leadership Team will usually be dealt with by them personally, unless they deem it more appropriate to ask the Form Teacher or Subject Teacher to respond.

- If a complaint refers to a member of the Senior Leadership Team, it should be made to the Head of School. If the complaint refers to the Head of School, it should be made to the Chief Master & Principal. If the complaint refers to the Chief Master & Principal, it should be made to the Chair of the Independent Schools' Governing Body ('ISGB').
- The person dealing with the complaint will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved **within ten school working days** or in the event that the member of staff and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents may proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head of School without delay, and at most within 15 school days of the conclusion of Stage 1 above. The parents should state in the letter that they want the matter to be dealt with under the Stage 2 procedure. Parents should state the nature of the complaint, state the remedy sought, and include all relevant information. Parents should note that the complaint at this stage should not change in scope from that presented in Stage 1. Should any new matters be presented, parents will usually be advised that they will be dealt with under Stage 1. The complaint will be acknowledged within **five school working days**. The Head of School will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- It may be necessary for the Head of School to carry out further investigations and he will usually appoint a member of the Senior Leadership Team to act as investigator. The investigator may request additional information from the parents and will probably wish to speak to them personally and to others who have knowledge of the circumstances. The investigator will prepare a report on the investigation which will be considered by the Head of School.
- Once the Head of School is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made, in consultation with the Chief Master & Principal, and parents will be informed of this decision in writing, usually **within twenty school working days** from the receipt of the complaint. The Head of School will also give reasons for the decision.

- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.
- In the event of a formal complaint about the Head of School, it should be addressed to the Chief Master & Principal. In the event of a formal complaint about the Chief Master & Principal, it should be addressed to the Chair of ISGB who will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take. In all cases above, parents will be informed of the decision within 20 school working days of receipt of the complaint.
- Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept securely in School.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents are dissatisfied with the Head of School's decision under Stage 2, they should put their request for a Panel Hearing in writing to the Chair of ISGB, c/o the Foundation Office, Edgbaston Park Road, Birmingham, B15 2UD **within ten school working days** of the decision. It is not possible to move to this stage without completing Stage 2 of this procedure.

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- The Clerk to the Governors will convene a meeting of the Review Panel. They will, on behalf of the Panel, acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within fifteen school working days.
- The Review Panel will consist of at least three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Panel members shall be appointed by the Clerk to the Governors and one of them will be appointed to be the Chair of the Panel.
- If the Review Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than **five working days** prior to the hearing.
- The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative or friend. The Panel hearing is not legal proceedings and so legal representation is not necessary. If the parents do wish to be accompanied by someone who is legally qualified, they should notify the Chair of the Review Panel of this at least **five school working days** prior to the hearing. The parents should note that the Panel will wish to speak to them directly and this person will not be permitted to act as an advocate.
- At **least two school working days** before the Review Panel hearing, the Head of School will provide a statement to the Review Panel and to the parents of the circumstances of the case and the action he has taken so far.

- The parents, and friend and pupil if attending, will come before the Review Panel at the same time as the Head of School. When it is agreed that all have read and understood the Head of School's statement, the parents will make their statement, identifying the factors which give grounds for their complaint. There will be an opportunity for clarification and discussion of the points raised by all concerned.
- The parent, the Head of School, and, where relevant, the person complained about will be given a written copy of the Review Panel's findings and recommendations within five school working days. The findings of the panel will be final.
- A copy will be filed in School for inspection on the premises, only by the Chair of ISGB, the Chief Master & Principal, and the Head of School.
- The correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential, except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education & Skills Act 2008 requests access to them. The School will provide, upon request to the Independent Schools' Inspectorate, a written record of all formal complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

Parents have the right to contact the Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI) if they have a complaint that has not been concluded to their satisfaction through the School's Complaints Procedure. ISI can be contacted at concerns@isi.net, on 020 7600 0100 or at the following address:

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Independent Schools Inspectorate
CAP House
9 - 12 Long Lane
London
EC1A 9HA

It is expected that complaints will follow the School's Complaints Procedure before ISI is contacted.

Record of complaints

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially, and that the School will look beyond the immediate complaint to ensure that it does not represent a deeper issue that needs to be addressed.

The School will maintain a written record of all formal complaints and of whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or proceed to a Panel hearing. The written record will also include a record of the action taken by the School as a result of these complaints. This record is reviewed by governors on an annual basis.

At KEHS, matters raised by parents during 2023-24 were all resolved at Stage 1.

At KES, matters raised by parents during 2023-24 were all resolved at Stage 1.

Further notes on the Complaints Policy

Complaints about matters concerning Visiting Music Teachers (VMT's): VMT's are not employed by the School, nevertheless, any initial complaint concerning a VMT should be made through School using the above procedures in the first instance. The School will directly investigate and manage any complaints that involve safeguarding concerns and will usually pass those that do not to the VMT to investigate and manage under their own self-employed procedures.

Complaints not in scope: these include complaints concerning prospective pupils (this policy relates to current pupils), statutory assessment of special educational needs, and matters likely to require child protection investigation (these should be handled under the child protection and safeguarding policies).

'Group' complaints: where parents raise simultaneous and similar complaints pertaining to more than one pupil, these will generally be dealt with separately.

Serial and unreasonable complaints: on occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints procedure having been followed, the complainant tries to re-open the same issue, they will be informed that the matter is now closed. Further serial or persistent contact on the matter will then not be responded to.

Vexatious complaints: these are complaints which are persistent, harrasing, prolific and repetitious or designed to disrupt or lack any serious purpose or value. The Chief Master & Principal may decide it is time to stop responding in such circumstances. This will only be after all reasonable steps have been taken to address the complainant's legitimate concerns and the complainant has been given a clear statement of the School's position and of their options. In these cases, measures may be taken such as restricting the individual to a single point of contact and restricting the number of times contact may be made each term.

Confidentiality: it is expected that once raised with the School, the interaction with the School and the outcome of the complaint will be kept confidential, and in particular not disclosed on social media.

The Head of School is responsible for the monitoring and review of the Complaints

Policy and Procedure. Reviewed August 2024 (to be reviewed in August 2025)