



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Policy area

Parents

Statutory regulation

Education Act 2002

SLT Lead

Director of Finance and Operations

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THE KING ALFRED SCHOOL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. AIM

Our school ethos promotes open communication with parents and encourages a continuing dialogue between home and school throughout a child's education. The aim of this policy is to ensure that a complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level, and resolved as soon as possible. We will try to resolve every complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing our systems and procedures in light of the circumstances.

2. INTRODUCTION

This Complaints Procedure applies to the parents of pupils currently registered at King Alfred School and to past pupils if the complaint was raised at the time that the pupil was still registered at the school.

A complaint is any matter which a parent of a pupil is unhappy about and seeks action by the school in order to redress. The purpose of this Procedure is to ensure that parents have the opportunity to raise any complaint that they may have, secure in the knowledge that it will be dealt with properly and fully.

There are three stages to the process:

- Stage 1 : Informal Approach
- Stage 2 : Formal Approach
- Stage 3 : Panel Hearing

Each of these stages are described below.

This policy is made available to parents on our website and can be made available in large print or other more accessible format, if required. If assistance is required with making a complaint, for example because of a disability, parents should contact the Director of Finance and Operations who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.

STAGE 1: INFORMAL APPROACH

If parents and guardians are concerned about an issue relating to their child's academic or pastoral wellbeing, including those children in the EYFS, they should contact their child's class teacher in the Lower School, or form tutor in the Upper School. Parents should do this by telephone or e-mail.

Class teachers or form teachers will acknowledge the communication by email or telephone within 48 hours, and then follow up on the concern raised, and seek to resolve the issue.

If this is not successful, then

- Lower School parents should contact the Head of Lower School
- Upper School parents should contact the Head of Department for an academic issue or Head of Year for a pastoral issue, and following that the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team.

This second communication will be acknowledged by email or telephone within 48 hours, and the relevant member of staff will seek to resolve the issue.

We will aim to resolve all concerns at Stage 1 within 10 term-time working days from when the issue is first raised.

If there is a concern about an issue other than academic progress or pastoral wellbeing then parents should contact the Director of Finance and Operations. The Director of Finance and Operations will acknowledge the communication within 48 hours by telephone or email, and seek to resolve the issue within 10 working days from when the issue is first raised. If the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Council, who can be contacted in confidence via the Clerk to Council (or in their absence, the Director of Finance and Operations).

No complaint may be brought under this Procedure in relation to the non-payment of any sum(s) owing to the school. If a parent has a complaint regarding any action taken (or proposed to be taken) by the school as a result of their failure to pay any sum(s) owing to the school, the parent may write to the Director of Finance and Operations who will refer the matter to the Treasurer and/or Chair of Council. Similarly, if a parent wishes to make a complaint, their attention will be drawn to the school's standard Terms & Conditions under which a place is accepted; the making of a complaint does not remove the obligation to settle fees due and payable under those terms and conditions.

STAGE 2: FORMAL APPROACH

If the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved by Stage 1, then parents may lodge a formal complaint in writing to the Head, stating explicitly the wish to invoke the formal complaints procedure.

This will be acknowledged within 48 hours by letter or email.

The Head will seek to meet the parents concerned to discuss the matter as soon as possible but within 10 term time days of receiving the formal complaint. If possible a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Head to initiate an investigation into the complaint and, in such cases, the parents will be informed of this process with a date agreed for follow up action and meetings. The matter will be treated in as confidential a manner as possible. Discussions of the case will be limited to the Head, and those that need to be consulted. Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews.

In deciding on how to carry out the investigation, the Head will, having regard to the nature of the complaint, and if appropriate, liaise with Social Services and/or the police. The School may carry out its own internal investigation or, where relevant, rely on an external investigation carried out by the social services and/or police. The Head may ask a senior member of staff to act as Investigator and/or may involve one or more Council members. The Head and/or Investigator may wish to speak to others who have knowledge of the circumstances.

The School will always apply the civil standard of proof, "the balance of probabilities" rather than the criminal one, "beyond reasonable doubt" in reaching its decisions.

The Head will inform any complainant of the outcome of the investigation and the resolution to the complaint within 15 term-time working days of the date of the parental meeting. The outcome will be communicated by letter.

If the complaint is against the Head, the Chair of Council will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will, in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for their decision.

If the parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to the more formal Stage 3 of this Procedure.

STAGE 3: REVIEW BY COMPLAINTS PANEL

We hope that any parent will judge that their complaint has been fully and fairly considered. If a parent is not satisfied, they may request that their complaint be referred to the Complaints Panel. A Complaints Panel hearing is a review of the decision taken by the Head at Stage 2. The Panel is not able to consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaints procedure.

Parents should write to the Director of Finance and Operations who will refer the matter to the Clerk to Council who will arrange for a Panel Hearing to consider the matter. The Clerk to Council will acknowledge the communication within 48 hours, and in consultation with the Chair of Council, appoint the Panel.

The Panel will consist of at least two members of Council, who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, and an additional individual independent of the management and running of the school. The Panel will appoint one of its number to act as Chair.

The Panel will meet within 20 term time working days of the receipt of the stage 3 written complaint. The Clerk to Council will provide all parties with a procedure and timescale to be followed and confirm the role of the Panel.

Copies of relevant documents will be distributed to members of the Panel and those attending the meeting not less than 3 working days before the Panel meets. The documents will be provided for the purpose of the meeting only.t

The Panel Hearing

The Panel hearing will normally take place at the school premises, or, at the discretion of the Chair of the Panel, at a nearby independent venue.

Those present at the hearing will normally be:

- Members of the Panel
- The Head and any appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team
- Other relevant school staff
- The complainant (together with friend or relation if appropriate [see below])
- Panel Secretary, (generally the Clerk to Council)
- Any other person at the discretion of the Chair of the Panel, for all or part of the meeting

Parents or guardians may be accompanied, by a friend or relation, for instance, but legal representation will not be appropriate. If they wish to be accompanied, they must give the Clerk to Council the name of the person attending at least 3 working days in advance of the panel meeting and the capacity in which they are attending.

The proceedings will be conducted in an informal manner. They will not be tape recorded by either party, but the Secretary will keep a minute of the main points that arise. All present will be entitled to write and retain their own notes. The meeting will be directed at all times by the Chair of the Panel who will ensure that all those present have the opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

All those present are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners. The Chair may at their discretion adjourn or terminate the meeting.

Each of the issues raised in the letter of complaint will be considered and discussed. If the Panel considers that further investigation is required, it will decide how it should be carried out.

As soon as possible after the hearing, the Panel will consider all facts it regards as relevant in reaching its decision and deciding upon any recommendations. In the case of an equality of votes the Chair of the Panel will exercise a casting vote.

The findings and recommendations of the Panel will be final and a copy will be provided to the complainant within 10 term time working days of the Panel hearing. Where relevant, the person complained about will also receive the finding and recommendations, and they will be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Council and the Head. Council members will be informed of the nature of the complaint, key findings and recommendations.

The Head will ensure that a copy of the panel's findings is maintained along with the files referred to under stages 1 and 2, together with the details of any action taken.

Note 1

If a complaint is received during the week preceding a school holiday, the time limits in this policy will run from the first day of the next term or half term period.

Note 2

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where disclosure is required by law including where the Secretary of State or a body carrying out an inspection of the school requires access to them.

Note 3

A written record will be kept of all formal complaints, noting whether they were resolved at the Formal Approach or whether they proceeded to a Panel Hearing. The record will also show action taken by the school as a result of complaints considered, regardless of whether they were upheld. The record will be retained for a minimum of 7 years after the child has left the school. The number of formal complaints for the previous school year will be published each year on the school's website.

Note 4 – Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

If the school receives a complaint from a parent or guardian relating to the schools' EYFS provision (Reception Class at KAS), the complaint must be investigated and the complainants will be notified of the outcome of an investigation within 28 days of that complaint being received in writing. EYFS complaints will be kept separately to those concerning the main school. The record of complaints will be made available to Ofsted and ISI on request.

The parents/guardians of children in the Reception Class (EYFS) only are entitled to contact the Independent Schools Inspectorate and/or Ofsted, if they believe that the school is not meeting the EYFS Regulatory Requirements.

Contact details are below:

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

Telephone 020 7600 0100
Email: concerns@isi.net

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone helpline 0300 123 4666
Textphone: 0300 123 4666
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Complaints Procedure – flowchart

Stage 1

- Concern or informal complaint sent by parent to class teacher/tutor
- Teacher acknowledges concern/complaint within 48 hours
- School follows up on concern/complaint and if not resolved, parent may send a second communication to Head of Lower School/HoD/HoY/SLT
- School acknowledges second communication within 48 hours
- Resolve concern/informal complaint within 10 term-time working days of when issue first raised

Stage 2

- Parent may raise to a "formal" complaint via the Head if not satisfied with Stage 1
- Head acknowledges formal complaint within 48 hours of receipt and arranges to meet parents within 10 term time days of receiving "formal" complaint
- Head arranges an investigation if appropriate
- Head informs parents of outcome of formal complaint within 15 term time days of meeting parents

Stage 3

- Parent may raise to a Stage 3 formal complaint if not satisfied with Stage 2 by writing to the Director of Finance and Operations
- Clerk to Council acknowledges receipt of Stage 3 complaint within 48 hours
- Clerk to Council arranges for a complaints panel hearing to take place within 20 term time working days of receipt of Stage 3 complaint
- Panel sends decision/recommendations to parents within 10 term time working days of the hearing