

Member of staff responsible : Head

Date of policy review : November 2017

Approved by Governors : November 2017

Next review date : November 2018

King's House School Complaints Procedure for Parents of Pupils

Introduction

King's House School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents of pupils do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school in accordance with this complaints procedure.

A copy of this procedure can be found on the school's website and is available to parents and staff. The school will also ensure that parents of pupils are made aware that this document is published on the website or available on request from the Senior Department office.

In this procedure the word "Parent/s" refers to a current parent, legal guardian or education guardian. It includes a parent whose child has recently left the School if the complaint was raised when the pupil was registered at the School.

Separate procedures apply in the event of a child protection issue or if the Head permanently excludes a pupil and the parents seek a Governors' review of that decision.

This procedure applies to all departments of the school and is inclusive of EYFS pupils.

This procedure has been approved by the Governors and Head of King's House School ("the Head").

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. The School does not distinguish between concerns and complaints and any matter about which a parent of a pupil is unhappy and seeks action by the school is considered to be a complaint and will be treated seriously and confidentially.

Parents can also be assured that a pupil will not be penalised for a complaint that they raise in good faith.

Complaints by EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) Parents

Parents of EYFS pupils may complain to the Independent School Inspectorate (ISI) and/or Ofsted if their complaint is about the fulfilment of EYFS requirements.

ISI (Independent School Inspectorate)

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA (Telephone: 020 7600 0100)

www.isi.net

Ofsted

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD (Telephone: 0300 123 1231)

www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The School must investigate a written complaint relating to its fulfilment of the EYFS requirements and notify parents of the outcome within 28 days of the complaint being received.

The time limits specified in the procedure detailed below shall be adapted by the School in relation to such a complaint in order to comply with this requirement.

Documentation and Record Keeping

The School keeps a written record of all formal parent complaints for at least three years for regular review by the Governors and for inspection by Inspectors. The record states whether the complaint was resolved at the formal stage or proceeded to a panel hearing and the action taken as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld).

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph 33 of the Schedule to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014, by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required during the course of an inspection or under other legal authority.

The School will fulfil the information requirements of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Directive 2013.

A written record of all formal complaints made during any specified period and the action taken as a result of each complaint will be made available to Ofsted and the ISI on request.

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

The following procedure details specific timeframes for the resolution of complaints. In this procedure “working day” means a day which is not a Saturday, a Sunday or a bank holiday in England. The word “normally” is used to introduce flexibility during school holiday periods. Any deviation from the normal timescale will be exceptional and convincingly explained to the parent by the school.

THE PROCEDURE

1. Stage One - Informal Resolution

- 1.1. It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally at the First Stage.
- 1.2. If a parent of any pupil has a complaint they should normally contact one of the following:
 - The pupil’s Form Teacher
 - The Head or a member of the Senior Management Team
 - The Bursar
 - The Chair of Governors (if the complaint is about the Head)
- 1.3. Complaints made directly to the Head or a senior member of staff will usually be referred to the Form Teacher or other relevant staff unless they deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- 1.4. The member of staff concerned will make a written record of all complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved to the parent’s satisfaction within 5 working days the parent will be advised that they may progress to Stage Two (Formal Resolution) of this procedure.

2. Stage Two – Formal Resolution

- 2.1. If the parent is not satisfied with the resolution of their complaint at the informal stage, they should write to the Head within 5 working days of receiving that decision. The letter should provide details of their complaint and the outcome they are seeking. If the complaint is about the Head, then the parents should address their complaint to the Chairman of the Governing Body who will deal with the matter in place of the Head and in accordance with Stage two of this procedure.
- 2.2. The Head will then either take the case forward himself or delegate responsibility, at this stage, to an appropriate member of the Senior Management Team. All references to “Head” under Stage Two shall automatically be taken to include any such person as appropriate.
- 2.3. In most cases, the Head will speak to and/or meet with the parents concerned, normally within 5 working days of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter. Every attempt will be made to reach a resolution at this stage.
- 2.4. It may be necessary for further investigations to be undertaken with the result that a resolution will be postponed while those investigations are carried out. The parents will be given an estimate of the time that is likely to be required to complete any necessary investigation.
- 2.5. Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept. The investigator will prepare a report on the investigation which will be considered by the Head in making his decision.
- 2.6. Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be notified in writing of the decision. The Head will also give reasons for his decision.
- 2.7. If the parents are still not satisfied they may progress to Stage Three (Panel Hearing) of this procedure within 5 working days of receiving written notice of the decision.

3. Stage Three – Panel Hearing

- 3.1. A Complaints Panel Hearing is a review of the decisions taken at Stage Two. The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been raised previously as part of the procedure. It is not within the powers of the Complaints Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents. The Complaints Panel may make recommendations to the School on these matters or any other issues as appropriate.

- 3.2. The parents should send written notice of their complaint to The Bursar, Kings House School, 68 Kings Road, Richmond, Surrey, TW10 6ES within 5 working days of receiving written notice of the decision reached at Stage Two. When doing so, the parents should:
 - Give reasonable particulars of their complaint; and
 - Specify the outcome they are seeking.
- 3.3. The Bursar will acknowledge the parents' request in writing within 3 working days.
- 3.4. The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel. The 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. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Chairman of Governors (or his nominee). The Panel will appoint its own Chairman. If the complaint has been dealt with at Stage Two by the Chairman of Governors, then the Chairman of Governors will not be on the Stage Three Complaints Panel.
- 3.5. The Bursar, on behalf of the Chairman of the Panel, will schedule a hearing to take place as soon as reasonably practicable and normally within 10 working days of the date of acknowledgement. The Panel will not normally sit during half terms or school holidays.
- 3.6. Where a complaint that reaches Stage Three is brought by one parent only, the School will (save in exceptional circumstances) keep informed, and invite to attend the Panel Hearing, any other adult who entered into the contract with the School for the education of the relevant pupil. The School also reserves the right to keep informed, and invite to attend the Panel Hearing, any other adult whom the School believes to have parental responsibility for the relevant pupil.
- 3.7. Within 3 working days after notifying their complaint to the Bursar in accordance with paragraph 3.2 above, the parent shall send the Bursar copies of all documentation on which they intend to rely at the hearing.
- 3.8. The parent shall produce, within 3 working days of the Bursar's request, any further information and documentation that the Bursar reasonably considers the Panel may require in order to make an informed decision about the complaint.
- 3.9. At least 3 working days before the hearing, the Head shall submit to the Panel a written statement setting out his views. The Bursar shall give a copy of the Head's statement to the parents.
- 3.10. The parents shall (on request) be provided with a copy of the pupil's school file.
- 3.11. Parents may be accompanied at the hearing by one other person who is over the age of 18. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Panel hearings are not legal proceedings and so legal representation will not be appropriate in most cases. If the parents do wish to be accompanied by someone who is legally qualified, they should notify the Bursar of this at least 5 working days prior to the hearing. Legal representation requires the prior approval of the Chairman of the Panel.

- 3.12. A clerk appointed by the Complaints Panel will take a handwritten minute of the proceedings. The Chairman of the Panel may decide that the hearing may be recorded or transcribed by a stenographer.
- 3.13. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how this should be carried out.
- 3.14. A hearing before the Complaints Panel is a private proceeding. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed or arising from the proceeding shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media. At the hearing both the school and the parents will be asked to confirm their agreement to the hearing taking place on this basis.
- 3.15. If the Chairman of the Panel reasonably believes the Panel should hear evidence from an individual in private (i.e. in the absence of the person bringing the complaint or any third party), he/she may do so. In those circumstances, the parents will be given reasons for that decision. The parents will be given a summary of the individual's relevant evidence after the event if the Chairman believes it to be relevant to the complaint. The Panel may withhold the identity of a pupil who gives evidence in private to the panel.
- 3.16. The panel may make decisions by majority vote.
- 3.17. The Panel's findings and recommendations in relation to the complaint shall be documented in the form of a report.
- 3.18. Within 5 working days after the hearing, The Bursar will send the parents and the Head a copy of the Panel's draft report. If the Panel's decision was reached by majority vote and there was a dissenting minority, the dissenting views shall be briefly summarised in the report.
- 3.19. On receipt of the report, if the parent believes that the report is not factually accurate, the parents shall inform the Bursar in writing within 2 working days, giving details of the alleged inaccuracies. If the Head believes that the report is not factually accurate, he will likewise inform the Bursar in writing within 2 working days, giving details of the alleged inaccuracies.
- 3.20. The Panel shall then finalise its report. A copy of the Panel's report will be:
- Sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parent and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
 - Made available for inspection on School premises by the Head and Board of Governors of Kings House School.
- 3.21. Subject to the rules set out in this document, the Panel may regulate their proceedings as they see fit.

4 Contractual Disputes – Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

- 4.1 Alternative Dispute Resolution is the name given to different methods of dealing with disputes without going to Court. Common ADR methods include mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication.
- 4.2 Schools and parents are not required to use ADR but schools, as traders, do have a responsibility to make parents aware that ADR is available for all disputes in relation to its contracts with them even if the School does not intend to use it.
- 4.3 If the School has been unable to resolve a contractual dispute through the internal complaints procedure, the school must advise the parents in writing:
- That the school cannot settle the complaint with the parents;
 - That 'Small Claims Mediation (UK) Ltd' at www.small-claims-mediation.co.uk or 'Ombudsman Services' at www.ombudsman-services.org are relevant certified ADR providers and would be competent to deal with the complaint, should the parent wish to use ADR.
 - Whether the school is prepared to submit to an Alternative Dispute Resolution procedure operated by 'Small Claims Mediation (UK) Ltd' or 'Ombudsman Services'.

Information made available in relation to paragraph 33 of the Schedule to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014.

Number of Formal Complaints made in the 2016-17 Academic Year: 1