



# COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Last Updated

September 2023

# 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 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.

## 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 then initiate an investigation into the complaint. 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 from the receipt of the written Stage 2 complaint. The outcome will be communicated by letter.

### 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, in their capacity as Secretary of the Council will arrange for a Panel Hearing to consider the matter. The Director of Finance and Operations 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 Secretary of the 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 and must be returned to the Secretary on its conclusion.

#### 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 Secretary to the 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.

The proceedings will be conducted in an informal manner. They will not be tape recorded, 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 5 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.

#### 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.

#### 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 School 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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)