



# COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

## Policy area

Parents

## Statutory regulation

Education Act 2002

Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

The Independent Schools (ISS) Guidance April 2026

The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025

## SLT Lead

Director of Finance and Operations

## Last Updated

April 2026

## Last Approved

Approval by Full Council December 2025

## Next review

October 2027

# 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 or concern 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 or concern 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 Resolution
- Stage 2 : Formal Resolution
- 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.

Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this will be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure. Complaints should be brought to the School's attention within a reasonable timeframe, normally within 3 months of the matter coming to the parents' attention.

## **STAGE 1: INFORMAL RESOLUTION**

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. 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 2 working term time days, 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 2 working term time days, 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 2 working term time days 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 upon the parent to settle fees when due and payable under those terms and conditions.

## **STAGE 2: FORMAL RESOLUTION**

If the concern or complaint 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 Stage 2 complaints procedure. This communication should clearly set out the complaint including any resolution the parents are seeking.

This will be acknowledged in writing within 2 working term time days. In order for the matter to be successfully resolved, the Head may require further information from the parents to help clarify the scope and nature of their concerns. To that end, the Head is likely to ask for a Complaints Form (see Appendix 1) to be completed within 3 working days. The School will only be able to seek resolution once it has received all relevant information and reserves the right to pause the process until the parents have provided this.

In most cases, the Head (or their nominee) 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, to discuss the matter. If possible a resolution will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out. The Head will determine who should carry out an investigation into the complaint and this may be someone external to the School. 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. Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews in relation to the complaint.

Once the Head (or their nominee) is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head will also give reasons for their decision. In most cases, the Head will make their decision and provide the parents with reasons within 15 term time working days of the date of the meeting. If this timeframe needs to be extended due to an extensive investigation, the Head will liaise with the parents to set out a reasonable timeframe.

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.

If the complaint is against the Head, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Council who will nominate an appropriate person to deal with the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the references above to the Head (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of Council to deal with the complaint against the Head.

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

### **STAGE 3: PANEL HEARING**

We hope that any parent will judge that their complaint has been fully and fairly considered. If a parent is not satisfied, they may seek to invoke Stage 3 so that their complaint is 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 within 5 working term time days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with

their grounds of appeal against the Stage 2 decision. In the event the parents are unable to provide their appeal within the time period stipulated, the School reserves the right to conclude the complaints process, consider the matter closed and not progress the matter to Stage 3.

If Stage 3 is invoked, the Director of Finance and Operations 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 5 term time working days, and in consultation with the Chair of Council, appoint the 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. The other two persons may be governors or other suitable individuals external to 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.

### **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 to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a friend or relation, for instance, but legal representation will not be appropriate and the companion should not be a lawyer. 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 Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.

A note-taker (normally the Clerk to Council) will attend the hearing to take a note. This will not be a verbatim note but an accurate reflection of what was discussed. Notes of the hearing will be shared with attendees as soon as practicable after the hearing.

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 in the Complaints log 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)**

Parents of EYFS pupil should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted.

The School will provide ISI/Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint.

The parents/guardians of children in the Reception Class (EYFS) may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements.

Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

ISI can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: [info@isi.net](mailto:info@isi.net)

Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), CAP House, 9 - 12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA  
Note 6 – Persistent correspondence

### **Note 5**

If a complaint is regarding the school's use of personal data, please contact the Director of Finance and Operations, who is also the Data Compliance Officer, at [carolinek@kingalfred.org.uk](mailto:carolinek@kingalfred.org.uk) who will acknowledge your complaint within 30 days. The complaint will be investigated and the outcome communicated without undue delay.

## Complaints Procedure – flowchart

### Stage 1

- Concern or informal complaint sent by parent to class teacher/tutor
- Teacher acknowledges concern/complaint within 2 working term time days
- 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 2 working term time days
- Concern/informal complaint aimed to be resolved 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 2 working term time days of receipt
- Head may request parents complete a Complaints Form within 3 working days
- Head 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 within 5 working term time days of receiving Stage 2 decision
- Clerk to Council acknowledges receipt of Stage 3 complaint within 5 term time days
- 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

## APPENDIX ONE – Complaints Form

### King Alfred School Complaint Form

To be completed by those with **parental responsibility** for a current pupil and returned to the Head via email within 3 working days

PLEASE USE **BLOCK CAPITALS**

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<b>Your name(s)</b>	
<b>Name of pupil(s), year(s) and your relationship to them</b>	
<b>Contact address</b>	
<b>Contact telephone day</b>	
<b>Contact telephone mobile</b>	
<b>Contact email address</b>	
<b>Details of the complaint</b>	
<b>Action taken to date (including staff member(s) who has/have dealt with it so far) and solutions offered</b>	
<b>The reason(s) that this was not a satisfactory resolution for you</b>	
<b>What action(s) would you like to be taken to resolve your complaint?</b>	

<b>Signature(s):</b>
<b>Date:</b>
<b>School use</b>
<b>Stage in the complaints procedure (circle as appropriate):</b> 1        2        3
<b>Date acknowledgement sent:</b>
<b>By whom:</b>
<b>Complaint referred to:</b>
<b>Action taken:</b>
<b>Date:</b>

**How we may use personal information**

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice which is available on the School's website. When dealing with complaints, the School (including any Panel members appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include:

- This completed complaint form
- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent(s) and pupil(s)
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations
- Pupil records (as appropriate)
- Witness statements (as appropriate)
- Name and contact details of member(s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes/minutes of meetings including the Panel hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision.

As part of the complaints process we may also process 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice, but potentially including, for instance, information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy.

The School will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Complaints Procedure.