



Parent Carer Complaints Policy

Kingsbridge Educational Trust Parent Carer Complaints Policy

This policy applies to any matter, (other than matters relating to admissions and exclusions, which have their own processes), which has been raised with a Trust school as a matter of concern, but which has not been capable of resolution and which the complainant or the school considers should be dealt with on a formal basis.

It is a pre-condition of the operation of this policy that the complainant shall have made reasonable attempts, as set out below, to seek a resolution and shall have acted in relation to the matter in a reasonable, measured and proportionate way. The Chair of the Local Governing Body or Chair of the appropriate committee with delegated responsibility shall have discretion to not allow a complaint to be pursued unless this precondition has been met.

1. In any community, misunderstandings arise or actions are taken which might be felt to militate against the spirits of fairness and common sense established in the school. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about policies or procedures, the conduct, actions or omissions of members of staff or governors at the school and the standards of teaching and learning. It is important to move swiftly to prevent the escalation of a minor problem into a major incident.

Early and informal resolution of your complaint

2. Do not hesitate to contact the school if you are uneasy or dissatisfied about something. It is important not to let concerns build up into serious mistrust or irritation. We are as keen to see things run smoothly as you are - after all, we all want the best for the children.
3. When you contact the school, say what concerns you and try to find out the facts. You will be in a much better position to know if you have grounds for a complaint when you are in possession of all the facts. We may be able to give an explanation or fill in details which answer your concerns. Do not rely solely on your child's account or on information from other parent/carers.
4. We welcome telephone calls from parent/carers who wish to talk about a problem before it becomes a complaint. A telephone call is better than a letter, and a temperate letter is better than an ultimatum or threat of action.
5. If a parent/carer approaches a member of the Local Governing Body directly, the Governor will direct that person to take the complaint to the Headteacher. In circumstances where the complaint is about the Headteacher, it will be appropriate for the Governor to make contact with the Chair of the Local Governing Body.

Contacting the school

6. Talk to the right person. It may be tempting to "go straight to the top" but putting the problem to the Headteacher often escalates something that could have been better resolved at a lower level.
7. Your first line of approach is your child's Form Tutor/Class Teacher. These are the people who have immediate responsibility for your child's studies, pastoral care, discipline and involvement in school life.

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In most cases, it is they who will be best informed about your child and will be best placed to resolve problems.

The school's expectation of parent/carers

8. The school seeks to build a partnership with parent/carers in the education of their children. This Complaints Policy sets out how the school will deal with your concerns.

We would ask that, for your part...

- do not believe everything you hear - things are often not entirely the way they are reported (by children or by other parent/carers); children very much see things from their own point of view and important elements, circumstances and nuances of the story are often omitted in the version told to parent/carers.
- find out what your child is like in school - you may be surprised; children in school can be very different people from the way they are at home - sometimes for better and sometimes for worse;
- trust the school to resolve matters according to the aims and methods stated in this policy;
- seek information from the school where you need it;
- consider what the school has to say;
- disclose full and frank information which would help the school to resolve situations with integrity and justice;
- take seriously, and report without delay, any concerns or suspicions of bullying;
- do not involve your child inappropriately in your complaint - it is important that the child sees parent/carers and school working together to resolve differences or difficulties; the child should not be placed in a position where s/he appears impertinent, insolent, disobedient or acts inappropriately; remember that directly countermanding a teacher's instruction or requirement is likely to make matters worse and bring confrontation rather than resolution.

What you can expect of the school

9. You can expect your complaint to be recorded, to be taken seriously and to be investigated.
10. You can expect staff to be professional. This may sometimes mean they do not agree with you and must put forward a view or make a decision that you may not like - but they will always explain their reasons.

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11. Your child will be involved only if the complaint directly and personally concerns them. Parent/Carers are sometimes worried that if they complain there will be adverse consequences for their child. The school is committed to ensuring that this is never the case.
12. You can expect members of staff to treat the complaint with appropriate confidentiality.

Support

13. At any stage of the complaints procedure, parents are welcome to bring with them a supportive friend who is not involved in the complaint.
14. Within the complaints procedure it is not appropriate for the school to engage in meetings to which parent/carers bring legal representatives or advisors.
15. The school will not generally enter into correspondence with solicitors or others in place of direct communication with parents.

Anonymous complaints

16. Anonymous complaints are unhelpful and will not usually be acted upon.

Formal Procedure

A written record will be kept of all formal complaints, whether or not they are resolved at the preliminary stages or proceed to a panel hearing, in accordance with stage 2 (below).

In accordance with the Regulatory Requirements for the Provision of Information (DfE Standard 6, para 6.j.), the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year will be available upon written request.

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept strictly confidential, except where they are required to be disclosed by statute.

Stage 1 – Formal

17. The complaint should be made formally in writing to the Headteacher who will log it centrally with Governor Services.
18. The Headteacher will document the complaint, acknowledge it in writing within 7 school days of receipt, and will consult with those directly involved, and aim to deal with the complaint within 14 school days of the receipt of the formal letter of complaint. Senior staff will be involved as appropriate at this level and this may form part of a wider investigation.
19. The Headteacher or a senior member of staff may also meet with the complainant and, following any necessary investigation or actions, provide a written response to the complaint.

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20. If the complaint cannot be resolved, the complainant will be advised of the next stage which is to have the complaint heard before a panel.

Stage 2 – Panel Hearing

21. If the parent/carers are not satisfied with the response to the complaint as dealt with at Stage 1 above then they will be invited to write to the Headteacher (at each school address) requesting a panel hearing.
22. The request for a panel hearing must be submitted as soon as possible and, in any event, within 7 school days of the decision in Stage 1 of the complaint being notified to parents. A panel hearing will be convened for the majority of complaints not capable of stage 1 resolution. The Chair of the Local Governing Body/delegated representative retain a discretion not to move to stage 2 when the complaint concerns already agreed school policies/procedures or is clearly vexatious.
23. The Headteacher will appoint a panel that will consider the complaint within 21 school days of receipt of the notification.
24. The panel will consist of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, including one person who is independent of the management and the running of the school.
25. Parents may attend and be accompanied by a witness at a panel hearing if they wish.
26. The panel will also consider the school's response and carry out further investigations and/or interviews as appropriate.
27. The panel will aim to reach a final decision on the complaint and recommend an appropriate action as quickly as possible, normally within 7 school days after the panel hearing.
28. The panel will record in writing its findings and recommendations and these will be sent to the complainant, the Headteacher and, where relevant, the person complained about. This will normally be sent out within 14 school days of the hearing.

Vexatious Complaints

There may be rare occasions when the complainant is deemed to be “vexatious”. This could be because it is clear that the complainant has insufficient grounds for complaint and is seeking to annoy, or that a complaint has been investigated and is found not to be justified, but the complainant persistently engages in making further accusations relating to the same issue.

Any such case will be dealt with on an individual basis but the Chair of the Local Governing Body or delegated representative reserves the right to close the complaint if the complainant is deemed to be “vexatious”, and to determine that the matter is now concluded.

Adopted by the Board of Directors
24th May 2018