KING EDWARD'S SCHOOL POLICY DOCUMENT

Title: Complaints Policy and Procedures

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Staff Responsibility	Headmaster

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The Regulatory Framework
All independent schools are required by law to draw up and implement a Complaints Procedure for parents of pupils pursuant to Part 7 of the ISS Regulations. This policy is based on the model Complaints Policy produced by ISBA and is reviewed by WSMT and approved by the Board of Governors annually.

Introduction

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

King Edward's School:
makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and in the school office during the school day.

will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available.

Complaints by parents of former pupils will be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil to which the complaint relates was still registered as a pupil at the School.

The only exception to this is if the complaint is a review of a decision taken by the Head to exclude or require the removal of a pupil under clause 6 of the School's Terms and Conditions of Contract in which case such a review must be requested by no later than five working days from the date of the decision to exclude or require the removal of a pupil.

In line with guidance for Schools King Edward's School will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate details of the School's complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

"Parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for a current pupil about whom the complaint relates.

What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the School as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the School is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong, failed to do something that it should have done or has acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.
Complaints which are raised anonymously will not be dealt with by the School or by the Governing Board.

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution of a concern or complaint

It is hoped that most concerns and complaints will be resolved quickly and informally.

1. If parents have a concern or complaint, they should normally contact their child's Tutor/Form Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the complainants' satisfaction.
2. If the Tutor/Form Teacher is unable to resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult a Head of Department/Subject Coordinator, member of the pastoral management team or senior manager.
3. Unless it is deemed appropriate to deal with the matter personally, concerns or complaints which are raised directly with a Head of Department/Subject Coordinator, a member of the pastoral management team or a senior manager, will usually be referred to the member(s) of staff best placed to address the issues.
4. The member(s) of staff looking into the matter will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received.
5. The School aims to investigate and resolve concerns or complaints at Stage 1. Depending on the nature of the concern or complaint, this should normally be within 10 working days
6. Should the matter not be resolved within this time frame, or in the event that the member of staff dealing with the matter and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure, within seven working days.
7. If the complaint is against the Head of the Pre-Prep School or Head of the Junior School parents should make their complaint directly to the Headmaster.
8. If the complaint is against the Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors via the Clerk to the Governors.

Stage 2 - Formal Resolution of a written complaint

1. If the concern or complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should formalise their complaint by putting it in writing to the Head of the Pre-Prep School, Head of the Junior School or the Headmaster, as appropriate. The formal written complaint should clearly state the nature of the complaint and who it is being made against. It should be no longer than six A4 pages long and include a clearly stated desired outcome.
2. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
3. The School will contact the parents concerned to acknowledge receipt of the formal written complaint and may ask for further clarification if there remains any uncertainty about the nature of the formal complaint
4. If further investigation is necessary, the Head is likely to appoint a Designated Person to be responsible for this.
5. In most cases, the Designated Person or Headmaster will contact the parents concerned to discuss the matter, normally within 5 working days of receiving the complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
6. The Designated Person will keep written records of all information held in relation to the complaint and these will be passed to the Headmaster.
7. Once the Headmaster is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, he/she will consider the evidence and a decision will be made (in the case of the Pre-Prep and Junior Schools this is likely to be following consultation with another member of the Whole School Management Team) and parents will be informed of this decision in writing.
8. The Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, securely and separate from a pupil's general file.
9. If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Headmaster 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 her/his decision.
10. The School aims to complete Stage 2 of the complaints procedure within 10 working days of the complaint being put in writing.
11. If parents/ are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure. This should happen within 10 working days of the completion of Stage 2.
12. The Chair of Governors will be notified in summary at the start of this stage.

Stage 3 - Panel Hearing

1. If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they will be referred to the member of the Governing Board who has been appointed to request the Clerk to the Governors to convene hearings of the Complaints Panel.

2. The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. 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 Clerk to the Governors, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place within 10 working days. The members of the panel will be appointed by the Governing Board. One of the Panel members will be appointed to act as the Chair of the Panel.
3. If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint, or any related matter, be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties, normally not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.
4. All materials are confidential to both parties and a confidentiality agreement will be issued by the School in advance of distribution of a Panel Pack.
5. The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation is not considered appropriate.
6. The remit of the Panel shall be at the discretion of the Chair of Governors and the manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how this should be carried out.
7. After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and may make recommendations.
8. The Clerk to the Governors will write to the parents informing them of the Panel's decision and the reasons for it, within 5 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final.
9. A copy of the Panel's findings and any recommendations if any will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents and, where relevant, the person complained about, as well as the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster.
10. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Headmaster.
11. The School aims to complete Stage 3 of the procedure within a further 20 working days.
12. Any complaint of a decision taken by the Headmaster to exclude or require the removal of the pupil under clause 6 of the School's Terms and Conditions (Parent Contract) will be governed by this Stage 3 of the School's Complaints Procedure. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Headmaster, that the Headmaster's decision to exclude / require the removal of the pupil was not a reasonable decision for the Headmaster to have taken.

13. Where repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this may be regarded by the School as vexatious and outside the scope of this procedure.

**The independent person is likely to be someone who has held a position of responsibility and who is used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired businesspeople, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force.*

Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively.

They will be acknowledged within 5 working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. It may take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to School life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only occur on an exceptional basis, and the School will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 20 working days.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 working days.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays.

Recording Formal Complaints

Following the resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all formal complaints and whether they are resolved at the informal stage, the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

A written record will be kept of all complaints that are made, whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing and the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless or not, whether they are upheld).

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice (see School Website). When dealing with complaints the School (including any panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue

- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name 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 of the hearing
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice, but potentially including sensitive data such as 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 Privacy Notice and Record Keeping Policy, but in most cases for a period of at least six years after the pupil leaves the School.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

For the academic year 2024-25 the Senior School handled 4 formal complaints in line with this policy. The Junior and Pre-Prep School received a further 1 complaint.

King Edward's 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 record of any such complaints will be kept for at least 3 years in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Record Keeping Policy.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe the provider is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Schools must make available details of how to contact Ofsted and/ or the ISI:

Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD
ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: concerns@isi.net
Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA