THE
KING'S SCHOOL
CANTERBURY

Complaints Policy

Responsible Person: Senior Deputy Head, KSC

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This is the Complaints Policy of The King's School, Canterbury, comprising the Senior School, Junior King's and the International College (together, the '**School'**).

1.2 The School has long prided 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 in accordance with this policy.

1.3 This policy applies only to complaints raised by parents of pupils of the School. It does not extend to complaints in the following categories:

a) Complaints from parents of pupils who are no longer enrolled at the School, unless the complaints process was started when the pupil was still enrolled.
b) Complaints relating to the exclusion, required removal or voluntary withdrawal of a pupil.
c) Complaints from parents of prospective pupils.
d) Complaints relating to the refusal by the School to admit a child as a pupil to the School (including where the child may already be a pupil of Junior King's or the International College).
e) Queries or complaints about fees, which should be addressed to the Bursar.
f) Anonymous complaints (see paragraph 1.10 below).

1.4 Complaints that relate to child protection issues may be considered under the terms of the safeguarding policy, whilst those involving the permanent exclusion or required removal of a pupil may be dealt with under the Exclusion, Removal and Review Policy.

1.5 Although this policy primarily addresses complaints by parents, pupils are also encouraged to express any concerns about the way that the School is run. This can operate through a number of channels, including informally speaking to any member of staff, asking their parents to raise a concern, raising an issue through their representative of the King's Council (a committee which comprises pupil representatives and senior staff), attending one of the Head's 'drop-in' session, or contacting the independent person.

1.6 Requests for financial awards, such as claims for compensation, damages or fee refunds, are beyond the scope of the School's complaints procedures.

1.7 Parents should be aware that the School has a duty of care to pupils and staff, including specific safeguarding and data protection legal responsibilities. Complaints about other pupils or staff will be investigated and actioned where appropriate, but the School will never disclose details of those actions to third parties, including to parents who made the original complaint.

1.8 A written record of complaints will be recorded and stored on a central log held by a nominated person at each School which will include information on how complaints are resolved, whether at stage 1, 2 or 3, and action taken. The written record will ensure that the School can identify particular types of complaints, such as those relating to bullying or the boarding provision. It will be reviewed periodically by the relevant SMT or Whole School

Strategic Group for trends and patterns. The number of formal complaints registered during the preceding School year will be supplied to parents on request.

1.9 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 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them. In accordance with data protection principles, details of individual complaints will be kept only for as long as is considered to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances.

1.10 The School logs anonymous complaints for monitoring purposes but obviously cannot apply the procedures set out elsewhere in this policy where the identity of the complainant(s) is unknown. We may seek to investigate anonymous complaints if they purport to raise significant or systemic concerns such as, for example, serious misconduct, bullying or safeguarding concerns. In other cases, anonymous complaints will be recorded and may be used to inform future improvements.

1.11 References to the 'Head' in this policy are references to the Head of The King's School, the Head of Junior King's or the Principal of the International College, as required by the context, and may be taken to include or refer to other senior members of staff or governors to whom relevant roles or tasks have been delegated. This includes situations where a complaint is about the Head.

2 TIME SCALES

2.1 The School aims to resolve all complaints in a timely manner.

2.2 Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs (and, in relation to the EYFS, in paragraph 4.4).

2.3 Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay to the timescales for a stage of the complaints procedure (such as other bodies investigating aspects of the complaint), the School will notify the parents and inform them of the new timescales as soon as possible.

2.4 Parents are encouraged to bring any matter causing concern to the School's attention as soon as possible. Whenever possible, a complaint should be raised within three months of the incident, or where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. The School may consider complaints made after three months, but Parents should be aware that most complaints will require the School to investigate and the ability to carry out a full and fair investigation, particularly where pupils or staff may need to be interviewed, becomes increasingly difficult as time elapses. A complaint raised after three months should therefore include details of the issues which led to the delay.

2.5 Complaints which are raised in the School holidays will usually be deemed to have been received on the first working day after receipt.

2.6 References to working days mean Monday to Friday, when School is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website. In the event that the application of this definition is likely to introduce excessive delays, due to intervening School holidays, the School's approach is to take sensible and reasonable steps so as to minimise any hardship or unfairness arising from such delays.

3 COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

3.1 It is hoped that the vast majority of concerns about the School can be resolved quickly and without resorting to formal procedures.

3.2 If parents wish to express a concern they should contact a relevant member of staff. This might sometimes be a class teacher, a Head of Department, their son or daughter's Housemaster or Housemistress (HsM) or a relevant member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) at the IC, JKS or KSC.

3.3 A concern provided in writing will be acknowledged by phone call or email within two working days of receipt. The issue may be passed onto another, often more senior member of staff to deal with. The concern will be treated as a Stage 1 (informal) complaint regardless of whether it is in writing or not.

3.4 Parents can expect to receive a response which seeks to resolve their informal complaint within 15 working days.

3.5 If the parents remain dissatisfied, they will be advised that they may refer it to the Head as a formal complaint under Stage 2 of this policy. Parents are advised to notify the School promptly that they intend to escalate their complaint to Stage 2, at least within 15 working days of the Stage 1 outcome, although at the School's discretion requests to escalate made after the elapse of 15 working days may be considered if there are extenuating circumstances which might have impeded the parents from taking more prompt action.

3.6 Appropriate training and guidance on handling expressions of concern is provided for relevant staff at each School.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

3.7 If a parent is dissatisfied with the School's response to the complaint under Stage 1, the complaint may be escalated to Stage 2. The full details of the complaint should be set out in writing by a parent and sent with all relevant documents to the Head, together with the outcome(s) sought.

3.8 The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone, e-mail or letter within two working days, indicating the action that is being taken and the likely time scale.

3.9 The Head or an appropriate deputy will ask a senior member of staff, governor or appropriate external expert to act as Investigator. The Investigator(s) may request additional information from the parents and may wish to speak to them and others who have knowledge of the circumstances. Written records will be kept of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. The Investigator(s) will prepare a written summary of findings which will be considered by the Head.

3.10 Once the Head is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a formal meeting will take place. This will typically be within 2 weeks of the commencement of the formal proceedings, but this may be extended either by the requirements of the investigation or the impact of term dates. At this meeting the Head or an appropriate deputy will take the parents through all the relevant findings of the formal investigation. They will ensure that the parents have the opportunity of asking any relevant questions.

3.11 The Head, after due consideration, will write to the parents with their conclusions and decision. This will be within three working days of the meeting. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay, the parents will be notified of this and informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.

3.12 If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure. Parents are advised to notify the School promptly that they intend to escalate their complaint to Stage 3, at least within 15 working days of the Stage 2 outcome, although at the School's discretion requests to escalate made after the elapse of 15 working days may be considered if there are extenuating circumstances which might have impeded the parents from taking more prompt action.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

3.13 A Complaints Panel Hearing is a forum for the review of the decision(s) taken at Stage 2 by the Head (or in circumstances where the formal complaint concerns the Head, a Governor appointed to act in their place). The Panel will not consider any new areas of complaint which have not been previously raised as part of the complaints procedure.

3.14 The role of the Panel is to establish the facts surrounding the complaints that have been made by considering the documents provided by both parties and any representations made by the Parents and the Head. It should then reach a decision, on the balance of probabilities, as to whether each complaint is made out in whole or in part.

3.15 It is not within the powers of the Panel to make any financial award, nor to impose sanctions on staff, pupils or parents. The Panel may make recommendations on these matters or any other issues to the Head and / or to the Board of Governors, as appropriate.

3.16 A request for a hearing before the Complaints Panel must be put in writing to the Clerk to the Governors within five working days of the decision complained of. The request will usually only be considered if the procedures at Stages 1 and 2 have been completed.

3.17 A written request should include a copy of all relevant documents and full contact details, an outline of the grounds of the complaint, and the outcome desired. It should also include a list of the documents which the parents believe to be in the School's possession and wish the Panel to see and whether the parent proposes to be accompanied to the hearing. A parent may be accompanied to the hearing by another person, for example a relative, teacher or friend, although parents should note that members of the Complaints Panel are likely to want to hear from parents directly. The Panel hearing is not a legal procces and so legal representation is not necessary.

3.18 If assistance with the request is required, for example because of a disability, please inform the Clerk to the Governors of this and they will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.

3.19 The Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the request for a hearing in writing within two working days of receipt.

3.20 Every effort will be made to enable the hearing to take place within 15 working days of receipt of the request. However, note that the Panel will not normally sit during half terms or School holidays, but in any event will convene a panel hearing within 10 weeks during School holidays.

3.21 As soon as reasonably practicable, and in any event at least ten working days before the hearing, the Clerk to the Governors will send written notification to each party of the date, time and place of the hearing.

3.22 Copies of any additional documents a parent wishes the Panel to consider should be sent to the Clerk to the Governors to be received at least five working days prior to the hearing.

3.23 The Clerk to the Governors will circulate a copy of the bundle of documents to be considered by the Panel to all parties at least three working days prior to the hearing.

3.24 The Panel will comprise three individuals who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, including members of the Board of Governors and at least one independent member who is independent of the management and running of the School.

3.25 The parents may ask the Clerk to the Governors to tell them who has been appointed to sit on the Panel ahead of the hearing.

3.26 The Panel members will choose one of themselves to be the Chair of the Panel throughout the proceedings.

3.27 All those present at the hearing shall have the opportunity to ask questions and make comments in an appropriate manner. The hearing is not a legal proceeding and the Panel shall be under no obligation to hear oral evidence from witnesses but may do so and / or may take written statements into account. All statements made at the hearing will be unsworn. All present will be entitled, should they wish to write their own notes for reference purposes. A clerk appointed by the Panel will take a minute of the proceedings.

3.28 All those attending the hearing are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners or, after due warning, the hearing may be adjourned or terminated at the discretion of the Chair. Any person who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way the hearing is conducted must say so before the proceedings go any further and their comment will be minuted.

3.29 The Chair may, at their discretion, adjourn the hearing for further investigation of any relevant issue. This may include an adjournment to take legal advice.

3.30 A hearing before the Complaints Panel is a private proceeding. No notes or other records or oral statements about any matter discussed in or arising from the proceeding shall be made available directly or indirectly to the press or other media.

3.31 The Panel will reach a decision on a balance of probabilities unless there is an agreed position. The decision, findings and any recommendations will be confirmed in writing to the parties including where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chairman of Governors and the Head, normally within five working days of the hearing.

3.32 The decisions, findings and any recommendations will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chairman of Governors and the Head.

3.33 The completion of Stage 3 represents the conclusion of the School's complaints procedure. The decision of the Panel is final and there is no further opportunity within the School for consideration of the complaint.

4 COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE EYFS (JUNIOR KING'S)

4.1 The following provisions apply in addition where a concern or complaint is from a parent or carer relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage.

4.2 The School keeps a written record of any complaints, and their outcome, and will make a record of complaints available to Ofsted.

4.3 The School will investigate written complaints relating to how they are fulfilling the EYFS requirements.

4.4 The School will notify the person who made the complaint of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.

4.5 Parents or carers may contact Ofsted or ISI if they believe the School is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Ofsted can be contacted on 0300 123 4666 or at enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk and ISI can be contacted at concerns@isi.net or on 020 7600 0100.