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To be reviewed by:	<i>Headteacher</i>
Governors' review: Summary of changes:	<i>Introduction of new stage 2, clarification of School staff involvement in any Governors' meetings to consider complaints</i>
Ratified by:	<i>Student & Staff Welfare Committee</i>
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Dissemination: Teams policy folder KES website Other	<i>✓ ✓ ✓ KES All Staff Team</i>
Next review:	<i>March 2025</i>



KING EDWARD VI
SCHOOL LICHFIELD

Complaints Policy

How to Comment or Complain

Email address office@keslichfield.org.uk - Telephone 01543 255714

We Care About What You Think

Each day the school makes many decisions and tries hard to do the best for all its students. Your comments - either positive or negative - are helpful for future planning.

You may want to talk to us about a particular aspect of this school, though not actually make a complaint - you just want to get something 'off your chest'.

If you are dissatisfied about the way your child is being treated, or any actions or lack of action by us, please contact us.

How to Make a Complaint

In the first instance – Informal Stage

Discuss the problem in the first instance with the class teacher/subject teacher/Head of Department/Pastoral Support Team or relevant member of the school's Senior Leadership Team. Emails can be forwarded for the attention of an individual via the office@keslichfield.org.uk address. We hope that most complaints can be settled quickly and informally, either by putting matters right or by giving you an explanation. If there is something you are not happy about, or you don't understand why we are doing something in a particular way,

please discuss it with the class teacher or another appropriate member of staff, such as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) if it is about Special Needs.

We know that it can feel uncomfortable to question or challenge something, but if you don't tell us what is worrying you we cannot explain what we are doing or try to put it right. If the member of staff you speak to in the first instance is unable to attempt to resolve the matter you may be referred to another staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important. If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. You may also be referred to or request an appointment with a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Please do not come into school to make a complaint without an appointment; staff will not be able to drop other commitments to discuss this with you and it does not support either party in resolving the issue.

You should be able to resolve your worries but sometimes this is not possible. In this case there is a next step.

Where to Direct Your Complaint

If it has not been possible to resolve a difficulty informally then the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by King Edward VI School Lichfield, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions to schools • Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs • School re-organisation proposals 	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with admissions@staffordshire.gov.uk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Telephone- 0300 111 8007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of children from school* 	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions . <i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus . Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances 	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint, for example the police, local authority (LA) safeguarding teams or Tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations.

If a complainant commences legal action against King Edward VI School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Making a Formal Complaint to the School

Having discussed your concerns, you may feel it necessary to inform the Headteacher that you wish to make a formal complaint. You can do this by writing a letter, filling in a form, or telephoning and arranging an appointment. (complete the complaints form A below)

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance, to the Headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to Mrs H Coulthard (the Chair of Governors), via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to Ms S Jones (the Clerk to the Governing Body) via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law, we will consider making reasonable adjustments if required, to enable complainants to access and complete this complaints procedure. For instance, providing information in alternative formats or assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint.

Anonymous Complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

Timescales

You must raise the complaint within three months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints Received Outside of Term Time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage in the procedure, King Edward VI School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, the school will ask them to confirm this in writing.

Stage One – A Formal Complaint to the Headteacher

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher), via the school office. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.

The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will **acknowledge receipt** of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) **within five school days**.

The Headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, establish what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. We may ask for further clarification or information by phonecall or by email. The Headteacher can also consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this. This may be with the Headteacher or a designated member of the senior leadership team.

Note: The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the Headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a **formal written response**, ideally **within fifteen school days of the date of acknowledgement of the complaint**. If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions King Edward VI School will take to resolve the complaint.

Any complaint should be brought to the attention of the school at the earliest opportunity. Any matter raised more than 90 days after the event will only be considered in exceptional circumstances although records will be kept on file for later reference.

The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the Headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via the school office.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

Stage Two – Governor Reconsideration

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – governor reconsideration.

Upon receipt of notification that the complainant remains dissatisfied beyond Step 1, all correspondence and information relating to the complaint will be considered by a member of the school's governing body who has been designated to serve in this function. If the Chair has considered the complaint at Stage 1, this will not be the Chair. They may contact the complainant or the school for clarification of details of the complaint if they deem it necessary in order for them to issue findings and recommendations in relation to it. The complainant will receive a response with findings and recommendations within fifteen school working days.

Stage 3 – The Governing Body

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 3 – a meeting of the members of the governing body's complaints committee, which will be formed of the first three, impartial, governors available. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

A **request to escalate to Stage 3** must be made to the Clerk, via the school office, **within fifteen school days** of receipt of the Stage 2 response. This request should explain the details of the problem, who has been involved already at Stage 1 and 2 and include what the complainant wants to happen as a result of the complaint. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and **acknowledge receipt** of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) **within five school days**.

The complaints committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from King Edward VI School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 3.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the meeting. They will aim to convene a meeting within fifteen school days of receipt of the Stage 3 request. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

The committee will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

If the complainant is invited to attend the meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.

For instance, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Note: Complaints about staff conduct will not generally be handled under this complaints procedure. Complainants will be advised that any staff conduct complaints will be considered under staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

If the complainant rejects an offer of three proposed dates, without good reason, the Clerk will decide when to hold the meeting. It will then proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis of written submissions from both parties.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least seven school days before the meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least five school days before the meeting

Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least five school days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

A School representative will normally be present if Governors convene a meeting to hear a Stage 3 complaint. The purpose is to provide factual evidence and answer any questions from the Governors. A complainant will be notified in advance of any School representative attending a meeting.

During a Stage 3 complaint meeting, Governors will initially call the complainant into the meeting to hear their representations. Where a School representative is invited, Governors will then call the representative into the meeting alongside the complainant.

The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The committee can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the committee will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the Committee will provide the complainant and King Edward VI School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within ten school days.

The letter to the complainant will include details of how to contact the Department for Education if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by King Edward VI School.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 3 will be heard by a committee of independent, co-opted governors.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions King Edward VI School Lichfield will take to resolve the complaint. The decision of the committee will be final.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

A record of the complaint will be retained securely by the Headteacher for the duration of the time any relevant student remains at the school.

Unreasonable Complaints

Where a complainant raises an issue that has already been dealt with via the school's complaints procedure, and that procedure has been exhausted, the school will not reinvestigate the complaint except in exceptional circumstances, for example where new evidence has come to light.

If a complainant persists in raising the same issue, the Headteacher will write to them explaining that the matter has been dealt with fully in line with the school complaints procedure, and therefore the case is now closed. The complainant will be provided with the contact details of the Department for Education (see the end of this document) if they wish to take the matter further.

Unreasonable complaints include but are not limited to the following scenarios:

- The complainant refuses to co-operate with the school's relevant procedures.
- The complainant changes the basis of the complaint as the complaint progresses.
- The complainant seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Excessive demands are made on the time of staff and school governors and it is clearly intended to aggravate.
- The complainant acts in a way that is abusive or offensive.

The Headteacher will use their discretion to choose not to investigate these complaints. Where they decide to take this course of action, they must inform the chair of governors that they have done so, explaining the nature of the complaint and why they have chosen not to investigate. If the chair deems it appropriate to, they can redirect the Headteacher to investigate the complaint. The full complaints procedure will commence from stage one on this direction.

If the chair upholds the HT's decision not to look into the complaint and the complainant deems this decision to be so unreasonable that no other rational body in the same position would have made that decision, then

the complainant may write to the Department for Education (see the contact details at the end of the document).

Further Recourse

If the complainant thinks that Governors have failed to consider a complaint properly and reasonably, they can raise the matter with the **Local Education Authority** or the **Department for Education**. However, it is important to understand that this is not a general right of appeal for any parent who disagrees with the Governors' decision. If the Governors have followed a proper procedure and considered the complaint reasonably, neither the Local Education Authority nor the Secretary of State can reverse their decisions.

To raise the matter with the Local Education Authority please contact:
complaints&customerfeedback@staffordshire.gov.uk

In the email or letter please explain:

- a) what the complaint to the Governors was,
- b) what response the school and the Governors have made to it,
- c) why the complainant believes that the Governors have not followed a proper procedure in considering the complaint, and/or
- d) why the complainant believes that their consideration of it was unreasonable.

Department for Education

If the complainant believes the school did not handle their complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or they acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of their duties under education law, they can contact the Department for Education after they have completed Stage 3.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by King Edward VI School Lichfield. They will consider whether King Edward VI School Lichfield has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint.

The complainant can refer their complaint to the Department for Education online at:
www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

COMPLAINTS

A formal complaint can be made by using the form below or by providing the information in the form of a letter. Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

Name	
Name of pupil, year group and your relationship to them (where applicable)	
Contact address	
Contact telephone day	
Contact telephone mobile	
Contact email address	
Details of the complaint	
Action taken so far (including staff member who has dealt with it so far) or solutions offered	
The reason that this was not a satisfactory resolution for you	
What action would you like to be taken to resolve the problem?	
Signed	Date

Official use:

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date: