



KET Complaints Policy



Kingsbridge Educational Trust Complaints Policy

ADOPTION AND AMENDMENTS TO COMPLAINTS POLICY

Section	Board of Directors Meeting or Committee	Page and Year of Minute
Whole Document	Board of Directors	23/03/2017 – page 4
<i>Editorial update – p3 – first sub-title</i>	<i>Governor Services</i>	<i>06/11/2017</i>
Whole Document	Board of Directors	24/05/2018 – page 5
Whole Document	Board of Directors	May 2019
Next review 2019/2020		

Kingsbridge Educational Trust Complaints Policy

This policy applies to any matter 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. However, it does not apply to complaints that have their own statutory procedures, such as admissions and exclusions. Should a complaint be received which falls outside the scope of this policy, the complainant will be informed and redirected to the relevant guidance.

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.

What is a complaint?

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.

Stage 1 - Early and informal resolution of your complaint

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. We welcome telephone calls from individuals who wish to talk about a problem before it becomes a complaint. A telephone call is better than a letter or email, and a temperate letter or email is better than an ultimatum or threat of action.
4. If you approach 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

5. 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.

Kingsbridge Educational Trust Complaints Policy

6. Where the matter involves an issue relating to a child at the school, your first line of approach is the child's Form Tutor/Class Teacher. These are the people who have immediate responsibility for the child's studies, pastoral care, discipline and involvement in school life. In most cases, it is they who will be best informed about the child and will be best placed to resolve problems.
7. For issues relating to provision of facilities or services that the school provides, your first line of approach is the Headteacher.

The school's expectation

8. The school seeks to build a partnership with parent/carers in the education of their children and other stakeholders. 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 or stakeholders); 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 the parent/carer/stakeholder;
- find out what your/the 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/the child inappropriately in your complaint - it is important that the child sees parent/carers (or stakeholder, where relevant) 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.

Kingsbridge Educational Trust Complaints Policy

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.
11. The child will be involved only if the complaint directly and personally concerns them. Parent/carers/stakeholders 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.

Where the matter has not been resolved at the informal stage, you may elevate your complaint to the formal stages set out below.

Stage 2 – Formal

13. The complaint should be made formally in writing to the Headteacher. If the complaint regards the Headteacher, it should be referred to the Chair of the Local Governing Body. If the complaint regards the Chair of the Local Governing Body, it should be referred to the Chair of the Kingsbridge Educational Trust Board of Directors, c/o Governor Services, Kingsbridge Educational Trust, Kents Hill Park School, Timbold Drive, Kents Hill Park, Milton Keynes, MK7 6BZ. Where the complaint regards an individual member of the Local Governing Body it should be referred to the Chair of the Local Governing Body. The appropriate recipient of the formal written complaint will then follow the steps set out below.
14. The Headteacher (or appropriate person) will document the complaint, acknowledge it in writing within 5 school days of receipt, and will consult with those directly involved, and aim to deal with the complaint within 10 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.
15. The Headteacher (or appropriate person) 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.
16. 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.

Kingsbridge Educational Trust Complaints Policy

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

17. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint as dealt with at Stage 2 above then they will be invited to write to the Headteacher (or appropriate person) (at each school address) requesting a panel hearing.
18. The request for a panel hearing must be submitted as soon as possible and, in any event, within 5 school days of the decision in Stage 2 of the complaint being notified to the complainant.
19. The Headteacher will appoint a panel that will consider the complaint within 15 school days of receipt of the notification.
20. 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.
21. The panel meeting is not a court case, it will be held in private, and will be as informal as circumstances allow. The panel reserve the right to set the agenda and procedure for the panel meeting but broadly the complainant will have the opportunity to put his/her reasons for dissatisfaction to the panel but may not introduce matters not previously put in writing. The school will have the opportunity to give its account of the situation and each side, as well as the panel, will be able to ask questions. The complainant will have the opportunity to make final comments to the panel.
22. The complainant may attend and be accompanied by a friend or relative at a panel hearing if they wish, but legal representation (by either party) will generally not be permitted. The panel has the discretion to proceed irrespective of whether or not the complainant and/or their representative attend. Any further attempt to re-open the matter may be considered as falling under the serious/persistent complaint section below.
23. The panel will also consider the school's response and carry out further investigations and/or interviews as appropriate.
24. The panel will aim to reach a final decision on the complaint and recommend an appropriate action as quickly as possible, normally within 5 school days after the panel hearing.
25. 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 10 school days of the hearing.

Support

26. At any stage of the complaints procedure, the complainant is welcome to bring with them a friend or relative.

Kingsbridge Educational Trust Complaints Policy

27. Within the complaints procedure it is not appropriate for either party to bring legal representatives to any meeting forming part of the complaints procedure. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate.
28. The school will not generally enter into correspondence with solicitors or others in place of direct communication with parents.

Anonymous complaints

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

Withdrawal of a complaint

30. If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, the school will request this to be confirmed in writing.

Complaints received outside of term time

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

Serial and Persistent Complaints

32. If at any level a complainant attempts to reopen an issue or a closely related issue that has already been dealt with under this complaints procedure, the [Chair of the Kingsbridge Educational Trust Board of Directors] may write to the complainant to inform him/her that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter closed, that continued correspondence on the same matter is vexatious and that the academy trust will not respond to any further correspondence on this issue or a closely related issue.

Campaigns

33. If the school becomes the focus of a campaign and receives large volumes of complaints all based on the same subject, the school reserves the right to send a standard response to all complainants and/or publish a single response on the school's website. The school will not instigate the formal processes outlined earlier in the policy in response to such a campaign. If complainants are dissatisfied with the response that is provided, they may contact the Department for Education.

Record-keeping

34. A written record will be kept of all complaints that were resolved at the formal stage of the complaints procedure. Records will contain details of when the complaint was resolved. The action taken by the academy or the academy trust as a result of a complaint (regardless of whether they are upheld) will also be recorded.

Confidentiality

35. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an

Kingsbridge Educational Trust Complaints Policy

inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them or disclosure is otherwise required by law (including but not limited to subject access and freedom of information requests).

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

36. Once the complaints process is concluded (or a complaint has been terminated due to undue delay or failure to progress the complaint within the time stated in the policy) the matter is closed. If the complainant is still not satisfied then they may contact the ESFA. There is an online procedure at <https://form.education.gov.uk> or you may write to the Ministerial and Public Communications Division Department for Education Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD.

Complaints Relating to Fulfilment of the EYFS Requirements

37. In order to comply with the statutory framework, written concerns or complaints relating to the fulfilment of the EYFS Requirements will be dealt with in accordance with the following process:

- The written concern/complaint will be acknowledged within 5 days;
- The Headteacher will investigate the concern or complaint which may include meeting with the complainant and the Head of Early Years. A written response notifying the complainant of the outcome of the investigation will be sent within 28 days of the complaint being received.
- Where the complainant remains dissatisfied, the Headteacher will ensure that a formal complaints panel will be convened in accordance with stage 3 of this policy.

38. A record of the written complaints and their outcome will be maintained and made available to Ofsted on request.

39. Where an individual has concerns regarding the school meeting EYFS requirements they may contact Ofsted on 0300 123 4666.

Links to other policies

Policies dealing with other forms of complaints include:

- Safeguarding and child protection
- Admissions
- Behaviour management/Exclusions
- Staff grievance
- Staff disciplinary
- SEND

Adopted by the Board of Directors
May 2019