KINGS MEADOW PRIMARY SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY

General:

'The Education Act of 2002 requires the governing body to have a policy for dealing with parents' complaints.'

The school's complaints policy allows parents' complaints about school issues to be dealt with efficiently and sensitively, and at the appropriate level.
Complaints can cover a wide variety of matters that concern parents. The school expects ALL parental complaints to be taken seriously and to be dealt with comprehensively and as far as possible in confidence.

Aims:

The policy aims to ensure that all complaints from parents, pupils and others are dealt with as quickly and sensitively as possible, and by the person best able to do so.

As far as possible all concerns should be dealt with as informally as possible.

A parent, pupil or other complainant should be able to expect to have a response, even if not the final response, to their complaint in accordance with the stages of the procedure as outlined in this policy.

If parents, pupils or other complainants wish to register a formal complaint they should be asked to make the complaint in writing and address it to the Head Teacher in a sealed envelope.
(The complaint should be addressed to the Chair of Governors if it is about the Head Teacher.)

Definition of a Complaint:

A complaint is defined as:

"An expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to a school issue or member of staff, which requires a response."

Stage 1

The complainant must feel able to raise concerns with members of staff without any formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing. This allows staff to establish whether a person is asking a question, expressing an opinion or making a complaint.

The member of staff first contacted, should clarify the nature of the concern and reassure the complainant that the school wants to hear about it. If the member of staff can resolve the concern immediately they should do so and notify the head teacher.

If the member of staff can't resolve the concern they should make a clear note of the date, name, contact address and phone number and a brief note of the nature of the concern.

It would also be useful to record what sort of outcome the complainant is looking for. The member of staff should then refer the complaint to the HT or in their absence the DHT. The HT must decide if the concern is covered by the complaints procedure or should be dealt with under other procedures e.g. Safeguarding or Personnel.

If the concern is about the Head Teacher, the complainant should put the concern in writing to the Chair of Governors, c/o The School.

The complainant should receive a response as soon as possible, and within a maximum of 15 school days. At this stage the response may be given verbally or in writing.

Stage 2

Formal complaints should be made in writing to the HT. If the complaint is about the HT the complainant should write to the Chair of the Governing Body who should carry out Stage 2 of the procedure.

The HT should acknowledge the complaint within 3 school days. The acknowledgement should include a copy of the complaints policy and a target date for providing a response; this should be within 15 school days, if this date cannot be met, the complainant should be contacted and given a reason for the delay and a revised target date.

The HT should make whatever enquiries they consider necessary to ascertain the facts and the legitimacy of the complaint.

Pupils should be interviewed in the presence of another member of staff, or in the case of serious complaints (where the possibility of criminal investigation exists), in the presence of their parents.

It is important that all complaints are investigated thoroughly and objectively ensuring an accurate account of all steps taken is logged.

Once all of the relevant facts have been established, the HT (or other appropriate person) should provide a written response to the complainant. This should include a full explanation of decisions taken and the reasons for them. Where appropriate, it should detail any actions the school may take to resolve the complaint.

Stage 3

A letter received by the school notifying that a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint at Stage 2 must be passed to the Chair of Governors within three school days.

In the case of a written complaint received directly by the governing body the Chair of Governors should first ensure that:

- The complaint has been dealt with at Stage 2.
- The complaint is covered by the school's complaints procedure NOT other procedures such as Safeguarding or Personnel.

If the governors cannot hear the matter it should be referred back to the HT and the Clerk to the Governors should write to the complainant advising them of the correct procedure.

Upon receipt of a letter stating that the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of a Stage Two investigation, the Clerk to the Governors should write acknowledging that the complaint has been received.

The letter should explain that the complainant has the right to submit any further documents or information relevant to the complaint. A deadline for submission of these documents should be given.

The Clerk to the Governors should convene the complaints panel elected from the governing body. The panel will comprise of three governors who have had no previous involvement with the complaint. The complaint should not be heard by the entire governing body as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

The complaints panel should set a timetable for the investigation and should notify the complainant and the HT of this. The review hearing should be heard within 20 school days of receiving the letter from the complainant stating that they are dissatisfied with the outcome from Stage 2.

The HT should also be invited to submit a written report for the panel.
The HT may also invite members of staff directly involved in matters raised by the complainant to respond personally or in writing.

The Clerk to the Governors should write to inform the panel, HT, complainant and any relevant witnesses of the date and time of the hearing, giving a minimum notice of 5 school days. All documents submitted should be circulated to the panel, the HT and the complainant. The complainant will be notified of their right to have a friend, family member, advocate or interpreter if they wish. The name of this person should be provided to the Clerk to the Governors at least 3 school days before the review meeting. The Chair of Governors should ensure that the Review Panel Meeting is minuted.

The panel should be open-minded and independent. The aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, it may sometimes only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations that satisfy the complainant that their concern has been taken seriously.

The hearing should be held in private. Any witnesses (other than the complainant and HT) should only attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.

It is incumbent upon the panel to make the proceedings as informal as possible and no audio or visual recording of the proceedings is permitted.

If either party wishes to introduce new information at the meeting, this should be allowed. The meeting should then be adjourned for a short period to allow other parties to review and respond to this information.

The meeting should allow for:

- The complainant to explain their complaint and the HT to explain the response of the school.
- Witnesses to be brought by the complainant or the HT.
- The HT and the complainant to ask questions of each other and any witnesses.
- The panel to ask questions of the complainant, HT and any witnesses.
- The complainant and the HT to summarise their position.

The chair of the panel should explain to the complainant and the HT that the panel will consider its decision and respond in writing within 15 school days.
The complainant and the HT should then leave.

The panel should then consider the complaint and all of the evidence presented. They should then decide:

- Whether or not they dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Whether or not they uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Where appropriate, what action can be taken to resolve the complaint
- Where appropriate, recommend what action can be taken to prevent similar difficulties in the future.

A written response detailing the decisions, recommendations and the basis upon which these have been made, should be sent to the complainant and the HT within 15 school days.

Stage 4

The complainant should be notified of the right to appeal to the Secretary of State for Education if they are unhappy with the way in which procedures have been undertaken.

Complaints may be withdrawn in writing at any time.

DEALING WITH UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS

The aim of our complaints procedure is to limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there may be occasions when despite all stages of the procedure being followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied.

A complaint can be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- Repeatedly makes the same complaint and refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Has a history of making unreasonable complaints.
- Makes frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact regarding the complaint.

A complaint will also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so:

- Maliciously
- Aggressively
- Using threats, intimidation or violence
- Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- Knowing it to be false

In these circumstances, the HT and/or Chair of Governors should liaise with Legal Services and the Assistant Director for Schools before deciding what action to take. They may also seek advice from the Complaints Manager and the Governor Training Unit.

The presumption should be in favour of not restricting access to the school site unless it is absolutely necessary. The governors may consider:

- Warning/contract re: future conduct

- Restricting telephone calls to a particular day/time/person
- Restrictions on methods of contact (e.g. in writing only)
- Not acknowledging future correspondence that does not present new information.
- Temporary suspension of the person's access to the complaints system.

Reviewed: Sept. 2025