



**KING EDWARD VI SCHOOL,  
SOUTHAMPTON**



**Stroud School**  
King Edward VI Preparatory School

## Complaints Policy

<b>Rationale:</b>	This policy sets out the Schools' procedures for managing any parental complaint.
<b>Owner:</b>	Head
<b>Endorsed by Governing Board:</b>	Reviewed by Governors June 2020 (next review November 2020 and to be endorsed December 2020)
<b>Revised:</b>	October 2020
<b>Date of next full review:</b>	September 2023
<b>Reviewed:</b>	Three yearly
<b>Date(s) of interim amendments:</b>	March 2020
<b>Category:</b>	Statutory
<b>Circulation and publication:</b>	Public/ Website

## **Introduction**

The School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils, and aims to provide the best service that it reasonably can for its pupils and parents. However, inevitably, there will be occasions when issues of concern arise. The School will try to resolve these informally, but understands that this may not always be possible. If parents do have a concern or complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this Complaints Procedure. The School publishes this Complaints Procedure on the Schools' websites, and any parents who request it are made aware of where it can be accessed. This policy is also available in hard copy and accessible formats on request.

Whilst the policy is published and therefore made available to all to view, including parents of prospective pupils, it only applies to parents of current pupils. 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 a parent requests a 'Stage 3' review of a decision taken by the Head to exclude or require the removal of a pupil, in which case such a review must be requested by no later than 10 working days from the date of the decision to exclude or require the removal of a pupil.

Note: "Parent(s)" means the holder(s) of parental responsibility for the 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. The School is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you (or your child) raise in good faith.**

## **The Three-Stage Complaints Procedure**

### **Stage 1 – Informal Resolution**

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

If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If not, the Tutor will conduct an initial investigation and, if necessary, contact more senior staff for assistance.

Complaints made directly to other members of staff (including senior staff) will usually be referred on to the relevant Tutor. Occasionally the School may decide that there is a reason why an alternative member of staff is more appropriate to conduct the initial investigation. If so, then this will be communicated to the parent(s).

The Tutor/Staff Member will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days or in the event that the Tutor 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 Complaints Procedure.

If, however, the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors (KES or Stroud as relevant) whose contact details are available from the School Office on request. At the discretion of the Chair of Governors any such complaint may be dealt with under Stage 2 at this point.

### **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.

In most cases, the Head (or a suitable senior leader nominated by the Head) will meet the parents concerned within 10 working days of receiving the Stage 2 complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage. It may be necessary for the Head, or their nominee, to carry out further investigations. The Head, or nominee, will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Head, or nominee, is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Head/Nominee will also give reasons for his/her decision, although some details may need to be withheld if they relate to another staff member or pupil. In most cases, the Head/Nominee will make his/her decision and provide the parents with reasons within 10 working days of the Stage 2 meeting. Should longer be required to fulfil a proper investigation for any reason, then the parents will be informed either in the initial Stage 2 meeting, or in writing prior to the date of scheduled communication.

If the complaint is against the Head, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors (KES or Stroud as relevant). The Chair of Governors or a Governor nominee appointed by them will call for a full report from the Head and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors or their nominee may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and may wish to speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair of Governors or their nominee 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 of Governors or their nominee will give reasons for his/her decision.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Hearing**

If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the Chair of Governors (KES or Stroud as relevant) within 10 working days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided along with their grounds of appeal.

The Chair of Governors will then convene a Governing Body Complaints Review Panel. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the School. The Chair of Governors will appoint one Panel member to act as Chair of the Panel. The Chair of the Panel, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and schedule a hearing to take place normally within 20 working days of the receipt of the appeal.

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 or further investigation be carried out. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.

The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. The Head shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not be permitted, as this is not a legal proceeding. The Clerk to the Governors must be given seven days' notice if the friend or relation is legally qualified and the parents should note that the Review Panel will wish to speak to them directly and this person will not be permitted to act as an advocate. The companion does not have the right to answer questions on the parents' behalf.

The Panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.

The manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.

The Clerk to the Governors will take minutes of the hearing.

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 it should be carried out, and will notify the parents of any changes to the specified schedule of communication as a result.

The hearing will be a full merits hearing of the complaint. 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 accordingly decide whether to:

- Dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
- Uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part; and
- Make recommendations.

The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, within 10 working days of the hearing (unless additional time has been required to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and 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 Head. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Chair of Governors and the Head.

Any complaint or appeal of a decision taken by the Head to exclude or require the removal of the pupil will be governed by this Stage 3 of the School's Complaints Procedure. In such circumstances, the Panel may only uphold the complaint and ask the Head to reconsider his/her decision if they consider, having regard to the process followed by the Head, that the Head's decision to exclude / require the removal of the pupil was not a reasonable decision for the Head to have taken.

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

### **Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints**

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the School's target is to complete the first stage of the procedure within 10 working days. Stage 2 may normally take up to 20 further days from receipt of the formal complaint, and Stage 3 is intended to be completed within 30 working days of the request for a panel hearing.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, working days refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay.

### **Recording Complaints and use of personal data**

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at Stage 2 or proceed to a Panel hearing (Stage 3) and any action taken by the School as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld).

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. 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 and contact details 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 and minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy, but potentially including, for instance, 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, Data Protection Policy and Retention of Records Policy.

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 2019-2020 the School received 0 formal (Stage 2 or 3) complaints.*