



KINGSBURY GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Complaints Policy and Procedure

December 2018

Complaints Policy

Governors' Committee Responsible – Curriculum, Pupils & Standards Committee	
Policy Author: Head teacher	Review Period: Annual
Statutory provision: Governors to ensure provision & policy	Next Review: December 2019

Introduction

At Kingsbury Green Primary School we value positive partnerships with parents and carers, understanding that it is in the best interests of children for parents and school to work closely together. We strive to make all families welcome in our school and to communicate openly the school's approach to learning, behaviour, safety and relationships.

Despite this, we understand that concerns or issues may arise from time to time. In the vast majority of cases, concerns will be dealt with swiftly and efficiently following a discussion of the issue with the person concerned. We acknowledge, however, that in some cases parents or carers may not feel happy to discuss the issue with the person concerned. In these circumstances they will talk, in the first instance, to the relevant school leader on duty that day or the Assistant Headteacher. If the complaint is of a serious nature, parents or carers will not hesitate to talk directly to the Headteacher or, in her absence, either deputy Headteacher. If the concern is about the Headteacher, parents or carers may talk to the chair of the governing body (who can be contacted via the school office on office1@kgreen.brent.sch.uk)

At Kingsbury Green we will treat all concerns and complaints seriously and courteously, and will advise parents and others of the school's procedures for dealing with their concerns. In return, we expect parents and other complainants to behave respectfully towards all members of the school community. It is not appropriate to talk disrespectfully about a member of staff when raising a complaint. It is also not appropriate for disagreements with the school to be expressed in front of pupils.

Complaints Policy

- Governing bodies are required by law to have a procedure in place to deal with complaints relating to aspects of the school or the provision of facilities or certain services at the school. The law requires that this procedure must be publicised.
- The vast majority of complaints and concerns can and will be resolved informally.
- A complaint can be brought by a parent of a registered child at the school or any person who has been provided with a service or a facility at the school. The procedure refers to this person as a complainant.
- The complainant must feel able to raise concerns and complaints with members of staff without formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing.
- At first it may be unclear whether a complainant is asking a question or expressing an opinion rather than making an education complaint. A complainant may want a preliminary discussion about an issue to help decide whether he or she wishes to take it further.
- A concern or unresolved problem becomes a complaint only when the complainant asserts that a school has acted wrongly in some significant decision, action or failure to take action.
- Even when a complaint has been made it can be resolved or withdrawn at any stage.
- The School Business Manager is responsible for the operation and management of the school complaints procedure.
- An anonymous concern or complaint will not be investigated under this procedure, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- To allow for a proper investigation, concerns or complaints will be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible. In general, any matter raised more than 3 months after the event being complained of, will not be considered.

Special circumstances

- Any complaint or other notice that suggests that a child has been at risk of significant harm through violence, emotional abuse, sexual interference or neglect may be referred without further notice to Children's Social Care and/or to the social services authority for the area in which the child lives. If a social services authority decides to investigate a situation this may postpone or supersede investigation by the Headteacher or governing body.

Other solutions to complaints

- Where a matter can be resolved through a legal appeal it will not be considered as a formal complaint. The key areas are: admissions decisions; certain decisions relating to formal assessment of special educational needs; and decisions to permanently exclude a child.

Stage 1: Dealing With Concerns Informally

- The complainant will be given an opportunity to discuss their concern with the appropriate member of staff. An appointment may need to be made.
- The complainant will be able to bring a companion to any discussion.
- The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure that the complainant is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed.
- This stage will be completed speedily (within at least 15 days of initial issue raised) and concluded in writing with appropriate detail.
- Where no satisfactory solution has been found, the complainant will be informed that s/he will need to consider whether to make a formal complaint in writing to the Headteacher. To assist in this process a complaint form will be provided. (example attached)

Stage 2: Formal Action

- If your concern or complaint is not resolved at the informal stage you must put the complaint in writing.
- The complaint will be passed to the Headteacher, [or to the Chair of the Governing Body, if the complaint is about the Headteacher]. The Headteacher or Chair of the Governing Body will be responsible for ensuring that the complaint is investigated appropriately.
- A Complaint Form is provided with this policy to assist you in making concerns or complaints clear. You will include details which might assist the investigation, such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events, and copies of relevant documents.
- It is very important that you include a clear statement of the actions that you would like the school to take to resolve your concern. Without this, it is much more difficult to proceed. Please pass the completed form, in a sealed envelope marked private and confidential to the Headteacher or to the Chair of the Governing Body, as appropriate.
- The Headteacher [or Chair] may invite you to a meeting to clarify your concerns and to seek an informal resolution. If you accept that invitation, you may be accompanied by a companion, if you wish to assist you in explaining the nature of your concerns.

The Headteacher's Investigation

2.1 The Headteacher will acknowledge the complaint in writing. In some cases the Headteacher will have already been involved in looking at the matter; in others it will be his/her first involvement.

2.2 The Headteacher will consider providing an opportunity to meet with the complainant to supplement any information previously provided.

2.3 If the complaint is against a member of staff the Headteacher will talk to the staff member against whom the complaint has been made.

2.4 If necessary, the Headteacher will interview witnesses and take statements from those involved.

2.5 The Headteacher will keep reasonable written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation.

2.6 Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Headteacher will produce a written response to the complainant. The Headteacher may wish to meet the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter before confirming the outcome in writing.

2.7 The written response will include a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, it will include what action the school will take to resolve the complaint.

2.8 Stage 2 will be completed in 15 school days. However, it is recognised that where the case is complex, it may prove difficult to meet this timetable. In such cases, the Headteacher will write to the complainant giving a revised target date.

2.9 Schools will not pay financial compensation as a response to complaints, though may spend money on a relevant educational purpose (e.g. paying a fee for a repeat examination).

2.10 The formal stage 2 response will also advise the complainant that if s/he is not satisfied with the response and wishes to take the matter further, s/he will write to the Chair of the Governing Body within 15 school days of receiving the outcome letter. The outcome letter will set out the name of the Chair of the Governing Body and the address to which the complainant can send the letter.

Complaints against the Headteacher

2.11 If the complaint is wholly or mainly about the Headteacher, the Governing Body will consider the complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of the procedure described below. However, before Stage 2 is instigated the Chair of the Governing Body will invite the Headteacher to respond to the complaint in writing within ten school days. The Chair will send a copy of the Headteacher response to the complainant who will be asked to indicate within five school days of receipt of the response whether s/he is satisfied with the response. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response stage 2 will commence as described in paragraph 2.1 below.

Stage 3 – Consideration By The Governing Body

3.1 If the complainant decides to take the matter further, the Chair of the Governing Body will write to the complainant to acknowledge the complaint within five school days of receipt of the complaint. A copy of the acknowledgement and the complaints form will be sent to the Headteacher and the Clerk to the Governing Body.

3.2 Investigating the complaint – If the complaint has been investigated at Stage 2, the result of the investigation must be made available to the Clerk/Chair by the Headteacher. However, where the complaint is against the Headteacher and the complaint is referred to Stage 2, the Chair of the Governing Body must decide how the complaint will be investigated. Where the facts of the complaint are clearly established, it is unlikely for the Chair of the Governing Body to order an investigation. The matter may instead be escalated directly to the Complaints Appeal Panel.

3.3 Governing bodies are advised to establish a Complaints Appeal Panel (CAP) drawing on three governors with no prior, direct involvement with the complaint. In deciding the make-up of the CAP, where possible the governing body will try and ensure that it is a cross-section of the categories of governor and sensitive to the issues of race, gender and religious affiliation.

3.4 The Headteacher will not serve on the CAP. If the Chair of the governing body has had any prior involvement in the complaint then the Chair **must not** sit on the CAP.

3.5 The CAP will consider the complaint on the basis of the written evidence and set up a hearing to hear both parties. The CAP will reconsider the issues raised in the original complaint and not confine themselves to consideration of procedural issues.

3.6 The Chair of the CAP will take a decision at the beginning of Stage 2 on whether to seek the services of a Clerk to:

- Deal with the administration of the procedure;
- Provide independent advice on procedure and evidence;
- Ensure that the relevant facts are established;

- Minute the meeting; and
- Draft the decision letter.

3.7 The Clerk/Chair of the CAP will write to the complainant to explain how the review will be conducted. The letter will be copied to the Headteacher.

3.8 The Clerk/Chair of the CAP will confirm the date of the meeting with the other governor(s).

3.9 The complainant and Headteacher will be invited to attend the meeting. The date and time of the meeting will be convenient to the complainant and Headteacher, within reason. The notification will inform the complainant of his/her right to be accompanied to the meeting by a companion/representative. It will also explain how the meeting will be conducted and of the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the committee.

3.10 The Headteacher will also be invited to prepare a written report for the CAP in response to the complaint.

3.11 All relevant correspondence regarding the complaint will be circulated to the CAP; the complainant and the Headteacher in advance of the meeting.

3.12 If the Headteacher and/or the complainant wish to call witnesses, the agreement of the Chair of the CAP will be obtained in advance of the meeting.

3.13 It is the responsibility of the Chair of the CAP to ensure that the meeting is properly conducted. However, the proceedings will be as informal as possible.

3.14 The aim of the meeting will be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. However, at the end of the meeting the CAP will need to issue a finding in writing either upholding or not upholding the complaint or upholding some parts and not others.

3.15 If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interest of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to respond to the new evidence. Late evidence of witnesses will not be accepted unless there is a good reason for the lateness

3.16 The meeting will allow for:-

- The complainant to explain his or her complaint and the Headteacher to explain the reasons for his or her decision;
- The Headteacher to question the complainant about the complaint and the complainant to question the Headteacher;
- The CAP to have an opportunity to question both the complainant and the Headteacher;
- Any party to have the right to bring witnesses (subject to the approval of the Chair of CAP) and all parties having the right to question all the witnesses; and
- A final statement by the Headteacher and complainant.

3.17 The Chair of the CAP will explain to the complainant and the Headteacher that the CAP will consider its decision, and a written response will be sent to both parties as soon as possible. The complainant, Headteacher and any witnesses will then leave.

3.18 The CAP will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented and reach an unanimous, or at least a majority, decision on the complaint. Where appropriate the CAP can decide on the action to be taken to resolve the complaint and/or suggest recommended changes to the school's system or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not happen again.

3.19 As in Section 1.8 above, the CAP will not pay financial compensation as a response to a complaint, though may spend money on an appropriate educational purpose.

3.20 The Clerk/Chair of CAP will send a written statement outlining the decision with reasons to both the complainant and the Headteacher.

3.21 Stage 3 will be completed in 15 school days. However, it is recognised that this timetable is likely to improve impossible for complaints which are complex. In such cases the chair of the complaints committee will write to the complainant and Headteacher giving a revised target date.

Role of the secretary of state, department for education

If the complainant is unhappy with the way in which a school has dealt with the complaint, they may be able to approach the Secretary of State, Department for Education to intervene.

For the Secretary of State to intervene following a complaint, he needs to be sure that either

- The school has acted or is proposing to act unreasonably in the exercise or performance of its functions imposed by or under the Education Act 1996; or
- The school has failed to discharge any duty imposed by or for the purposes of the Education Act 1996.

Guidance on making a submission about a school complaint to the Department for Education can be found on Department for Education website at the following link:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/schoolperformance/b00212240/making-complaint-school>

Vexatious complaints

- There will be occasions when despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body can inform the complainant in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

**Kingsbury Green Primary School
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Your Name: _____

Address: _____

Post Code _____

Telephone Number (Home): _____

Telephone Number (Day): _____

Telephone Number (Mobile): _____

Name of Child _____

Date of Birth of Child _____

What is your complaint about and what would you like the Headteacher teacher to do?

Continue on a separate sheet as necessary

When did you discuss your concern/complaint with the appropriate member of staff?

Continue on a separate sheet as necessary

What was the result of the discussion?

Continue on a separate sheet as necessary

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____