KING EDWARD VI SCHOOL
SHAKESPEARE'S SCHOOL

Complaints Procedure

Reviewed 26.03.26

Introduction

At King Edward VI School, we undertake to provide a friendly and safe environment in which students will be helped to achieve their potential, both academically and socially. We recognise that sometimes things can go wrong and parents, carers and members of the public may need to make a complaint or raise concerns they have with the School. Unless they are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this Complaints Procedure to address them. We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headmaster, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

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, assisting complainants in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations.

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 the Staff Disciplinary Procedure, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

Time Scales

Complaints must be raised 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.

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 this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

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 until those legal proceedings have concluded.

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

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

Stage 1 – Informal Complaints

Most concerns and complaints can be resolved informally and quickly by discussion with the member of staff concerned, the Vertical Group Tutor or the Head of School. Alternatively, parents/carers can write to these staff outlining the issue clearly and stating what their preferred outcome would be. All complaints will be acknowledged by staff within five School days. Where a meeting is specifically requested by parents it should be arranged within ten School days of the request being made. When parents request such a meeting they should again, if possible, outline the issue clearly and stating what their preferred outcome would be prior to the meeting taking place.

If a complaint is not from a parent/carer of a student of the School (an example being a member of the public) it should be made directly to the Headmaster, preferably in writing.

If the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to make a formal complaint.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaints

Where the matter cannot be resolved under the informal procedures referred to above, a formal written notice of the complaint should be submitted to the Headmaster. This should set out in detail the matter of complaint so that the situation is clear to all involved parties and state what the complainant's preferred outcome would be. The Headmaster will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within five School days and, if deemed necessary, arrange a meeting with the complainant.

If the issue is complex, the Headmaster may need to have the matter investigated. The Headmaster may delegate the investigation to another member of the School's Senior Leadership Team, but not the decision to be taken.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Headmaster will provide a formal written response within ten School days of the date of receipt of the complaint. If this timescale cannot be met the Headmaster will inform the parent/carer that the matter will take longer, explain the reasons for this and give a timescale for when the investigation will be completed. 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 the School will take to resolve the complaint. The Headmaster will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 2.

The Headmaster reserves the right to refer the complaint directly to Stage 3 if deemed appropriate.

If the complaint is about the Headmaster, or a member of the Governing Body (including the Chairman or Deputy Chairman), a suitably skilled Governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 2. Complaints about the Headmaster or member of the Governing Body must be made to the Clerk of the Governors. If the complaint is jointly about the Chairman and Vice-Chairman or the entire Governing Body or the majority of the Governing Body, Stage 2 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 3 – Panel Hearing

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate their complaint to Stage 3 – Panel Hearing. As far as possible it is recommended that Panel Hearings are a last resort.

A request to escalate to Stage 3 must be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governors within five School days of receipt of the Stage 2 response. The request must clarify the nature of the complaint, explain what remains unresolved and the outcome the complainant would like to see. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within five School days. Requests received outside of this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances apply.

The Panel will be made up of three members, at least one of whom will be independent of the running and management of the School. Two others are normally members of the School's Governing Body, but none will have had previous involvement in the handling of the complaint.

The Panel Hearing should take place at a time convenient to all parties. The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the hearing. They will aim to convene a hearing within ten 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. If the complainant rejects the 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.

The complainant, the Headmaster, the Chairman of Governors and any member of staff the complaint is about will be invited to the hearing. Any person invited can bring a friend or supporter if they wish. The Panel Hearing will consider any written material and also give the person making the complaint and the Headmaster, Chairman of Governors and staff an opportunity to state their case and to question others present. The Panel Hearing will ensure that all present are treated fairly. It will be minuted by the Clerk to Governors and everyone present will be given a copy of the minutes.

If the complaint is jointly about the Chairman and Deputy-Chairman 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 panel will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint. New complaints must be dealt with from Stage 1 of the procedure.

The panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The panel 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 panel 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 Panel will provide the complainant and all other attendees with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within five School days. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions King Edward VI School will take to resolve the complaint.

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

Next Steps

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 DfE after they have completed Stage 3.

The DfE will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by King Edward VI School. They will consider whether King Edward VI School 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: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Academy Complaints and Customer Insight Unit
Department for Education
Cheylesmore House
5 Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

Withdrawal of a complaint

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