



Curiosity | Care | Courage | Creativity

King Edward VI School

Complaints Policy

Our Vision:

To be a vibrant learning community nurturing courage, care, curiosity and creativity in every young person, so that they flourish in the world with hope and self-belief.

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1. Who can make a complaint?

This complaints procedure is not limited to parents or carers of children that are registered at the school. Any person, including members of the public, may make a complaint to King Edward VI School about any provision of facilities or services that we provide. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures (such as appeals relating to exclusions or admissions), we will use this complaints procedure.

2. The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as *'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'*.

A complaint may be defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'*.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. King Edward VI School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member of staff, we will respect your views. In these cases, a Deputy Headteacher will refer you to another staff member. Similarly, if the member of staff directly involved feels unable to deal with a concern, a Deputy Headteacher will refer you to different staff member. The member of staff may be more senior but does not necessarily have to be. The ability to consider the concern objectively and impartially is more important.

We understand, however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, King Edward VI School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

3. How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf on a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so.

Concerns should be raised with either the **Tutor, Class Teacher, Head of Year, Subject Leader, SENDCO** or **Deputy Headteacher**. Staff will endeavour to respond to concerns at their first opportunity, in line with our communication expectations: [Communication-at-King-Edwards.pdf](#)

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

Complainants should not approach individual governors to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

Complaints against school staff (except the Headteacher) should be made in the first instance directly to the Headteacher, via Reception or the Headteacher's PA. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints that involve or are about the Headteacher should be addressed to the Chair of Governors via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints about the Chair of Governors, any individual governor or the whole governing body should be addressed to The Clerk to the Governing Body via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

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 staff disciplinary procedures, if appropriate, but outcomes will not be shared with them.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask third party organisations like the Citizens Advice to help you.

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.

Care should be taken in forming a complaint to avoid disclosures about third parties that may contravene UK data protection legislation.

4. Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors, if appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation.

5. 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.

6. Complaints received outside of term time

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

7. Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by King Edward VI School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Admissions to schools• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs• School re-organisation proposals	Concerns about admissions, statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs, or school re-organisation proposals should be raised with the Local Authority (Suffolk County Council).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation 	<p>Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance.</p> <p>If you have serious concerns, you may wish to contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who has local responsibility for safeguarding or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Email on LADO@suffolk.gov.uk or LADO central telephone number 0300 123 2044. For more information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Authority Designated Officer Leaflet ▪ Local Authority Designated Officer Referral Form
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of children from school* 	<p>Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions.</p> <p><i>*complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.</i></p> <p>King Edward VI School Behaviour Policy</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing 	<p>We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors.</p> <p>The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus.</p> <p>Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff grievances 	<p>Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff conduct 	<p>Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate.</p> <p>Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities 	<p>Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Curriculum - content 	<p>Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus</p>

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.

Our approach to handling vexatious complaints is set out in Appendix A.

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 in relation to their complaint until those legal proceedings have concluded.

8. Resolving complaints

At each stage in the procedure, King Edward VI School wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology.

9. Withdrawal of a Complaint

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

10. Stage 1

Formal complaints must be made to the Headteacher (unless they are about the Headteacher) via the Reception. This may be done in person, in writing (preferably on the Complaint Form), or by telephone.

The Headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 10 working school days.

Within this response, the Headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unresolved and what outcome the complainant would like to see. The Headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face or virtual meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The Headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation, the Headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish.
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation.

At the conclusion of their investigation, the Headteacher will provide a formal written response within 15 school days of the date of acknowledgement of the complaint. This outcome completes Stage 1 of the process.

If the Headteacher is unable to meet this deadline, they will provide the complainant with an update and revised response date.

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 King Edward VI School will take to resolve the complaint.

The Headteacher will advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If the complaint is about the Headteacher, or a member of the governing body (including the Chair or Vice-Chair), a suitably skilled governor will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1.

Complaints about the Headteacher or member of the governing body must be made to the Clerk, via Reception or the Headteacher's PA.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body.

Stage 1 will be considered by an independent investigator appointed by the governing body or, if appropriate, the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent investigator will provide a formal written response.

11. Stage 2

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – where further particular consideration of the complaint will be undertaken by members of the governing body's Complaints Committee. This is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

In handling a complaint escalated to Stage 2, the Complaints Committee should test the integrity, thoroughness, fairness and adequacy of the Stage 1 procedure and thus should:

- Determine if the Stage 1 investigation properly considered all the relevant evidence;
- Consider new, or overlooked, evidence but only to the extent that it might reveal flaws or omissions in Stage 1;
- Assess the lawfulness and reasonableness of the decisions made.
- Notwithstanding that a new complaint closely related to the existing complaint could be regarded as vexatious, recognise that new evidence, in certain circumstances could form part of a new Stage 1 procedure.

- Balance the right of the complainant to make a formal complaint with the need to protect staff well-being, uphold School policies and maintain a safe and supportive environment for the School community.

It should not:

- Reinvestigate the complaint from scratch nor, in its review, should it exceed the boundaries set out in the Stage 1 complaint.
- Substitute its own views without clear evidence of a failure in process or professional judgement.
- Require the complainant to prove their case in full

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made to the Clerk, via the Headteacher's PA, within 10 school days of receipt of the Stage 1 response. Requests received outside this time frame will only be considered if exceptional circumstances are considered to apply.

The Clerk will record the date the complaint is received and acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 10 school days.

The Complaints Committee will consist of at least three governors with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. On selection, they will decide amongst themselves who will act as the Chair of the Complaints Committee. If there are fewer than three governors from King Edward VI School available, the Clerk will source any additional, independent governors through another local school or through their LA's Governor Services team, in order to make up the Committee. Alternatively, an entirely independent Committee may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2.

The Complaints Committee, after completing an initial review of the process completed at Stage 1 will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a meeting or through written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs.

The Clerk will write to the complainant to inform them of the decision taken by the Complaints Committee on the way forward and either seek an optional written representation or notify the date options for the meeting. If a meeting is to be convened, the aim will be to convene it within 10 school days of acknowledgement of receipt of the Stage 2 request or otherwise to complete the process within 10 school working days of receipt of a written representation or confirmation that such a representation will not be submitted. If this is not possible, the Clerk will provide an anticipated date and keep the complainant informed.

If a meeting with the complainant is agreed by the Committee, should the complainant reject 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 any written submissions from both parties.

If the complainant is invited to attend a meeting, they may bring someone along to provide support. This can be a relative or friend. Generally, we do not encourage either party to bring legal representatives to the Committee meeting. However, there may be occasions when legal representation is appropriate. For example, if a school employee is called as a witness in a complaint meeting, they may wish to be supported by union and/or legal representation.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend.

At least 5 school days before any meeting, the Clerk will:

- confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the Committee at least 5 days before the meeting. Such written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting. The Committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The Committee will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken.

The Committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The Committee 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 Committee 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 Committee will provide the complainant and King Edward VI School with a full explanation of their decision, and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 5 school days.

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

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and Vice Chair or
- the entire governing body or
- the majority of the governing body

Stage 2 will be heard by a committee of independent governors.

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 King Edward VI School will take to resolve the complaint.

The response will also advise the complainant of how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

12. 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 Department for Education after they have completed Stage 2.

The Department for Education 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: www.education.gov.uk/contactus, by telephone on: 0370 000 2288 or by writing to:

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD.

13. Complaint Form

Please complete and return to the Headteacher's PA/Clerk to Governors who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:
Student's name (if relevant):
Your relationship to the student (if relevant):
Address:
Postcode:
Day time telephone number:
Evening telephone number:
Please give details of your complaint, including whether you have spoken to anybody at the school about it.

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By who:

Complaint referred to:

Date:

14. Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant

The complainant will receive a more effective response to the complaint if they:

- explain the complaint in full as early as possible
- co-operate with the school in seeking a solution to the complaint
- respond promptly to requests for information or meetings or in agreeing the details of the complaint
- ask for assistance as needed
- treat all those involved in the complaint with respect
- refrain from publicising the details of their complaint on social media and respect confidentiality.

Investigator

The investigator's role is to establish the facts relevant to the complaint by:

- providing a comprehensive, open, transparent and fair consideration of the complaint through:
 - sensitive and thorough interviewing of the complainant to establish what has happened and who has been involved
 - interviewing staff and children/young people and other people relevant to the complaint
 - consideration of records and other relevant information
 - analysing information
- liaising with the complainant and the complaints co-ordinator as appropriate to clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.

The investigator should:

- conduct interviews with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning
- keep notes of interviews or arrange for an independent note taker to record minutes of the meeting
- ensure that any papers produced during the investigation are kept securely pending any appeal
- be mindful of the timescales to respond

prepare a comprehensive report for the Headteacher or Complaints Committee that sets out the facts, identifies solutions and recommends courses of action to resolve problems.

Complaints Co-ordinator (Headteacher's PA or Clerk to Governors)

The complaints co-ordinator should:

- ensure that the complainant is fully updated at each stage of the procedure
- liaise with staff members, Headteacher, Chair of Governors, Clerk and LAs (if appropriate) to

ensure the smooth running of the complaints procedure

- be aware of issues regarding:
 - sharing third party information and the requirements of UK data protection legislation.
 - additional support. This may be needed by complainants when making a complaint including interpretation support or where the complainant is a child or young person
- keep records.

Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk is the contact point for the complainant and the Committee and should:

- ensure that all people involved in the complaint procedure are aware of their legal rights and duties, including any under legislation relating to school complaints, education law, the Equality Act 2010, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- set the date, time and venue of any meeting, ensuring that the dates are convenient to all parties (if they are invited to attend) and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
- collate any written material relevant to the complaint (for example; stage 1 investigation summary, school and complainant submissions) and send it to the parties in advance of the meeting within an agreed timescale
- record the proceedings
- circulate the minutes of the meeting
- notify all parties of the committee's decision.

Committee Chair

The Committee's Chair, who is nominated in advance of any Committee preparatory work or complaint meeting, should ensure that:

- both parties are asked (via the Clerk) to provide any additional information relating to the complaint by a specified date in advance of any meeting or relevant procedure
- any meeting is conducted in an informal manner, is not adversarial, and that, if all parties are invited to attend, everyone is treated with respect and courtesy
- complainants who may not be used to speaking at such a meeting are put at ease. This is particularly important if the complainant is a child/young person
- the remit of the committee and its scope is explained to the complainant
- written material is seen by everyone in attendance, provided it does not breach confidentiality or any individual's rights to privacy under the DPA 2018 or GDPR. Redacted material should be accepted where necessary

If a new issue arises it would be useful to give everyone the opportunity to consider and comment upon it without prejudice to new evidence forming part of a distinct and new Stage 1 complaint; this may require a short adjournment of the meeting

- both the complainant and the school are given the opportunity to make their case and seek

clarity, either through written submissions ahead of the meeting or verbally in the meeting itself

- the issues are addressed
- key findings of fact are made
- the committee is open-minded and acts independently
- no member of the committee has an external interest in the outcome of the proceedings or any involvement in an earlier stage of the procedure
- the meeting is minuted
- they liaise with the Clerk (and complaints co-ordinator, if the school has one).

Committee Member

Committee members should be aware that:

- the meeting must be independent and impartial, and should be seen to be so. No governor may sit on the Committee if they have had a prior involvement in the complaint or in the circumstances surrounding it.
- the aim of the meeting should be to resolve the complaint and achieve reconciliation between the school and the complainant. We recognise that the complainant might not be satisfied with the outcome if the meeting does not find in their favour. It may only be possible to establish the facts and make recommendations.
- many complainants will feel nervous and inhibited in a formal setting. Parents/carers often feel emotional when discussing an issue that affects their child.
- extra care needs to be taken when the complainant is a child/young person and present during all or part of the meeting in particular:
 - Careful consideration of the atmosphere and proceedings should ensure that the child/young person does not feel intimidated.
 - The Committee should respect the views of the child/young person and give them equal consideration to those of adults.
 - If the child/young person is the complainant, the Committee should ask in advance if any support is needed to help them present their complaint. Where the child/young person's parent is the complainant, the Committee should give the parent the opportunity to say which parts of the meeting, if any, the child/young person needs to attend.
 - However, the parent should be advised that agreement might not always be possible if the parent wishes the child/young person to attend a part of the meeting that the Committee considers is not in the child/young person's best interests.
- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

15. Appendix A: Serial or persistent complainants

If at any level a Complainant or connected party attempts to reopen an issue or a closely related issue that has already been dealt with under this complaints procedure, the Headteacher may write to the Complainant to inform them that the procedure has been exhausted and the matter closed, that continued correspondence on the same matter is vexatious and that the school will not respond to any further correspondence on this issue or a closely related issue.

16. Appendix B: Vexatious Complaints

King Edward VI School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

King Edward VI School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- 1) refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- 2) refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- 3) refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- 4) insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- 5) insists on pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason
- 6) insists on pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner
- 7) introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- 8) raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- 9) makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- 10) changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- 11) repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- 12) refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including referral to the Department for Education
- 13) seeks an unrealistic outcome
- 14) makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- 15) uses threats to intimidate

- 16) uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- 17) knowingly provides falsified information
- 18) publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums.

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school that relates to their complaint, while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an '*unreasonable*' marking.

If the behaviour continues, the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to change it. For complainants who raise multiple formal complaints within a school term or excessively contacts King Edward VI School, causing a significant level of disruption, the school may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts from the complainant by implementing a communication plan to support regular, constructive communication and support. An example of a communication plan is:
A senior member of staff will be designated as a single point of contact to the parent. The parent will be invited in for a termly meeting, where concerns can be discussed and dealt with. No further submissions of concerns or complaints will be heard outside these meetings*¹
Communication plans will be reviewed after six months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from King Edward VI School.

¹ Unless the concern is in relation to safeguarding.

17. Appendix C

School Complaints Procedure Flowchart

