

Complaints policy and procedures

1 Introduction

1.1 At The King Alfred Federation we strive to provide an outstanding education for all our children. The Executive head, Heads of School and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents. However, the schools are obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents/carers. The following policy sets out the procedures that the schools follow in such cases.

1.2 If any parents are unhappy with the education that their child is receiving, or have any concerns relating to the school, we encourage them to talk to the child's class teacher or the Key Phase Leader immediately. We stress that there is a clear difference between a **concern** and a **complaint**. We take informal concerns seriously and as a result few develop into formal complaints.

1.3 Parents should be assured that making a complaint will not adversely affect your child or you.

1.4 This policy is available from the school offices and will be published on our websites.

2 Aims

2.1 Our schools aim to be fair, open and honest when dealing with any complaint. We give careful consideration to all complaints, and deal with them as swiftly as possible. We aim to resolve any complaint through dialogue and mutual understanding. Our complaints procedure is accessible and simple to use and understand. It aims to be non-adversarial so we can work together co-operatively to reach the best resolution. In all cases we put the interests of the child above all else. We provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and then resolved within established time limits.

3 The complaints process

<p>Stage 1 - Talk to class teacher Expression of concern made to the school.</p>	<p><i>If you are worried about something that has happened in school concerning your child, talk to the class teacher by making an appointment via the school office, giving an outline of your concerns.</i></p> <p>We do not expect parents to go to a senior member of staff first unless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are seriously concerned about the way the teacher reacted when the problem was raised. • You have serious concerns about the teacher's actions or behaviour. • You have concerns about the conduct of a governor or member of staff who is not a teacher. <p>You may also speak to the Key Phase Leader responsible for your child's class if you are not completely satisfied with the response from the teacher.</p> <p>If a parent is concerned about anything to do with the education that we are providing at our schools, they should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their child's class teacher. In our experience most matters of concern can be resolved positively in this way. All teachers work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school, and is making good progress; they naturally want to know if there is a problem, so that they can take action before it seriously affects the child's progress. Most issues can be resolved quickly.</p>
<p>Stage 2 – Talk to the Head of School</p>	<p><i>If you continue to be worried about your child – for instance the problem continues or goes away but comes back again, and you have spoken to the Key Phase Leader, the next step is to see the Head of School.</i></p> <p>Complaints to the Head of School can be made in person or in writing. An appointment can be made through the school office.</p>

<p>Stage 3 – Complain to Executive Headteacher</p>	<p>If the Head of School cannot resolve the issue fully or the complaint is about the Head of School, your next step is to complain to the Executive Headteacher in person or in writing. She will investigate your complaint and aim to respond within 10 working days.</p> <p>Complaints to the Executive Headteacher can be made in person or in writing. An appointment can be made through the school office.</p>
<p>Stage 4 – Complain in writing to Chair of Governors</p>	<p><i>If you have gone through Stages 1 – 3 and are still not satisfied or if your complaint is against the Executive Headteacher you can refer the matter to the governors by writing to the Chair of Governors c/o the school.</i></p> <p>We will consider this as a formal complaint. The Chair of Governors will designate one of the governors to meet with you. We would like to be able to sort out all difficulties informally. The governor will contact the parent within 5 working days of the complaint being received and will try to meet them within 10 working days.</p> <p>If you wish, the governor will intervene to try to resolve the complaint with the school. You can also decide to go straight to the Complaints Panel. Sometimes, talking to the governor will also help you clarify your complaint and what you want from the outcome.</p>
<p>Stage 5 – Formal complaint hearing</p>	<p><i>The designated governor will convene a Complaints Panel within 15 working days. S/he will ensure the parent has all the information about how the panel will be conducted and their rights at the panel.</i></p> <p>The governors will follow Lewisham’s Complaint Panel Procedure at this stage. If the designated governor has been involved in attempting to resolve the complaint s/he may present information at the panel meeting but will take no part in the decision making.</p> <p>All papers relating to the hearing will be circulated to the parent, Head of School and panel at least 5 days before the hearing.</p> <p>The hearing will be as informal as possible, both the parent and the Head of School will have the chance to present their case. The parent may also bring a friend or representative to the panel meeting.</p> <p>Minutes of the meeting and any decisions will be circulated to the parents, Headteacher and panel members within 5 working days of the hearing.</p> <p>The outcome of the meeting will be formally reported to the next full meeting of the governing body under the confidential section of the agenda.</p>
<p>Stage 6 Final Complaints Stage If school based attempts to resolve your complaint has failed you may refer your complaint to the L.A . If all attempts to resolve the complaint have failed, you may refer your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education.</p>	<p>If the complaint is not resolved, a parent may make representation to the LA. Further information about this process is available from the school or from the LA. Decision is made by recommendation and will be provided within 15 days where possible.</p> <p>L.A Contact –</p> <p>Children and Young People's Complaints</p> <p>Tel: 020 8314 6930</p> <p>Email: cypcasework@lewisham.gov.uk</p> <p>Secretary for State for Education</p> <p>www.education.gov.uk</p>

3.4 An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances. These would include serious concerns such as child protection issues or bullying allegations, where the school might consider investigating further.

4. Resolving complaints

5.1 At each stage in the complaint schools and complainant will want to keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology.
- An explanation.
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better.
- An assurance that the event that was the basis of the complaint will not recur.
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure it does not happen again. Details of any disciplinary procedures that have taken place as a result of the complaint are not released.
- An undertaking to review school policy or procedure in light of the complaint.
- An explanation that there is insufficient evidence and thus the complaint cannot be upheld.
- An explanation that, following investigation, the concern is not substantiated by the evidence.

5.2 An admission that the school could have handled things better is not the same as an admission of negligence

6. Monitoring and review

6.1 The governors monitor the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Head of school logs all stage 2 complaints received by the school, and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis.

6.2 Governors take into account any local or national decisions that affect the complaints process, and make any modifications necessary to this policy. This policy is made available to all parents, so that they can be properly informed about the complaints process.

6.3 All SLT members will be fully aware of procedures and trained accordingly and will be involved in reviewing the policy. All staff to be aware that a member of SLT will handle all formal complaints. This policy is reviewed every two years, or before if necessary.

7. Vexatious complaints

7.1 If properly followed, the complaints procedure should limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there may be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant attempts to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

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