



Parental Complaints or Concerns

Whole school	WEBSITE
Statutory?	Yes
Reviewed	February 2019
Next review	February 2021

INTRODUCTION

King's Ely is committed to offering education, pastoral care and communication of the highest quality. We welcome comments from parents about the quality of services which we provide - good or bad.

If you are not happy with any aspect of the school or about your contact with us we need to know so that we can take action to make improvements. The school receives very few complaints from parents and we hope that the majority of problems can be resolved through informal, friendly discussions without the need to resort to formal procedures.

The staff take all complaints very seriously because we put the welfare of all our pupils and our service to parents at the top of our list of priorities. In the event of a complaint it is our aim to:

- ensure a full and fair investigation;
- respect the desire for confidentiality, should it be requested;
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response;
- deal with the matter as quickly as possible and within the timescales set out in this policy.

This policy is applicable to the parents of all current registered pupils, including those in the EYFS and is available on the School's website for all staff and parents. Furthermore, the Principal refers parents to the existence of key policies on an annual basis in her letter at the beginning of each academic year. The policy is also available in hard copy upon request.

PROCEDURE

King's Ely has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided for its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint about the school they can expect to be treated fairly and without penalty in accordance with the following procedure:

First Stage – Informal Resolution:

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. Any complaint should be raised as soon as a parent becomes aware of any issue, and certainly within fourteen working days of any significant event. The school will acknowledge any complaint within twenty-four hours and further contact will be made within six days of receipt of the complaint. The school commits to resolving any concerns or complaints as soon as is practicable and usually within 10 working days (not including the school holidays) of receiving the complaint. Should it not be possible to meet this timescale, regular updates will be provided;
- If parents have a concern or complaint they should normally contact their son or daughter's form teacher, tutor, housemaster or housemistress in the first instance. If this initial contact fails to resolve the matter it will be referred to a more senior member of the school or, if necessary, the relevant Head of Section;
- Complaints made directly to the Principal of the school will normally be dealt with by the Head of Section initially;
- The member of staff to whom a concern or complaint is first reported will make a written record of the subject matter and the date on which it was received. This will be sent to the relevant Head of Section for information. Should the matter not be resolved satisfactorily at the informal stage, parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with *Stage 2 – Formal Resolution*.

Second Stage – Formal Resolution:

- If concerns or complaints cannot be resolved informally then parents should address their complaint in writing to the Principal of King's Ely. The Principal will consider the matter and decide upon the appropriate course of action to take;
- In most cases the Principal will speak to or meet the parents concerned to discuss the matter, normally within 7 working days of receiving the written complaint. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage;

- It may be necessary for the Principal or other delegated member of the SLT to carry out further investigations;
- The Principal or other delegated member of the SLT will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint;
- Once the Principal is satisfied that all the relevant facts have been established so far as is practicable, the Principal will consider the matter and a decision will be made and communicated to the parents in writing. The Principal will also give reasons for the decision. The investigation and notification of the decision will be made normally within 28 working days of the date of receiving the Stage 2 written complaint;
- If parents are not satisfied with the Principal's decision they should proceed to *Stage 3 – Panel Hearing*.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents wish to invoke Stage 3 having failed to achieve earlier resolution they should write to the Chair of Governors (via the Clerk to the Governors, King's Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB7 4DB) setting out the basis for their complaint;
- The Chair of Governors may invite a Governor colleague to investigate the matter in conjunction with the Principal;
- A Complaints Panel will be established. The Panel will consist of two Governors having no direct involvement in the matters detailed in the complaint and one person who shall be independent of the governance, management or running of the school¹; one Governor member of this Panel will be designated as 'Convenor' of the Complaints Panel;
- The 'Convenor' will acknowledge the complaint and arrange a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and within 21 working days;
- The Panel may require further details of the complaint in advance of the hearing. Copies of any such details will be supplied to those involved in the hearing not less than 7 days before its scheduled date;
- Parents may be accompanied to the hearing by another person(s) e.g. relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate;

¹ Please refer to Appendix One; 'Complaints Procedure – Independent Member of the Panel'

Parental Concerns or Complaints Policy

- The Principal shall be entitled to attend the Panel Hearing (unless the complaint directly concerns the Principal);
- The Panel will try to resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation;
- Should further investigation be required it will be conducted as directed by the Panel;
- The Panel will consider all relevant facts before reaching its decision about the complaint and making any recommendations within 5 working days of the Hearing. The Panel will convey its findings and recommendations in writing, via electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents and, where relevant, to the person complained about. The decision of the Panel will be final;
- The Panel's findings and any recommendations it may make will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Principal.

If a parent, having invoked Stage 3 and the Convenor has acknowledged the complaint, indicates that they are satisfied and do not wish to proceed further, they must do so in writing.

If a parent, having invoked Stage 3, does not attend without good reason, such as parent availability, illness or considering comments concerning the Panel's composition, the Panel may consider the parent's complaint in his/her absence and determine its findings.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school will notify parents of the outcome of a concern or complaint whether resolved informally or at Stage 2 or 3 in accordance with the timescales given in this Policy. Parents will be informed of reasons for the decision.

A written record is kept (for at least three years) of all formal (Stage 2) complaints (including whether they relate to the Boarding provision), their outcomes and whether they are resolved at this stage or proceed to panel hearings. Records, correspondence and statements relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

At King's Ely Acremont, where there is provision for the EYFS, the following provisions apply to and are specifically detailed within this policy:

- The school will notify parents of the outcome of an investigation within 28 days of having received a written complaint about the fulfilment of the EYFS requirements;
- the School will retain a written record of complaints for at least three years, and;
- the action which was taken as a result of each complaint;
- the record of complaints must be available to Ofsted and ISI upon request.

Boarding pupils

Furthermore, as there are boarding pupils at King's Ely, the requirements under Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools apply to and are contained within this policy.

EXTERNAL CONTACTS

Parents of children in the EYFS are entitled to make a complaint directly to Ofsted and/or to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), if they believe the school is not meeting the EYFS requirements. :

- Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. General helpline – 0300 123 1231. About schools – 0300 123 4234.
- Parents can also raise concerns related to the quality of education or the welfare health or safety of pupils, by writing to ISI directly: Independent Schools Inspectorate, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA. Telephone number – 020 7600 0100. Concerns will be recorded and may be copied to the Department for Education. However, ISI will not investigate disputes about fees or specific complaints about pupils no longer at the school.

Details of how to contact Ofsted and/or ISI if parents believe that the EYFS requirements are not being met are made available on the noticeboards in the Nursery. Parents will be notified about an inspection, and once the final inspection report has been provided, it will be supplied to parents.

Parental Concerns or Complaints Policy

Complaints or concerns of a child protection nature can also be referred to the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officers) Unit, which can be contacted on 01223 727967.

APPENDIX ONE

Complaints Procedure – Independent Member of the Panel

The following guidance comes from a letter sent by the DfE to the ISC General Secretary in 2002. Although dated, the advice is extant:

“Whilst we do not intend to be prescriptive our general view is that suitable people would be those who have held positions of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments/points. It would add credibility if independent panel members had some standing in the local community. In this connection serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background – perhaps retired members of the Police Force – might be considered suitable by schools. Schools will have their own views and may well have other suitable suggestions to make.

You asked if it would be acceptable to appoint former governors or staff of the school as the independent panel member. The regulations do not preclude this since the stipulation is that the person must be independent of the management and running of the school. Clearly former governors or staff would not have any such involvement. However, schools should bear in mind that they may be subject to criticism that such people would remain too close to the school and would not be truly independent.”

This was expanded in the DfE's Registration of Independent Schools Information Pack of July 2011:

“Whilst we do not wish to be prescriptive about who schools should appoint as an independent person our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered by schools. Schools will of course have their own views.”

APPENDIX TWO

Number of complaints registered under the formal procedure (Second Stage – formal resolution) during the preceding academic year (2017/2018): 0

The school's record of complaints is monitored and analysed by the Senior Leadership Team and reviewed by the Governing Body. Any Child Protection related complaints would immediately be brought to the attention of the designated Child Protection Governor.