Knowsley Junior School

Complaints Policy



2026

Adopted & ratified by full governing body: June 2026

Next review due: June 2027

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Knowsley Junior School

Complaints Policy And Procedure

Introduction

In accordance with Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, all (LA) maintained schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides. This school complaints procedure sets out how the school will respond to any complaints received and adheres to the Updated Best Practice Advice for School Complaints Procedures 2019 provided by the Department for Education.

This procedure will apply to most general complaints received by the school. It is not intended to cover those matters for which there is a specific statutory requirement, or where there is a separate appeal process that parents can access, for example, in respect of special needs assessment and exclusions. Concerns about allegations of a safeguarding nature and staff disciplinary matters will be dealt with through the Governing Body and LA procedures that have been adopted for these purposes. Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use the school facilities should be progressed in the first instance, directly with the provider concerned. Access to the school complaints procedure is not limited only to those parents of pupils attending the school.

This procedure and information for parents about how to make a complaint or raise concerns is available on the school website or can be obtained via the school office.

The Head Teacher has responsibility for ensuring a robust and fit for purpose complaint process is in place and will assess each case in respect of the level of involvement of the headteacher at each individual stage.

Should any individual school governor be approached about a complaint, they should assist the complainant to access the school complaint procedure, or direct them to the headteacher or the Chair of Governors. It is important that no individual governor becomes involved in the investigation of a complaint as this will prejudice their involvement if this is required at a later stage.

It is expected that most concerns and complaints will be dealt with and resolved informally in the first instance, usually by the class teacher and without the need to invoke any formal process. Where matters cannot be resolved informally then a formal complaint may be raised with the school.

Complaints will be considered by the school as quickly as possible with emphasis on early resolution, therefore any concern or complaint will need to be raised with school as soon as possible after the incident or concern arises. The school will not generally consider any complaint made later than 3 months after the incident or concern has arisen. Where complaints are made outside of this time-frame they will be considered on a case by case basis by the headteacher who will determine whether the school is able to reasonably and practicably investigate and respond.

The Governing Body will nominate five school governors to form a Complaints Committee from which, when needed, three members can be identified to form a Governing Body

Complaints Panel. The Governing Body should have regard to the advantages of having a mix of different type of governor on the committee and be sensitive to issues of equal opportunity in the composition of the committee.

NB: The headteacher will not be involved in the preparations or management of this committee or the panel stage of the complaint process.

Complainants may request a panel independent of the nominated school governors, if they provide reasonable evidence to support their view there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. Any such request will be considered, but ultimately this decision will be made by the governors.

The Body will be provided with a report at the Governors' Meeting in respect of the number and type of complaints received by the school, and any actions/improvement taken as a result of complaint outcomes and information.

General Principles

Complaints will be responded to quickly and in a way that is consistent with fairness to all, with access provided to all stages of the complaint process.

To ensure that we meet the Public Sector Equality Duty, where a complainant has difficulty in providing written details of their complaint or other support needs are identified, then an alternative method of contact and support will be agreed.

Staff who may be the subject of a complaint or questioned as part of a complaint investigation must be treated fairly and have an opportunity to respond. They will be offered appropriate support and kept informed as to the outcome.

Confidentiality is important, and all conversations and correspondence will be treated accordingly and in line with data protection requirements. Parents can be assured and feel confident that making a complaint will not disadvantage their child. Anonymous complaints cannot be investigated and responded to, however the school will take any internal action that may be identified as being necessary.

If the outcome of a complaint is that the school is shown to be at fault, then the school will take appropriate action to address matters.

All complaints will be recorded to enable monitoring of complaint information and of any learning and development as a result of complaints.

We will aim to ensure that parents feel that they can raise any concerns they may have with staff without undue formality, either in person, by telephone or in writing. There may be occasions when it is appropriate for someone to act on behalf of a parent, where this is the case, appropriate consent will be sought before accepting the complaint.

Parents may not always wish to make a complaint, they may wish to ask a question or express an opinion, and the school will welcome positively any such feedback and suggestions. A preliminary discussion with school staff may be needed to clarify any issue and help to decide whether the parent wishes to take any matter further.

Staff will respond initially to any concerns or complaint, with the headteacher or Complaint Coordinator, Mrs Gresty, normally dealing with those complaints that proceed to a later stage. At any stage however the headteacher may designate responsibility for the investigation of a complaint to another member of staff or the Chair of Governors where this is felt to be appropriate.

Any investigation will be conducted in a way that is fair and transparent and the complainant will be kept updated as to progress made and any timescales.

In the case of serial or unreasonable complaints, or where the outcome sought is not one which is reasonable or achievable, or where the behavior of a complainant in pursuing their complaint is deemed to be unreasonable or unacceptable, the school will put in place a management plan, and respond to such complaints and behavior in line with school policies and the guidance provided by the Department for Education, the Local Government Ombudsman and the Local Authority.

Complaint Procedure – Stage One

Parents will be offered the opportunity for an informal discussion with an appropriate member of staff regarding their concerns or complaint.

If the member of staff cannot deal with the matter immediately, they should make a firm arrangement to deal with it at a future date or refer the matter to another member of staff. In either case a note of the name, date and contact details of the complainant should be taken, and the complainant kept informed about what is happening in respect of their concerns or complaint.

Where the concern or complaint is regarding a serious matter this may require the immediate attention or involvement of the headteacher or assistant headteachers; staff should seek advice from the headteacher where necessary. In any event the headteacher should be kept informed of the details and outcome of any complaints.

If the complaint is about the headteacher, the complainant should be advised to put their complaint in writing or, where appropriate, to arrange an appointment to meet with the Chair of Governors. Complaints about the Chair of Governors or any individual governor should be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body.

If no satisfactory solution can be found within 15 working days or any other agreed timeframe, the complainant, if they wish, may ask for their complaint to be progressed to the next stage of the process. They will be given clear information on how to proceed and any advice and support that may be available to them.

Complaint Procedure – Stage Two

Parents who wish to progress a complaint to Stage Two will be asked to put the complaint in writing to the headteacher, or where appropriate to arrange an appointment to meet with the headteacher. The complaint will be acknowledged either orally or in writing within 3 working days of receipt, and the complainant will be provided with information about what will happen next and the timescale for response. A response will normally be provided by the headteacher or nominated responder as soon as possible and within 15 working days

of receipt of the complaint details. If it is not possible to deal with the matter in this timeframe, the complainant will be informed of when it is likely to be concluded.

The complainant will be offered the opportunity to discuss their complaint in person and provide any additional information and can, if they wish, be accompanied to any meeting by a friend or relative for support.

The headteacher (or designated member of staff) will then investigate the complaint including, as deemed necessary, interviewing witnesses, obtaining statements from those involved and reviewing information available. Where it is deemed necessary to speak to pupils this will be done in a way that is sensitive, and normally with a parent/guardian present. In some circumstances this may not be possible and a senior member of staff, with whom the pupil feels comfortable, should attend with him/her. School will notify parents if their child has been involved in any complaint investigation.

The headteacher (or designated member of staff) will keep a written record of any interviews, meetings, telephone conversations and other complaint documentation. (Any such recordings may be subject to disclosure on request).

Once all the relevant facts have been established, the headteacher (or designated member of staff) will arrange a meeting with the complainant to discuss the outcome and try to provide a resolution. This meeting will normally be followed up with a letter formally confirming the outcome and any actions or resolution agreed. The complainant should be advised in this letter that if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome, and wish to take the complaint further, they will need to contact the Chair of Governors within ten working days of receiving the letter detailing the Stage 2 outcome of the complaint.

Where this is felt to be helpful, the Chair of Governors will be asked to review the school's response to the complaint so far or asked to attempt further resolution of the complaint if this has not been achieved.

If the complaint is in respect of the headteacher, or if the headteacher has been very closely involved at Stage One, the Chair of Governors should carry out the Stage Two investigation process.

Procedure – Stage Three: Review by a Governing Body Complaint Panel

The following procedure will be followed when a written request is received from the complainant for the complaint to proceed to Stage Three.

The Clerk to the Body or Chair of Governors will acknowledge receipt of the written request, and confirm that a Governing Body Complaint Panel will be arranged to hear the complaint within twenty working days of receipt of the request.

The Clerk to the Governing Body will consult with the Chair of Governors and identify, from the Complaints Committee, three panel members. The panel members will then agree the Panel Chair. A date for the panel meeting will be agreed.

The headteacher and the complainant will receive written confirmation of the agreed panel date, time and venue, including details of the timeframe within which they must submit any documentation for consideration by the panel members. All parties will be given five working days' notice of the panel date.

The letter of notification to the complainant should also inform them that they may be accompanied at the panel meeting by a friend or relative for support.

The Clerk will ensure that all those attending the panel receive a panel information pack containing all of the information submitted by the complainant and the school, no later than three working days prior to the panel date agreed.

Normally at the panel, the headteacher will represent the school and any other staff involved in the complaint. The attendance at the panel of school staff, other than the headteacher, pupils or witnesses will be subject to the discretion of the Panel Chair and the headteacher.

The school or Panel Chair may request that a representative/s from the Local Authority attends the panel to provide advice in respect of the complaint process, or where a professional opinion or advice would be considered helpful.

The Panel Chair will make appropriate arrangements for the panel to be minuted. Minutes will be kept with the complaint record, and can be made available on request to attendees.

The Panel Meeting

The Chair of the panel will ensure that the proceedings are as informal as possible and that the complainant feels at ease. The Chair will make introductions and confirm the remit of the panel, along with the details of the complaint and any outcome sought.

The aim of the panel will be to listen to the complaint, consider any information provided, review the school's response to the complaint, and to try to identify or provide for a resolution.

It is acknowledged that not all complaints will be resolvable and that there may be some occasions when a panel may be unable to provide the outcome that is being sought. In such cases the panel will then look to establish the facts, acknowledge any differences, and will try to identify a way forward that can be agreed by both the school and the complainant.

All parties will be treated fairly and addressed in a way that is respectful. Should any party behave in a way that is deemed by the Chair to be unacceptable then the Chair may adjourn the meeting for a time, ask the individual concerned to leave the meeting, or may bring the meeting to an early conclusion.

Both parties will be provided with an opportunity to address the panel and panel members may ask questions or seek further clarification, and the Chair will call on any attending witnesses or professionals to provide information as required.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chair will explain that the committee will consider its decision and write to both parties with the outcome within ten working days.

At the conclusion of the meeting the headteacher, complainants and any witnesses will withdraw. The panel will agree its decision, and this should include: a complaint outcome; any appropriate action identified to be taken by the school; and where appropriate, recommendations on changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure similar problems do not arise in the future.

The school will ensure that a copy of all correspondence and notes is kept on file in the school. This will be separate from pupils' personal records.

The Role of the Local Authority

When the LA receives a general complaint about a school matter, which does not fall within their remit or any independent appeal process, the LA will signpost the complainant to the school's own complaints procedure. The complainant will be advised to discuss their concern/complaint with the headteacher/Chair of Governors as appropriate. Assistance may be given to the complainant to contact the school, or where they are having difficulty or ask for support in accessing the school complaint process.

NB: Where there are matters of serious concern or safeguarding issues then the LA will contact the school/relevant professionals as appropriate.

The school - subject to a Service Level Agreement - may seek support and advice, including legal advice as appropriate from relevant LA officers in respect of responding to any complaints and concerns received.

Scope of this Complaints Procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision by Knowsley Junior School, other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
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 OMBC.
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. 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).

Exclusion of children from school*	Further information about raising concerns about exclusion can be found at: www.gov.uk/school-discipline-exclusions/exclusions. **complaints about the application of the behaviour policy can be made through the school's complaints procedure.*
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. 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. 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.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.
Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. 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.

Complaints about services provided by other providers who may use school premises or facilities	Providers should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints about service. Please contact them direct.
National Curriculum - content	Please contact the Department for Education at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus

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 a complainant commences legal action against <School Name> 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.

Data Protection Statement

The procedures and practice created by this policy have been reviewed in the light of our Data Protection Policy.

All data will be handled in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy.

What ?	Probable Content	Why ?	Who ?	Where ?	When ?
Notes from meetings, logs, emails relating to the issue	Names of staff / pupils / family members Details of complaint / Incident / follow-up actions	Ensure complaints can be dealt with effectively and according to policy	Staff Governors LA Advisors	Electronic documents (encrypted) E-mails Paper documents in locked cupboard	Held on file throughout a child's time at school Data may be transferred to receiving school where relevant

As such, our assessment is that this policy:

Has Few / No Data Compliance Requirements	Has A Moderate Level of Data Compliance Requirements	Has a High Level Of Data Compliance Requirements
		✔