

Kea School

Complaints Policy



Approved by: Full Governing Body

Date approved: Summer Term 2026

Review date: Autumn Term 2027

1. Purpose

At Kea School, we believe that strong partnerships between home and school are essential to every child's wellbeing, happiness and success. We value open, honest and respectful communication with parents, carers and members of our wider community and welcome feedback about the education and services we provide.

Most questions, worries and misunderstandings can be resolved quickly through positive communication. We therefore encourage anyone with a concern to contact the school as early as possible so that we can listen carefully, understand the issue and work together towards a solution.

We are committed to dealing with all concerns and complaints fairly, consistently and promptly. We will always seek to:

- listen carefully and without judgement;
- understand the concern from the complainant's perspective;
- respond with empathy and respect;
- agree appropriate next steps wherever possible;
- keep those involved informed throughout the process; and
- learn from feedback so that we continue to improve.

Where concerns cannot be resolved informally, this policy explains how a formal complaint can be made and how it will be considered.

This policy is based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance on school complaints and reflects Kea School's commitment to positive partnership working with families and the wider community.

2. Who Can Make a Complaint?

This procedure is open to anyone who wishes to raise a complaint about the provision of facilities or services provided by Kea School, including parents and carers, pupils (where appropriate), former pupils, members of the public and other stakeholders.

3. Feedback, Concerns and Complaints

We recognise that not every issue raised with the school is a complaint.

Feedback is a suggestion or comment intended to help the school improve.

A concern is an expression of worry or a request for clarification.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction where the complainant is seeking investigation, action or change.

We welcome all three and will work collaboratively to resolve issues wherever possible.

4. Our Approach to Resolving Concerns

At Kea School, we aim to resolve concerns at the earliest opportunity through respectful and constructive dialogue. We recognise that most concerns can be addressed quickly when there is open communication and a shared commitment to achieving the best outcome for children.

Our staff use the CLEAR approach when responding to concerns:

- **Categorise:** Understand whether the issue is feedback, a concern or a formal complaint.
- **Listen:** Give the complainant time to explain their perspective without interruption.
- **Empathise:** Acknowledge the person's feelings and demonstrate respect.
- **Ask:** Clarify the facts and establish what outcome is being sought.
- **Respond:** Agree next steps, keep the complainant informed and follow through on commitments.

5. Raising a Concern Informally

We encourage parents and carers to raise concerns with the member of staff most directly involved as soon as possible. Concerns may be raised in person, by telephone or by email. Many issues can be resolved quickly through discussion without the need for a formal complaint.

If a concern cannot be resolved informally, or the complainant wishes to make a formal complaint, the formal complaints procedure set out in this policy should be followed.

6. Stage 1 – Formal Complaint

If a concern cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint may be made to the Headteacher. Complaints should normally be submitted in writing, although the school will provide appropriate support where this is difficult.

Before beginning a formal investigation, the Headteacher (or another senior leader where appropriate) will normally seek to speak with the complainant to clarify the issues, understand the desired outcome and explore whether the matter can be resolved without the need for further investigation.

Where a formal investigation is required, the school will:

- acknowledge the complaint within five school days;
- investigate the complaint fairly and impartially;
- consider all relevant evidence;
- keep the complainant informed if additional time is required; and
- provide a written response explaining the findings, conclusions and any actions to be taken.

The school aims to issue a full written response within ten school days of acknowledging the complaint. Where this is not possible, the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay and given a revised timescale.

7. Stage 2 – Review by the Governing Board

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of the Stage 1 investigation, they may request that the complaint is reviewed by the Governing Board.

The request for a review should normally be made **within 10 school days** of receiving the Stage 1 response and should explain:

- why the complainant remains dissatisfied;
- which aspects of the complaint they believe have not been fully addressed; and
- the outcome they are seeking.

The purpose of the review is to consider whether the complaint has been handled fairly, reasonably and in accordance with this policy. It is **not normally a re-investigation** of the original complaint.

The Review Panel

The review will be heard by a panel of **three governors** who:

- have had no prior involvement in the complaint;
- have no conflict of interest;
- can consider the matter impartially; and
- have received appropriate guidance on the school's complaints procedure.

Where this is not possible, the Governing Board may appoint suitably independent individuals in accordance with Department for Education guidance.

The Review Meeting

The Clerk to the Governors will:

- acknowledge receipt of the review request;
- arrange a mutually convenient date for the meeting;
- provide all parties with relevant documentation in advance; and
- explain how the meeting will be conducted.

Both the complainant and the school may be accompanied by a friend, relative or representative if they wish.

The Chair of the Panel will ensure that everyone has the opportunity to:

- present their views respectfully;
- ask relevant questions;
- clarify any points of evidence; and
- respond to information presented during the meeting.

The panel will consider:

- whether the complaint was investigated thoroughly;
- whether the evidence was considered fairly;
- whether the conclusions reached were reasonable; and

- whether any further action is required.

Outcome

Following the review meeting, the panel will decide whether to:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- dismiss the complaint; or
- recommend actions to resolve the matter or improve school practice.

The Clerk will write to the complainant, normally within **five school days** of the meeting, setting out:

- the panel's decision;
 - the reasons for that decision;
 - any recommendations or actions arising from the complaint; and
 - confirmation that this concludes the school's complaints procedure.
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8. After the School's Complaints Procedure

Once the Governing Board has completed its review, the school's complaints procedure is concluded.

If the complainant believes that the school has not followed its published complaints procedure correctly or has acted unlawfully or unreasonably, they may refer the matter to the **Department for Education**, which will consider whether the school has complied with its statutory responsibilities. The Department for Education does not normally reinvestigate the substance of individual complaints or overturn decisions made by schools.

9. Special Types of Complaint

Complaints About the Headteacher

Where a complaint concerns the Headteacher, it should be submitted in writing to the **Chair of Governors**, via the Clerk to the Governing Board.

On receipt of the complaint, the Chair of Governors will first consider the nature of the issues raised. This initial review will determine whether the complaint relates to:

- the actions, decisions or conduct of the Headteacher in carrying out their professional responsibilities; or
- the implementation of an established school policy or a decision made on behalf of the school community.

The Governing Board recognises that many school policies are developed through consultation and are formally adopted by governors on behalf of the school community. Where a complaint relates primarily to an agreed school policy, rather than to the professional conduct or actions of the Headteacher, it will be considered as a complaint about the school's policy or governance arrangements, rather than as a personal complaint against the Headteacher.

Where appropriate, the Chair of Governors may explain the rationale for the policy, clarify the school's position, or consider whether the matter should be referred to the Governing Board as part of its policy review processes. A disagreement with an agreed school policy will not, in itself, constitute evidence of misconduct or maladministration by the Headteacher.

Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher's actions or decisions, the Chair of Governors (or a suitably appointed governor where the Chair is unable to act) will determine whether the matter can be resolved informally or whether it should proceed under the formal complaints procedure.

Where a formal investigation is required, the complaint will be considered fairly, impartially and in accordance with the principles set out in this policy.

Complaints About the Chair of Governors or the Governing Board

Where a complaint concerns the Chair of Governors, an individual governor or the Governing Board as a whole, it should be submitted to the **Clerk to the Governing Board**.

The Clerk will arrange for the complaint to be considered by an appropriately constituted panel of governors with no prior involvement in the matter. Where necessary, suitably independent individuals may be appointed in accordance with Department for Education guidance to ensure a fair and impartial process.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will normally not be investigated because it is often difficult to establish the facts or seek clarification.

However, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors may decide that an anonymous complaint should be investigated where:

- the issues raised are serious;
 - there is a potential safeguarding concern;
 - there is evidence suggesting a significant risk to pupils, staff or the wider school community; or
 - there is another compelling reason why an investigation is in the public interest.
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Persistent, Serial or Unreasonable Complaints

Kea School is committed to responding respectfully and fairly to all concerns and complaints. We recognise that, on rare occasions, the behaviour of a complainant may hinder the school's ability to investigate concerns effectively or place an unreasonable demand on staff time and resources.

Examples may include:

- repeatedly raising substantially the same issue after the complaints procedure has been completed;
- refusing to accept findings that have been reached following a fair investigation;
- making excessive or unreasonable demands on staff;
- communicating in a way that is abusive, offensive or threatening; or
- pursuing complaints with no reasonable grounds after all stages of the procedure have been exhausted.

Where this occurs, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors may implement proportionate measures to manage future correspondence. Any restrictions will:

- be reasonable and proportionate;
- be explained in writing;
- explain the reasons for the decision;
- identify the period for which the arrangements will apply; and
- be reviewed periodically.

Any restrictions will not prevent a complainant from raising a new complaint about a different matter or from reporting safeguarding concerns.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

A complainant may withdraw their complaint at any stage of the procedure by notifying the school in writing.

Where a complaint is withdrawn, the school will normally close the matter. However, if information received during the investigation indicates that there may be a safeguarding concern, a breach of statutory duty or another significant issue affecting the welfare of pupils or staff, the school reserves the right to continue appropriate enquiries or take any action required by law or statutory guidance.

Appendix C – Complaints Process Flowchart

Kea School Complaints Process

The school is committed to resolving concerns at the earliest opportunity through open, respectful communication. Most issues can be resolved quickly through discussion without the need for a formal complaint.

Step 1 – Feedback or Concern

A parent, carer or member of the community raises:

- feedback;
- a question;
- a concern; or
- an expression of dissatisfaction.

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Step 2 – Informal Resolution

The concern is discussed with the member of staff most directly involved.

Staff will use the **CLEAR** approach:

- **Categorise** the issue.
- **Listen** carefully.
- **Empathise** with the person's perspective.
- **Ask** what outcome they are seeking.
- **Respond** promptly and agree next steps.

Where possible, concerns will be resolved through conversation, clarification or agreed actions.

If resolved – the process ends.

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Step 3 – Stage 1 Formal Complaint

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, or the complainant wishes to make a formal complaint, it should be submitted to the Headteacher (or other appropriate person as set out in this policy).

The Headteacher will normally:

- acknowledge the complaint within **five school days**;
- clarify the issues and desired outcome;
- investigate fairly and impartially;
- consider all available evidence; and
- provide a written outcome, normally within **ten school days**.

If resolved – the process ends.

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Step 4 – Stage 2 Review by the Governing Board

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request a review by the Governing Board.

An impartial panel of governors will consider whether:

- the complaint was investigated fairly;
- appropriate procedures were followed;
- the conclusions reached were reasonable; and
- any further action is required.

The panel's written decision concludes the school's complaints procedure.

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Step 5 – External Review

If the complainant believes the school has not followed its complaints procedure correctly or has acted unlawfully or unreasonably, they may refer the matter to the **Department for**

Education, which will consider whether the school has fulfilled its statutory responsibilities.

The Department for Education does not normally reinvestigate the substance of individual complaints or overturn decisions reached by schools.
