KENNET VALLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Status: Statutory Policy
Approved by: Governing Body
Review Frequency: Every 3 Years
Responsible Officer: Headteacher
Review Date: June 2029

1. Purpose

Kennet Valley Primary School is committed to providing a high-quality education and maintaining positive relationships with pupils, parents, carers, staff and the wider community.

We recognise that concerns and complaints can provide valuable feedback and opportunities for improvement. We are committed to addressing concerns promptly, fairly, respectfully and transparently.

A concern is an expression of worry or dissatisfaction that can usually be resolved informally. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about actions taken or a lack of action which the complainant wishes to be considered under the school's formal complaints procedure.

The vast majority of concerns can be resolved informally through discussion with school staff. This policy provides a clear process for situations where a concern cannot be resolved informally and a formal complaint is required.

2. Guiding Principles

The school will:

- Treat complaints seriously.
- Investigate complaints fairly and objectively.
- Seek to resolve concerns at the earliest opportunity.
- Maintain confidentiality where appropriate.
- Ensure complaints are dealt with within reasonable timescales.
- Learn from complaints to improve practice.

The school expects complainants to:

- Treat staff, governors and school representatives with respect.

- Raise concerns honestly and in good faith.
- Engage constructively with the complaints process.
- Allow reasonable time for investigations to be completed.

The school will make reasonable adjustments where required to enable complainants to access this procedure.

3. Scope of this Policy

This policy applies to complaints relating to:

- The education provided by the school.
- The welfare and care of pupils.
- School policies and procedures.
- Operational matters.
- Conduct of staff acting in their professional capacity.

Complaints should normally be raised within **three months** of the incident or issue occurring.

The school may consider complaints outside this timeframe where exceptional circumstances exist.

4. Matters Not Covered by this Policy

Separate statutory procedures exist for:

- Admissions.
- Exclusions.
- Safeguarding concerns.
- Staff grievances.
- Whistleblowing.
- Employee disciplinary matters.
- Special Educational Needs tribunal appeals.
- Data Protection matters.
- Complaints about services provided by third-party organisations using school premises.

Complaints about individual governors should be addressed to the Chair of Governors via the school office.

5. Expectations of Conduct

The school is committed to treating all complainants with courtesy and respect.

In return, the school expects all communication with staff, governors and school representatives to remain respectful and professional.

The following behaviours are unacceptable:

- Abusive or offensive language.
- Personal attacks or insults.
- Discriminatory comments.
- Intimidating or threatening behaviour.
- Aggressive conduct towards staff or other members of the school community.
- Recording meetings without prior agreement.
- Publishing misleading or confidential information about staff or pupils.
- Social media campaigns directed at individual staff members.
- Excessive, repetitive or unreasonable contact.

The school has a duty of care towards its staff and will take appropriate action where conduct falls below these expectations.

Serious incidents may result in:

- Restrictions on communication.
- Withdrawal of permission to enter the school site.
- Referral to the police.
- Legal action where appropriate.

Governors are volunteers and should not be contacted directly by complainants regarding individual complaints outside of this procedure.

6. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated.

The Headteacher or Chair of Governors may determine that an anonymous complaint warrants investigation where the issues raised are sufficiently serious.

7. Investigating Complaints

At each stage the investigator will:

- Establish the facts.
- Clarify the nature of the complaint.
- Identify what remains unresolved.

- Consider what outcome the complainant is seeking.
- Gather relevant evidence.
- Speak to those involved.
- Keep written records of meetings and discussions.
- Provide a written response.

Investigations will be conducted impartially and without prejudice.

8. Resolving Complaints

Where appropriate, resolution may include:

- An explanation.
- An apology.
- An acknowledgement that procedures could have been improved.
- Clarification of school policy.
- Actions to prevent recurrence.
- A review of systems or procedures.

The school will not normally provide outcomes that are outside its legal authority, employment responsibilities or operational remit.

9. Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Most concerns can be resolved quickly through discussion with the relevant member of staff.

This may include:

- Class teacher.
- Subject leader.
- SENCO.
- School office team.
- Senior leader.

Concerns may be raised in person, by telephone or in writing.

The member of staff receiving the concern will seek to resolve the matter through discussion, clarification or appropriate action. A written response is not normally required at this stage, although staff may choose to provide one where appropriate.

Where a concern has been raised in writing, the school will normally acknowledge or respond within five school days.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following attempts to resolve the matter informally, they may proceed to Stage 2 by submitting a formal complaint in writing to the Headteacher.

Failure to progress the matter to Stage 2 within 15 school days of the school's response will normally result in the matter being considered closed.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

Formal complaints should be submitted in writing to the Headteacher.

The complaint should include:

- The nature of the complaint.
- Relevant dates and information.
- Steps already taken to resolve the issue.
- The outcome being sought.

The Headteacher will investigate the complaint and provide a written response within **15 school days**.

Where additional time is required, the complainant will be informed of the reason and provided with a revised timescale.

If dissatisfied, the complainant may request a Stage 3 review within **15 school days**.

Failure to progress the complaint within this timescale will normally result in the matter being considered closed.

Complaints About the Headteacher

Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the complaint should be submitted directly to the Chair of Governors via the school office.

The Chair of Governors will investigate the complaint and provide a written response within **15 school days**.

If dissatisfied, the complainant may request a Stage 3 review within **15 school days**.

Stage 3 – Complaints Review Panel

A request for review should be submitted in writing to the Chair of Governors.

The request must explain:

- Why the complainant remains dissatisfied.
- Which aspects of the Stage 2 response are being challenged.

The Chair will acknowledge receipt within **five school days**.

A Complaints Review Panel will be convened within **15 school days** where reasonably practicable.

The panel will comprise governors who:

- Have had no prior involvement in the complaint.
- Have no conflict of interest.
- Can consider the matter objectively and impartially.

The panel may:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part.
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part.
- Recommend actions to resolve the complaint.
- Recommend changes to school procedures.

The panel's decision will be provided in writing within **five school days** of the hearing.

The decision of the Complaints Review Panel represents the conclusion of the school's internal complaints procedure.

10. Managing Unreasonable, Persistent, Serial or Vexatious Complaints

The school is committed to considering all complaints fairly, objectively and impartially.

However, the school will not tolerate behaviour that places unreasonable demands on staff, disrupts the operation of the school, or prevents the efficient handling of complaints.

A complainant's behaviour may be considered unreasonable, persistent, serial or vexatious where they:

- Refuse to specify the grounds of their complaint.
- Refuse to engage with the complaints process.
- Refuse to co-operate with a reasonable investigation.
- Refuse to accept factual findings following a thorough investigation.
- Repeatedly raise the same complaint after the complaints process has been completed.
- Change the substance or basis of the complaint as investigations progress.
- Introduce irrelevant information and insist it be considered.
- Seek unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes.
- Make excessive demands on staff time.
- Contact multiple members of staff simultaneously regarding the same issue.
- Send excessive volumes of correspondence.
- Make unfounded allegations against staff.

- Use complaints as a means of harassment.
- Use abusive, offensive, threatening or discriminatory language.
- Use intimidation or aggressive behaviour.
- Deliberately provide false or misleading information.
- Publish misleading, inflammatory or confidential information on social media or public forums.
- Refuse to accept that a complaint has reached its conclusion despite the school's complaints procedure having been exhausted.

Complainants should limit communication regarding a complaint whilst it is being investigated. Repeated emails, telephone calls, letters or other correspondence regarding the same matter may delay the resolution process and may be considered when determining whether communication has become unreasonable.

11. Managing Unreasonable Behaviour

Where behaviour becomes unreasonable, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors may implement proportionate measures including:

- Requiring communication through a single point of contact.
- Requiring communication to be in writing only.
- Limiting the frequency of responses.
- Restricting attendance at meetings.
- Refusing to respond to repetitive correspondence.
- Providing a single consolidated response to multiple emails raising the same issue.
- Refusing to revisit matters that have already been fully investigated.
- Ending communication on matters that have been exhausted through the complaints process.

Where possible, the school will explain concerns and provide an opportunity for behaviour to improve before restrictions are applied.

Restrictions will normally be reviewed after six months.

In response to serious incidents involving aggression, intimidation, harassment, threats or violence, the school reserves the right to involve the police immediately and take any additional measures necessary to safeguard staff and pupils.

The school reserves the right to refuse requests for meetings where the issues have already been fully investigated and responded to through the complaints procedure.

12. Closing Complaints

A complaint will normally be considered closed when:

- All stages of the complaints procedure have been completed.
- The complainant has failed to progress the complaint within the required timescales.
- The complainant has indicated that they wish to withdraw the complaint.

Once a complaint has been concluded, the school will not enter into further correspondence regarding the same matter unless significant new evidence is presented.

Repeated attempts to reopen a concluded complaint may be managed under Section 10 of this policy.

The school reserves the right not to respond to correspondence that repeats matters already fully investigated and concluded through the complaints procedure.

13. Legal Proceedings

If, at any stage of the complaints process, the complainant initiates legal proceedings relating to the matter under consideration, the school's complaints procedure will normally cease immediately.

Any further correspondence will be directed through the appropriate legal representatives.

14. Record Keeping

The school will maintain records of:

- Formal complaints.
- Investigations.
- Correspondence.
- Outcomes.

Records will be stored securely in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

Complaint records will normally be retained for seven years.

A confidential summary of complaints may be reported to the Governing Body for monitoring purposes. Individual complainants will not be identified.

15. Escalation Beyond the School

If a complainant remains dissatisfied after completing all stages of the school's complaints procedure, they may refer the matter to the Department for Education.

The Department for Education will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn decisions made by the school. Their role is to consider whether the school has followed relevant legislation and statutory guidance.

Department for Education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Or online via:

https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school