



LANTERN OF KNOWLEDGE
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE

LoK Complaints Policy

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Revised by S. Ahmed

		Next Review Date	01/09/2025
Approved by	Position	Date	Sign
Shakil Ahmed	Headteacher	02/09/2024	
Mr. Irfan Sidyot	Governor	02/09/2024	

Lantern of Knowledge Secondary School **General Complaints Procedure**

Rationale

The education of the pupils at Lantern of Knowledge School is very important and the action of the individuals who work in it should be open to comment, question and, sometimes, criticism. These concerns are either sorted out informally, often as a result of discussion, or become formal complaints.

The School will give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them fairly and honestly.

What is a complaint?

A concern is:-

- a worry or
- a matter of anxiety or
- a dissatisfaction

Over any subject connected with the education or welfare of any pupil at the School.

A complaint is the formal expression of a concern.

Please Note: The School has separate policies for Safeguarding Children and for Anti-Bullying. Hence, if the concern or complaint is about one of these, the procedures in the relevant document will take precedence over the procedures in this document.

Aims of the policy

The Aims of this policy are:-

- to develop a procedure supported and followed by the whole School community;
- to ensure openness in regard to the procedures for dealing with any concern or complaint (see 3.1);
- to inspire the trust and confidence of parents (Includes guardians or carers (of pupils at the School) here and remainder of this document) in the procedures adopted by the proprietor;
- to protect the rights and professional integrity of staff members and other employees of the School;
- to define procedures in dealing with concerns and complaints.

Preventative Strategies

The School will encourage early resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible hence reducing the number of formal complaints.

This document will be available to all parents who wish to have a copy. The Policies page on the School's website will instruct parents on how to get a copy.

We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. When we refer to "school days" we mean Monday to Friday when the school office is open during term time. The dates of terms are published on the School's website and/or informed to parents through other means e.g. letter etc.

You can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you raise. Complainants must feel able to express their views knowing that they will be dealt with fairly and that making a complaint would not adversely affect their child. Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

The School is not required to divulge to parents any confidential information or the identities of pupils or others who have given information which has been investigated and/or which has led to disciplinary action including the required removal of a pupil.

Any anonymous complaints will be recorded in a separate register, and it will be at the Head Teacher's discretion as to what action is taken, if any. It is obviously not possible to provide a response to an anonymous complaint.

We will encourage complainants to express any concerns at the earliest opportunity and through the appropriate channels listed in this procedure. We will also ask the complainant at the earliest stage what they think might resolve the issue.

All formal complaints will be made in writing. If the complainant has any communication preferences due to disability or learning difficulties the schools will allow alternative methods of contact.

Stage 1 (Informal Complaint)

Any problem or concern should be raised promptly with the class teacher or member of staff responsible for the area you are concerned about. If your concern is more serious you may prefer to make an appointment to discuss it with the Deputy Headteacher (DHT). All staff will make every effort to resolve your problem promptly and within 5 days at this informal stage. Most concerns and potential complaints can best be resolved through informal discussion with the DHT or relevant member of staff.

Stage 2 (Formal Complaint)

If you are dissatisfied with the response of the member of staff (or the DHT if they have been involved at the informal stage) then you may wish to put your concerns in writing to the Headteacher (HT) (or designated senior staff member) as a complaint. You should make it clear if you wish the matter to be dealt with as a complaint. The HT (or designated

senior staff member) will acknowledge the complaint in writing within 5 school days of receiving the complaint. The acknowledgement will reference the School's Complaints Procedure and confirm a date when a formal written response will be completed. This will normally be within 15 school days, but if this is not achievable an explanation of the extended date will be provided.

The HT (or designated senior staff member) may provide an opportunity for the complainant to meet with them to discuss the complaint in detail. The complainant may be accompanied to any meeting by a friend/relative or any representative, and asked if they have any special requirements the school needs to be aware of e.g. wheelchair access, signing etc.

The HT (or designated senior staff member) must keep written records of any meetings or telephone conversations held and any other relevant documentation in relation to the complaint.

Once all relevant facts have been established, the HT (or designated senior staff member) will then produce a written response to the complainant or may wish to meet the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter directly.

A written response will include a full explanation of the decisions made and the reasons for those decisions. Where appropriate, this includes what action the school will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant is advised that if they wish to take the complaint further, they must notify the Chair of Trustees within 4 weeks of receiving the outcome letter.

If the complaint is against the HT, or if the HT has been very closely involved at stage 1, the Chair of Trustees will consider carrying out all the Stage 2 procedures.

Stage 3 (Complaints Appeal Panel)

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the HT, the complainant must write to the Chair of Trustees to request that their complaint is considered further.

The complainant is advised that if the complainant is not satisfied with the response and they wish to take the complaint further they must write to the Clerk to the Board of Trustees giving details of the complaint and asking that it is put before the Complaints Appeal Panel.

The Clerk to the Board of Trustees will write to the complainant to acknowledge receipt of the written request within 5 School Days. The acknowledgement will inform the complainant that the complaint is to be heard by the Panel which will consist of at least three persons appointed by the Board of Trustees (or on its behalf) not directly involved

in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school.

The Clerk to the Board of Trustees will ensure that the panel hears the complaint within 20 working days of receiving the written complaint. All relevant correspondence regarding the complaint will be given to the members of the Complaints Appeal Panel. If the correspondence is extensive, the Chair of the Panel may prepare a thorough summary, to send to the panel members.

The Clerk to the Board of Trustees will write and inform the complainant, HT, any relevant witnesses, and members of the panel at least 5 working days in advance, of the date, time and place of the meeting. The notification to the complainant will also inform him/her of the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a person of their choice. This letter will also explain how the meeting will be conducted and the complainant's right to submit further written evidence to the panel.

If either party wishes to introduce previously undisclosed evidence or witnesses, it is in the interests of natural justice to adjourn the meeting so that the other side has time to consider and respond to the new evidence.

The meeting will allow for:

1. The complainant to explain their complaint and the HT to explain the school's response
2. The HT to question the complainant about the complaint and the complainant to question the HT and/or other members of staff about the school's response.
3. Panel members to have the opportunity to question both the complainant and the HT
4. Any party to have the right to call witnesses (subject to the approval of the Chair of the Complaints Appeal Panel) and all parties having the right to question all witnesses
5. Final statements by both the complainant and the HT.

The Chair of the Board of Trustees Complaints Appeal Panel will explain to the complainant and the HT that the panel will now consider the complaint and all the evidence presented to reach its decision, and a written response/decision (including reasons for those decisions) will be sent to both parties within 5 school days.

The complainant, HT, other members of staff and witnesses will then leave.

The remit of The Complaints Appeal Panel

The Complaints Appeal Panel can:

1. Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;

2. Uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
3. Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
4. Recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

A copy of the findings and recommendations is provided to the complainant and where relevant, the person complained about. The decisions, findings and any recommendations will also be available for inspection on the School premises by the Proprietor and the HT/Chair of Trustees.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the findings of the Appeal panel then the final stage of appeal is to send your complaint to the Department for Education at <https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact-the-Department-for-Education>

The number of formal complaints made during the Academic Year 2023/2024 was 0 (zero).

Complaints not in scope of the procedure

This complaints procedure covers all complaints about any provision of facilities or services that the school provides with the exceptions listed above, for which there are separate (statutory) procedures.

Record Keeping

Following resolution of a complaint, the School will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or following a formal procedure and the action taken as a result of the complaint. At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them

Dealing with persistent serial, or unreasonable complaints

If the School is contacted repeatedly by a complainant making the same points, or asking the school to reconsider their position despite all stages of the complaint procedure being followed, the school will act appropriately in such circumstances. The school reserves the right to not respond to complaints that have been previously investigated and completed fully in accordance with the school's complaints procedure. If in the view of the school the persistent and unreasonable contact of a complainant is considered abusive, false, vexatious, unreasonably persistent or harassing and threatening behaviour, the school will take steps as appropriate to ensure it can continue to operate in a safe and secure way. The school may also take legal action.

The school defines unreasonable complaints as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the school, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints'. A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:-

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of their complaint and outcomes sought, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation whilst still wishing for it to be resolved.
- Refuses to accept certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are not compatible with the complaints procedure and good practice.
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information and expects these to be taken into account and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists these are answered fully and often immediately and to their own timescales.
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff dealing with the issued and seeks to have them replaced.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigation and outcome concluding the complaint is groundless).
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into the complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to the DfE.
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome. o Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthily, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint does so either face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically:-

- Maliciously
- Aggressively
- Using threats, intimidation or violence
- Using abusive, offensive or discriminatory language
- Knowing it to be false or Using falsified information
- Publishing unacceptable information in a variety of media such as in social media, websites and newspapers.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with a school while a complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email, text or in person) as it could delay the outcome being reached. Whenever possible, the Headteacher or Chair of Governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking against the complaint. If the behaviour continues the Headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact the School causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed. This may include barring an individual from the School premises. In any case, unacceptable behaviour described in the sections above will be taken into account when offers of places are made by the school for the next academic year.

Complainants who behave in an unacceptable way

Schools are private places. The public has no automatic right of entry. Schools will therefore act to ensure they remain a safe place for pupils, staff and other members of their community. If a parent's behaviour is a cause for concern, a school can ask him/her to leave school premises.

Appendix A: Complaints Flow Chart

