

Complaints Policy

PLEASE READ THIS DOCUMENT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY SPECIFIC LOCALISED PROCEDURES AS DIRECTED BY THE HEAD TEACHER.

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1. Supporting Documents

This policy must be read in conjunction with:

- [Safeguarding Children in Education Policy](#)
- [Allegations Policy](#)
- [Grievance Policy](#)
- [Whistle Blowing Policy](#)
- [Professional Boundaries and Personal Relationships with Children](#)
- [Equality and Diversity Policy](#)

2. Introduction

- 2.1** Keys Group recognises the rights of children, young people, their families, Placing Authorities, Neighbours, Ofsted and interested parties to make representation or complaints to the company.
- 2.2** A clear procedure for response in this circumstance ensures the issue is addressed professionally and consistently.
- 2.3** Children’s comments, views and suggestions have been gathered and are incorporated within all reviews of Keys Group Complaint Policy.
- 2.4** Detailed guidance to students and parents is provided to all students and parents on or prior to admission and is explained to students by form tutors during induction.

3. Aim/Scope

- 3.1** As a responsible provider, Keys Group recognises the importance of children, young people their families and other interested parties knowing how to make a complaint, that the complaint is addressed without delay, they are informed of the process and the company learns and improves schools.
- 3.2** These principles are part of the ethos and value base of the Keys Group and align closely to those enshrined in Legislation, Policy and Guidance. First and foremost the aim is for young people, or those concerned about young person to be given reassurance that: they will be listened to, understood and supported; they will be free from reprisal or reproach for exercising their right to make a complaint.
- 3.3** Their complaint will be taken seriously and the head teacher/manager/person dealing with the complaint will remain in communication with them to ensure they are aware of the procedures taking place and any progress and outcomes.

4. Abbreviations and Definitions

- Complainant – person making the complaint
LADO – Local Authority Designated Officer
SAF – School Audit Form
UTE – Untoward Event
RADAR – Management Information System used by Keys Group

5. Policy Content

Policy Principles

- 5.1** Keys Group welcomes the opportunity to respond appropriately to complaints in circumstances where the delivery of a School has been experienced or observed as negative. All pupils and stakeholders have the right to make a complaint and receive an appropriate response within agreed timescales.
- 5.2** The key principle underpinning the complaints and investigation procedure is that the welfare of the child is safeguarded and children's wishes and feelings are taken into account.
- 5.3** Upon admission, children/young people and their families and placing authority will be made aware of the Keys Group Complaints Policy & Procedure.
- 5.4** This Policy and Procedure must be displayed prominently within the school and a copy of each placing authorities procedures kept on the file for each child/young person and family as appropriate. Details of how to complain will be included in the Student's Handbook.

- 5.5** All staff will be informed of the Complaints Policy & Procedure and will be required to read, sign and understand the policy.
- 5.6** All staff will receive training in the operation of the Complaints Policy and Procedure.
- 5.7** All complaints will be received in a professional manner, investigated and recorded as outlined in the policy. Keys Group is a learning company and values feedback to help to continually improve the quality of all schools. When a mistake is made, it is important it is acknowledged and things put right quickly to learn from the experience.
- 5.8** All complaints against current and previous members of staff that could have safeguarding implications must be referred immediately to the LADO for a decision on whether Keys Group investigate – please refer to the school’s Safeguarding In Education Policy. Before any investigation involving members of staff is undertaken the Regional Manager must liaise with the Managing Director and Human Resource Department for advice.
- 5.9** Records relating to all complaints will be held locally within the school and within RADAR
- 5.10** All records relating to a complaint at Stage 1 investigation will be held locally within each school **and** recorded on RADAR.
- 5.11** All records relating to a complaint at STAGE 2 investigation will be held locally within each school **and** recorded on RADAR.
- 5.12** Any complaint or concern about the School that is received externally, for example through the Support Centre or on the website must be logged on RADAR and the School’s central record log along with copies of any correspondence and reports. If a complaint is received by the Support Centre, the relevant Head of Department (where the complaint was received) will ensure the School concerned is informed.
- 5.13** Any staff member wishing to complain should use the Grievance Procedure or follow the Whistle blowing Policy.

6. Stage 1 - Procedure for Informal/ Minor Complaints

6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1** There will be many circumstances where children, young people or other stakeholders make minor complaints about their education and care. Much of this will be normal for children and young people and while not minimising the issues, staff will be able to manage and respond to these situations verbally without recourse to the formal complaints procedure. Minor or informal verbal complaints may also come from other sources.

- 6.1.2 Examples of minor or informal complaints could be a child or young person complaining about having to study a particular topic in Mathematics.
- 6.1.3 In some situations the child or young person may not wish to make a complaint but want to discuss their 'grumble' with a member of staff and come to a resolution. Staff should be aiming to resolve the issue through discussion and negotiation this will assist the children and young people to learn skills to enable them to resolve problems
- 6.1.4 In the event that a young person wishes to discuss an issue but not make a complaint, staff should create a suggestion/comments box/form in the school to meet their specific needs/abilities.

6.2 Procedure

- 6.2.1 Any member of staff can receive a complaint.
- 6.2.2 If a complaint is made verbally or received in writing or from a student and is of a **minor nature**, the staff member should aim to resolve the complaint informally to the satisfaction of the person complaining or if needed refer to the headteacher to resolve informally.
- 6.2.3 They will then record the complaint in the Complaints Log Book and file any complaints records on RADAR.
- 6.2.4 The manner used to respond to concerns must never be perfunctory, curt or negative. Care must be taken over the messages sent out in the first interaction as this will set the tone and often influence the likelihood of dealing with the issue and looking to repair the relationship.
- 6.2.5 It is important that all complainants receive prompt feedback to any complaint or concern they raise.
- 6.2.6 Young people should be reminded of their right to access an independent advocate. If the young person has an advocate in place they should be offered the opportunity/supported to contact them. If they do not have an advocate in place - advice should be sought from the Head Teacher (if appropriate) in securing such services.
- 6.2.7 The outcome of any complaint and whether or not the complainant is satisfied must always be recorded on the central log locally within each school and on RADAR.
- 6.2.8 The complainant will be reassured that they will be given the outcome of their complaint in writing; alongside the opportunity to discuss this further if they so wish

- 6.2.9** The complainant should be made aware of their full right to appeal the decision that has been made and be reassured that there will be no recriminations should they choose to follow this course of action.
- 6.2.10** If a young person withdraws a complaint the record should note this. A holding letter does not need to be sent in response to informal complaints by children/young people
- 6.2.11** The Head teacher will use the information on minor and informal complaints to analyse any trends/patterns and to inform improvements in service locally.
- 6.2.12** The complaint outcome will be reviewed by the regional manager.

7. Stage 2 - Procedure for Formal and Serious Complaints

7.1 Overview

- 7.1.1** Formal or Serious complaints are verbal, written complaints of a serious nature or those unable to be resolved at Stage 1.
- 7.1.2** These complaints will have significant implications for school delivery involving the quality and standards of care and education provided.

7.2 Procedure

- 7.2.1** On receipt of the complaint the Head teacher must complete an entry on RADAR. Any associated documents such as; letters of complaint, emails, telephone record etc. should be uploaded alongside the complaint.
- 7.2.2** Young people should be reminded of their right to access an independent advocate. If the young person has an advocate in place they should be offered the opportunity/supported to contact them. If they do not have an advocate in place - advice should be sought from the Manager (if appropriate) in securing such services
- 7.2.3** Complaints@keys-group.co.uk will issue an acknowledgement in writing within 2 working days and will copy the letter to the Managing Director and Regional Manager.
- 7.2.4** Where a complaint is received verbally the complainant must be informed that their complaint is serious and that they will be informed of the next stage by letter.
- 7.2.5** The Red Flag policy should be adhered to for all serious/formal complaints.
- 7.2.6** In the event of a serious complaint the relevant Managing Director must assess the appropriateness of making verbal contact with the complainant, ensure a record is maintained and completed on RADAR

7.3 Investigation Process

- 7.3.1** The Managing Director will appoint an Investigations Manager, an individual who is not directly involved or indicated in the complaint.
- 7.3.2** The Investigation Manager is responsible for ensuring that all complaints are investigated thoroughly, within the prescribed timescales and any resulting action plans are monitored and signed off when completed.
- 7.3.3** The Investigation Manager will compile an Investigation Plan. The Investigation Manager will consider the information that will required to be reviewed and examined as part of the investigation including but not exclusively:-
- Interview with key staff members
 - Interview with children or young people (the method of this should be considered but not limited to interview with the social worker only)
 - Examination of key documentation
 - Interview or information gathering from external sources
 - Examination of environment including CCTV
- 7.3.4** An individual Complaint File will be opened on the RADAR system. All relevant documents should be placed in this folder
- 7.3.5** Following completion of the investigation the Investigation Manager will compile a written report. This report will include recommendations and an action plan as required.
- 7.3.6** The Investigation Manager must ensure that this report is approved by the relevant Managing Director and copied to the Director of Quality & Regulation.
- 7.3.7** Once approved the report will then be sent to the complainant (if appropriate) seeking confirmation of the complaint being satisfactorily resolved.
- 7.3.8** If the complainant is a young person, they will be given the outcome of their complaint in writing; in a format suitable to their age and understanding; alongside the opportunity to discuss this further if they so wish.
- 7.3.9** The young person will be given a full right to appeal the decision that has been made and they will be reassured that there will be no recriminations following this. (See section 6 Complainant Satisfaction).
- 7.3.10 All complaints must be responded to as efficiently and expeditiously as possible.** If the investigation is likely to take more than the required response time of 28 days, a follow-up letter to the complainant should be sent updating them of the circumstances from the appropriate person (i.e. Head Teacher, Regional Manager or Managing Director).
- 7.3.11** Any complaint or investigation cannot be concluded until all agreed actions resulting from the investigation have been signed off as complete by the Investigations Manager.

7.3.12 The Investigation Manager is responsible for seeking confirmation from the complainant that they are satisfied with the response. All correspondence must be copied to RADAR systems.

7.3.13 A complainant can withdraw their complaint at any time either verbally or in writing. If this occurs the Investigations Manager must be informed immediately and must contact the complainant to confirm their decision. The Investigation Manager and relevant Director will consider the withdrawal and determine whether any further internal investigation is required.

8. Complaints Review and Audit

8.1 All complaints will be checked monthly to ensure that the complaints policy and procedure is being adhered to and that the Manager is using the feedback to inform and improve the service.

8.2 The complaint outcome will also be reviewed during subsequent school audits and the young person's/complainants views, wishes and feelings monitored to ensure that they have suffered no negative consequences for making a complaint and are satisfied with the outcome.

8.3 Complaints and their findings will be evaluated and analysed in order to establish any policy, process or practice implications which may need to be acted upon in order to drive school improvements and positive learning. This will be shared and discussed at Senior Leadership Team level; and also embedded into discussions at monthly Heads Meetings, Staff Meetings, and Senior Leaders Meetings.

8.4 Young person friendly information sharing and discussion will be undertaken in response to any findings/learning from serious complaints; young people's suggestions, and views will be embedded into the learning discussions within staff teams and used to inform policy updates.

8.5 The Regional Manager will review all complaints and concerns as part of the SAF and this will include an evaluation/analysis of any findings and update any outcomes and positive action taken.

8.6 Complaints are reviewed as required by senior managers as part of Governance Committee and Senior Leadership Team Meetings. Complaints are also reviewed monthly as part of the key performance indicators.

9. Complaints Review Panel

9.1 Where a parent or concerned adult remains dissatisfied with the written response provided by the Head Teacher, an appeal can be made in writing to the Directors to review the complaint at a Complaints Review Panel.

- 9.2** The complaints review panel will consist of a Director, an Independent person and a senior member of staff, all of whom must not have been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. This meeting will be convened within five school days from the date of the application.
- 9.3** The complainant may be invited to attend the complaints review panel meeting, should they have expressed a wish to do so, and may of course be accompanied by a partner, friend, or legal representation.
- 9.4** The Chair of complaints review panel will notify and provide a written copy of the panel's findings and recommendations to the complainant, Head Teacher and where relevant the person complained about. The decision of the panel will be final.
- 9.5** Complainants will be made aware, that if their complaint has not been dealt with to their satisfaction, they may make their complaint known to the regulatory body

**Ofsted,
Compliance and Investigation Enforcement Team,
Freshford House,
Redcliffe Way,
Bristol,
BS1 6NL**

Telephone: 08456 404040

10. Further stages

Complainants who remain unsatisfied with the outcome may refer the complaint to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. Following the Education and Inspections Act 2002 parents may take certain unresolved complaints to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

11. Complaints and Child Protection

Where a complaint is found to be a Child Protection matter, the Child Protection Procedures and the school's Safeguarding Policy will take precedence over the complaints procedure.

12. Responsibilities

Head Teacher, Regional Education Manager, Managing Director of Education.
All direct contacts details are available within the school's prospectus.

13. Training Requirements

Where appropriate Head Teachers will ensure that familiarisation with this policy is a part of the induction process for all employees.

14. Equality Impact Statement

All relevant persons are required to comply with this policy and must demonstrate sensitivity and competence in relation to diversity in race, faith, age, gender, disability and sexual orientation. If you, or any other groups, believe you are disadvantaged by this policy please contact your line manager. Keys Group will then actively respond to the enquiry.