

# General Complaints Policy

## KISC VALUES

KISC recognises the importance of ensuring there is a clear channel for people to bring to our attention any issues or ideas that they may have about the running of KISC. It also recognises that on occasions such issues may need to be resolved through a more formal complaint process. KISC's value of Justice requires us to provide a process through which such issues can be considered, and the complainants voice can be heard.

*Hear me, my God, as I voice my complaint.*

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

KISC values require that after concerns have been addressed, if the person raising the concern is not satisfied with the outcome, they are reassured that a more formal complaints procedure is open to them that is fair, transparent and timely. It is intended that this can be easily accessible and well publicised. Any such procedure should be simple to understand and use, encourage resolution of problems by informal means, wherever possible, be impartial and non-adversarial, allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keep people informed of the progress, ensure a full and fair investigation, respect individuals' desire for confidentiality, address the key issues raised, provide an effective response and appropriate action, be used by staff and governors consistently, appropriately and confidently.

Any such process will require written records of all meetings that take place in relation to complaints to provide information to the KISC leadership so that services can be improved.

This policy relates to the matters not outlined below, as there are separate arrangements for these areas. Where a complaint is made and subsequently found to fall within the following categories, it will be investigated in accordance with the appropriate policies and procedures, and the complainant will be notified accordingly:

*child protection issues, the curriculum, collective worship, exclusions from school, staff disciplinary and grievance matters*

## Conclusions

The outcome of any complaints procedure must be that the complainant has the opportunity for their complaint to be heard by more than one member of the KISC staff if necessary, that it has been taken seriously and a proper investigation has taken place, and that the outcome can be explained to the complainant, whether or not it is the outcome that the complainant wished to achieve. It should also have a clear end point where the process is concluded and cannot be reopened in order to address vexatious complaints.

**Date of Approval: April 2022**

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# General Complaints Procedure

Most parents have a positive relationship with schools, but sometimes a problem may arise. KISC has established a procedure which deals with complaints should they arise. This procedure will be used by the School's Management Committee (SMC) when dealing with general complaints; it is for parents, carers and members of the public to use to raise informal and formal complaints with KISC and the SMC. All Complainants will be treated seriously and courteously and given the time they need to be heard. It is important that complainants have confidence in the procedure and know that their concerns and complaints will be investigated fully and impartially.

All parties need to be clear about the difference between a **concern** and a **complaint**. Concerns should be handled if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. In most cases, the class / subject teacher will receive the first approach and may be able to resolve an issue immediately. The existence of a complaints procedure should not be seen as a way of undermining efforts to resolve a concern informally.

The formal complaints procedure will need to be used where initial attempts to resolve the issue have been unsuccessful and the person raising the issue remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

**It is the responsibility of the KISC Director to ensure that all relevant staff have received appropriate training in this procedure.**

## **Who is the Procedure for?**

The procedure is for everyone (parents, carers and members of the public) to use to raise informal and formal general comments or complaints with the school and the SMC. Complainants will be treated seriously and courteously and given the time they need to be heard. It is important that complainants have confidence in the procedure and know that their concerns and complaints will be investigated fully and impartially.

If a complainant needs some kind of support in order to raise a concern or complaint, then every effort should be made to ensure this is available to enable them to fully participate in the process. (This could include provision of a translation of the procedure, provision of an interpreter etc.)

This procedure does not cover complaints that relate to the matters outlined below, for which there are separate arrangements. Where a complaint is made and subsequently found to fall within the following categories, it will be investigated in accordance with the appropriate procedures, and the complainant will be notified accordingly:

*child protection issues, the curriculum, collective worship, exclusions from school, staff disciplinary and grievance matters*

If at any point during the procedure it becomes apparent that the complaint is potentially a disciplinary matter relating to a member of staff, the procedure will be stopped and the relevant process instituted. All appropriate and involved parties will be notified.

## **General Principles**

The procedure for handling complaints is intended to:

- be easily accessible and well publicised
- be simple to understand and use
- encourage resolution of problems by informal means, wherever possible
- be impartial and non adversarial
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- ensure a full and fair investigation
- respect individuals desire for confidentiality
- address the key issues raised, provide an effective response and appropriate action
- be used by staff and governors consistently, appropriately and confidently.
- require written records of all meetings that take place in relation to both concerns and complaints
- provide information to the KISC leadership so that services can be improved

### **The Stages of the Complaints Process:**

The KISC Complaints Process has four defined stages:

- Stage One: The complaint is heard informally by a staff member (not the subject of the complaint)
- Stage Two: The complaint is formally heard by the Head Teacher of Primary or Secondary, or the Director of EQUIP. If the complaint is about the Head Teacher, this should move directly to Stage Three.
- Stage Three: The complaint is formally heard by the KISC Director
- Stage Four: The complaint is heard by a panel of three SMC members.

### **Dealing with Complaints – Initial Concerns:**

KISC needs to be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints. However, formal complaints should always follow the complaints procedure.

### **Resolving Complaints:**

At each stage in the procedure all parties should keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It would be useful if complainants state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage.

This procedure will identify areas of agreement between the parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

### **Vexatious Complaints:**

There may be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of the SMC is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

Problems may arise where the complainants are unreasonable and are not seeking to have a situation remedied but instead are determined to extract retribution for some real or imagined wrong. Complainants will be advised in writing of the school policy for handling unreasonably persistent, harassing or abusive complainants.

### **Time-Limits:**

Complaints should to be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible. Complaints should therefore be raised within 3 months of the event taking place, except in exceptional and mitigating circumstances. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadlines and an explanation for any delay.

### **Standards for handling complaints:**

We can receive complaints by letter or email, or alternatively if required during a face to face meeting.

You can expect to be treated with courtesy, respect and fairness at all times.

We expect that you will also treat our staff dealing with your complaint with the same courtesy, respect and fairness.

We will treat your complaint in confidence within KISC.

We will deal with your complaint promptly.

We will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within five working days you can expect to have a full reply within 20 working days.

We will not treat you less favourably than anyone else because of your:

- sex or legal marital or same-sex partnership status: this includes family status, responsibility for dependants, and gender (including gender reassignment, whether proposed, commenced or completed)
- sexual orientation
- colour or race: this includes ethnic or national origin or nationality
- disability
- religious or political beliefs, or trade union affiliation
- any other unjustifiable factors, for example language

### **Third Party Reporting:**

Complainants may wish to have a third party act on their behalf. A third party is any person or organisation acting on behalf of or making enquiries for the complainant. For example, third parties may include:

advice organisations

professionals such as social workers, community psychiatric nurses or doctors, solicitors

family members or friends

interpreters for second language

interpreters for the deaf

Where a third party is helping a complainant with a particular complaint, we need written consent to that effect. Where we have this authority, we will endeavour to take all possible steps to keep the third party informed of progress on the complaint.

### **Confidentiality:**

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially. We will only release information where there is a need to disclose information as required by Nepali authorities.

## Complaints Procedure

### 1. Informal

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the school can be crucial in determining whether the complaint will escalate. Anyone, (parents, carers or members of the public), must feel able to raise a concern or make a comment about what goes on in school with members of staff, the Head Teacher or other nominated senior member of staff, without formality. Informal complaints can be made in person, by telephone or in writing.

Most concerns, comments and complaints can usually be resolved informally by contacting the appropriate member of staff, the Head Teacher or Director of EQUIP or other nominated senior member of staff at KISC, and do not develop into formal complaints. The ability to consider the complaint objectively and impartially is crucial.

Anyone who wishes to raise a concern should ask for an appointment to meet with an appropriate member of staff at an agreed time. At the meeting, the nature of the concern should be clarified and brief details recorded.

The parties involved should discuss and be encouraged to offer their view of what would be a realistic resolution to the problem.

If the member of staff first contacted cannot deal with the matter personally, he/she may need to refer the matter to a colleague. Before doing so, the nature of the concern should be clarified, details recorded (name of person, contact address or phone number, nature of concern, date when concern raised and date(s) of any relevant incident or event) and the person should be notified of the likely time-scale of a response.

If the matter cannot be resolved at this stage, and the person wishes to take the matter further, they should be given clear information about how to proceed with a formal complaint.

**At this stage, the Chair of the SMC should not be approached in case they are needed at a later stage of the procedure.**

### 2. Formal Complaint heard by the Head Teacher

All formal complaints should be submitted to the Head Teacher in writing, by letter, unless the complaint is in respect of the Head Teacher, in which case it should be submitted to the KISC Director (stage 3).

All written complaints should be formally acknowledged within **five school days**, and a full written response should be sent within **twenty school days**. If this is not possible for any reason, ie the complaint is complex, the complainant should be notified of the delay, and reason in writing, and a new expected response date should be agreed.

If the matter cannot be resolved at this stage, and the complainant wishes to take the matter further, they should be given clear information about how to proceed with a formal complaint at Stage 3.

### **3. Formal Complaint heard by the KISC Director**

All formal complaints which remain unresolved following an investigation carried out by the Head Teacher of Primary or Secondary, or the Director of EQUIP, or are complaints about the Head Teachers or the Director of EQUIP should be submitted to the KISC Director for further consideration.

All written complaints should be formally acknowledged within **five school days**, and a full written response should be sent within **twenty school days**. If this is not possible for any reason, ie the complaint is complex, the complainant should be notified of the delay, and reason in writing, and a new expected response date should be agreed.

If the matter cannot be resolved at this stage, and the complainant wishes to take the matter further, they should be given clear information about how to proceed with a formal complaint at Stage 4.

### **4. Hearing by the Chair of the SMC and two other SMC members**

An issue that has not been resolved through informal and formal procedure (Stages 1, 2 and 3) will escalate to a full investigation by the Chair of the SMC (Stage 4) who will be charged with seeing the complaint through. This stage will be the last school-based stage of the complaints process.

The complainant should write to “The Clerk to the SMC” (marking it “private and confidential – complaint”) giving details of the complaint and asking for it to be dealt with at Stage 4. (**Appendix 2**). The Clerk to the SMC or Chair of the SMC should write to the complainant within **five school days** of receipt and advise them of receipt of their request for Stage 4 consideration and outline the timescales for the process. The Chair of the SMC will convene a panel of themselves and two other SMC members and they will then review the complaint at a meeting, usually within 20 school days of receipt of the letter. If there is a longer delay (i.e. due to school holidays), the complainant needs to be informed and given an estimated date of when the committee will meet.

Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole SMC at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of the Chair of the SMC who may also be required for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

It should be made clear by the Chair of the SMC who can attend the meeting and advise both the complainant and the person/people subject to the complaint that they may bring someone to support or represent them. The date, time and venue of the hearing, should be agreed to ensure that they are convenient and accessible to all parties.

The Chair of the SMC should arrange for copies of all the relevant documentation to be sent to all people invited, ensuring that everyone has copies to read through at least 5 school days before the date of the meeting.

Should the complaint be lengthy, it is wise for the Chair of the SMC to speak with the complainant prior to the meeting and identify “bullet point issues of complaint.” This should ensure that the relevant people attend the hearing.

It is recommended that the Chair meet the KISC Director prior to the hearing to agree any questions that they may have from the paperwork, and also to agree how questions will be raised during the hearing.

### Proceedings at the Meeting:

1. The Chair of the SMC will introduce him/herself, the other two SMC members of the Panel, and ask the people present to introduce themselves. It needs to be made clear at the start of the meeting, who can be present for what part of the meeting. The Chair will then explain the purpose and format of the meeting and advise those present that at any time they can ask for a short break. It should be noted that complainants may feel uncomfortable speaking in front of a large number of people, and therefore it may be more productive for people to be invited into part of the hearing only
2. The complainant will be asked to give a verbal statement in support of his/her written letter of complaint and why he/she feels that the issue has not been resolved. He/she will be permitted to call witnesses and to produce relevant documentation.
3. The person subject to the complaint will be given the opportunity to ask questions:  
of the complainant on the evidence given by him/her and  
of any of the witnesses the complainant has called on their evidence.
4. The Panel will take the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification.
5. The person subject to the complaint will be given the right of reply, to state his/her case, to call witnesses and to produce relevant documentation.
6. The complainant will be given the opportunity to ask questions:  
of the person subject to the complaint on the evidence given by him/her  
of any of the witnesses the person subject to the complaint has called on their  
evidence.
7. The Panel will take the opportunity to ask any further questions they may have. When the Panel members understand all the issues, the Chair will ask all parties to leave, except for the Clerk to the SMC.

### After the meeting:

The Panel considers the issues in private and will need to consider the information, come to a decision and suggest a way to resolve the issue taking into account the best interests of the child or children.

When the Panel has reached a decision, the Chair will inform everyone concerned in writing of their conclusion as soon as possible, but in any event, within 10 school days of the meeting.

**The decision of the Panel is final.** They will report their findings to the SMC ensuring that any issues coming out of the investigation are put into action.

Once a Chair of the SMC has heard a complaint and it is clear that correct procedures have been followed, that specific complaint cannot be reopened or re-heard. **The matter will then be closed as far as KISC is concerned.** The complainant should also be made aware that there is **NO right of appeal**

**Date of Approval: April 2022**

**Date of Review: April 2023**



Appendix 1

**KISC Complaint Form**

Please complete and return this form to the Head Teacher Primary or Secondary, or the Director of EQUIP (Stage 2)/The KISC Director (Stage 3)/The Chair of the SMC (Stage 4) (*relevant stage of the Complaints Process*) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (Daytime): \_\_\_\_\_ (Evening): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Your child's name & Grade / Year Group  
(if relevant to your complaint): \_\_\_\_\_

Please give concise details of your complaint, (including dates, names of witnesses etc. )  
to allow the matter to be fully investigated:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (i.e. who have you spoken with or written to and what was the outcome?)

Who did you speak to and what was their response?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

<b>School use only:</b>	
Date form received:	Received by:
Date acknowledgement sent:	Acknowledgement sent by:
Complain referred to:	Date referred:
Date of final response:	

**Complaint Review Request Form**



Please complete and return this form to the Chair of the SMC who will acknowledge receipt and inform you of the next stage in the procedure.

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship with the School (e.g. Parent, neighbour): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (Daytime): \_\_\_\_\_ (Evening): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Your child's name (if relevant to your complaint): \_\_\_\_\_

Year group: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Sir/Madam,

I submitted a formal complaint to the school on \_\_\_\_\_ (date) and am dissatisfied by the procedure that has been followed.

My complaint was submitted to \_\_\_\_\_ and I received a response from \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

I have attached copies of my formal complaint and the responses from the school.

I am dissatisfied with the way in which the procedure was carried out because: _____ _____ _____ _____
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What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage: _____ _____ _____ _____
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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>School use only:</b>	
Date form received:	Received by:
Date acknowledgement sent:	Acknowledgement sent by:
Complain referred to:	Date referred:
Date of final response:	