



# **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

**DANE COURT GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
AND  
KING ETHELBERT SCHOOL**

**COASTAL ACADEMIES TRUST**

## Complaints Policy and Procedure

### Introduction

#### Purpose:

This policy and procedure is for the benefit of pupils, and parents of pupils, at King Ethelbert School and Dane Court Grammar School. This policy and procedure will be relied upon in respect of **all complaints** by parents and students made against King Ethelbert School and Dane Court Grammar School except in respect of:

- a. **Child protection allegations** where a separate policy and procedure applies
- b. **Exclusions** where a separate policy and procedure applies
- c. **Appeals relating to internal assessment decisions for external qualifications** where a separate appeals procedure applies.

King Ethelbert School and Dane Court Grammar School expect that most concerns can be resolved informally and will use reasonable endeavours to resolve any complaints that are made informally, or any concerns that are raised, on that basis.

If informal procedures fail to resolve the issue, a formal complaint about any matter not involving child protection allegations, internal assessment decisions or a decision to exclude a student, must be given verbally or in writing to the Headteacher/Head of School and will be dealt with under this Complaints Policy and Procedure.

#### Aim(s):

- Every complaint shall receive fair and proper consideration and a timely response.
- We will do all we can to resolve your concern and to ensure you are happy with the education that your child receives at King Ethelbert School/Dane Court Grammar School
- Parents can be assured that all complaints and expressions of concern, whether raised informally or formally, will be treated seriously and confidentially.
- Correspondence, statements and records will remain confidential except in so far as is required by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of King Ethelbert School's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

#### Consultation:

All governors were provided with draft copies of the document for review and comment.

#### Sources and references:

Use the Key Guidance

## New School's Network Guidance

### **Procedures and practice**

Our Complaints Procedure will:

- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- Be easily accessible and publicised
- Be simple to understand and use
- Be impartial
- Be non-adversarial
- Allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
- Respect people's desire for confidentiality
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- Provide information to King Ethelbert School/Dane Court Grammar School's senior leadership team so that services can be improved.

King Ethelbert School and Dane Court Grammar School will be clear about the difference between a concern and a complaint. We will take concerns seriously at the earliest stage to reduce the numbers that develop into complaints.

### **Stage One - Informal Resolution**

1. It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
2. If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's Tutor/Mentor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Tutor/Mentor cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Head of Year/Head of House or Head of Department. If the complainant is still not satisfied he/she would contact the Assistant Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Head of School or Headteacher.
3. Complaints made directly to an Assistant Headteacher, a Deputy Headteacher, Head of School or the Headteacher will usually be referred to the relevant line manager unless the Assistant Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Head of School or Headteacher deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
4. The Line Manager will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. (See Annex A) These records will be kept for one (1) year after the student leaves King Ethelbert School/Dane Court Grammar School.
5. King Ethelbert School/Dane Court Grammar School will use its reasonable endeavours to resolve any informal complaints within ten (10) working days of them being raised, except where they are raised in school holidays where King Ethelbert School/Dane

Court Grammar School will use all reasonable endeavours to resolve them as soon as possible.

6. Should the matter not be resolved as referred to in paragraph 5 above, or in the event that the Line manager and the parents fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage Two of this Procedure.

## **Stage Two - Formal Resolution**

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis (as set out in paragraphs 5 and 6 of stage one above), then parents should put their complaint in writing to King Ethelbert School/Dane Court Grammar School's Headteacher/Head of School. Parents should also identify how they wish their complaint to be resolved.

1. The Headteacher/Head of School will delegate responsibility for undertaking investigation of the complaint to an Assistant Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher unless he/she deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
2. The Headteacher/Head of School will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
3. In most cases, the Headteacher/Head of School will meet or speak with the parents concerned to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
4. The Headteacher/Head of School will use reasonable endeavours to speak to or meet parents within ten (10) working days of the formal complaint being received, except where the complaint is received in school holidays where the Headteacher/Head of School will use his/her reasonable endeavours to speak or meet with parents as soon as possible.
5. It may be necessary for an Assistant Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher to carry out further investigations.
6. The Headteacher/Head of School will keep a written record of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
7. Once the Headteacher/Head of School is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. Parents will be informed of this decision in writing, giving reasons for the decision. The written decision should be provided no later than ten (10) working days after speaking or meeting with parents to discuss the matter (pursuant to paragraph 10 above). The Headteacher/Head of School may also arrange to meet with parents to explain the decision.
8. King Ethelbert School/Dane Court Grammar School will keep a written record of all formal complaints, including records of meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint, and King Ethelbert School/Dane Court Grammar School's decision, which record will be kept for one (1) year after the student leaves King Ethelbert

School/Dane Court Grammar School. This record will state if complaints were resolved at the preliminary hearing or if they were taken to appeal.

9. Where parents are dissatisfied with the outcome of King Ethelbert School/Dane Court Grammar School's response to their formal complaint, they have the opportunity to have their complaint considered by an independent Complaints Panel. (Stage 3)

### **Stage Three – Panel Hearing**

If parents seek to invoke Stage Three following failure to reach an earlier resolution and where dissatisfied with the Headteacher's decision in respect of their formal complaint, the parents may, in writing addressed to King Ethelbert School/Dane Court Grammar School, request that their complaint is further considered by an independent Complaints Panel set up for this purpose.

1. This request for further assessment of the complaint will, for the purposes of this Procedure, be known as an 'appeal'.
2. Parents must lodge their appeal in writing and within ten (10) working days of the date of King Ethelbert School/Dane Court Grammar School's decision made in accordance with the Stage Two Procedure.

The parents should provide a list of their complaint(s) made against King Ethelbert School/Dane Court Grammar School and which they believe to have been resolved unsatisfactorily by the Stage Two Procedure, along with the remedies sought in respect of each.

3. The Complaints Panel is only obliged to consider the complaint(s) lodged in this 'initial submission' although they may use their discretion to consider other relevant and related matters that may subsequently arise.
4. Where an appeal is received by King Ethelbert School/Dane Court Grammar School, it will, within five (5) working days, refer the matter to the Clerk to the Board of Governors who will act as Clerk to the Complaints Panel. Where the appeal is received by King Ethelbert School Dane Court Grammar School during school holidays, or within two (2) working days of their commencement, King Ethelbert School Dane Court Grammar School has up to five (5) working days upon commencement of the next school term to refer the matter to the Clerk.
5. The Clerk provides an independent source of advice on procedure for all parties.
6. Once an appeal has been received by the Clerk, he/she will acknowledge the appeal in writing within five (5) working days, and inform the parents of the steps involved in this Complaints Procedure.
7. The Clerk will then endeavour to convene an independent Complaints Panel hearing as soon as possible to consider the matter, normally no later than twenty (20) school days after receipt by King Ethelbert School Dane Court Grammar School of parents' written notice that they wish to invoke the Stage Three Procedure, dependent upon the availability of the Panel members.

8. The independent Complaints Panel will consist of two Governors on the Board who have not previously been involved in the complaint, and one person independent of the management and running of King Ethelbert School Dane Court Grammar School. The process used for selecting an independent person will conform to relevant guidance issued by the Department for Education.
9. The following are entitled to attend a hearing, submit written representations and address the Panel:
  - a. The parent/s (or, if aged over 18, the student) and/or one representative;
  - b. The Headteacher/Head of School of King Ethelbert School Dane Court Grammar School and/or one representative; and
  - c. Any other interested person whom the Complaints Panel considers to have a reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the Panel in their decision-making.

Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

10. Where the Complaints Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. In such cases all parties will be given the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Panel in support of their position, including:
  - a. Documents in support of complaint(s),
  - b. Chronology and key dates relating to complaint(s), and
  - c. Written submission setting out the complaint(s) in more detail.

This evidence will be considered by the Panel, along with the initial submission that was lodged by the parents.

11. Evidence will be initially sent to the Clerk, who will then circulate the documentation to all parties, including the Panel members, along with an order of proceedings. All written evidence must be received by the Clerk no later than ten (10) working days in advance of the hearing. The Clerk will distribute the written evidence to the relevant parties no later than five (5) working days in advance of the Panel hearing.
12. It is for the Panel to decide how to conduct the proceedings of the appeal, which should be reasonably informal so that all parties can present their case effectively. If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
13. After due consideration of all the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will reach a decision, and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within ten (10) working days of the hearing. The decision reached by the Complaints Panel is final. Any decision reached that may have financial implications for King Ethelbert School/Dane Court Grammar School will need the appropriate approval from the relevant authorities e.g. the Board of Governors, although any such approval must be compatible with the decision of the Complaints Panel.
14. The Panel's findings will be sent by the Clerk in writing to the parents, the Governors, and the Trust and, where relevant, the person complained of. The letter will state any reasons for the decision reached and recommendations made by the Complaints Panel.

15. King Ethelbert School Dane Court Grammar School will keep a record of all appeals, decisions and recommendations of the Complaints Panel, which record will be kept for one (1) year after the pupil leaves King Ethelbert School. Dane Court Grammar School

### **Concluding Notes:**

#### **Record-keeping**

The school will record the action and progress it takes as a result of all complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld), including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

#### **Monitoring and evaluation:**

The Governing Body will review this policy at least every two years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.

#### **Other Documents and Appendices**

Appendix A: Complaint Form

Appendix B: Flowchart

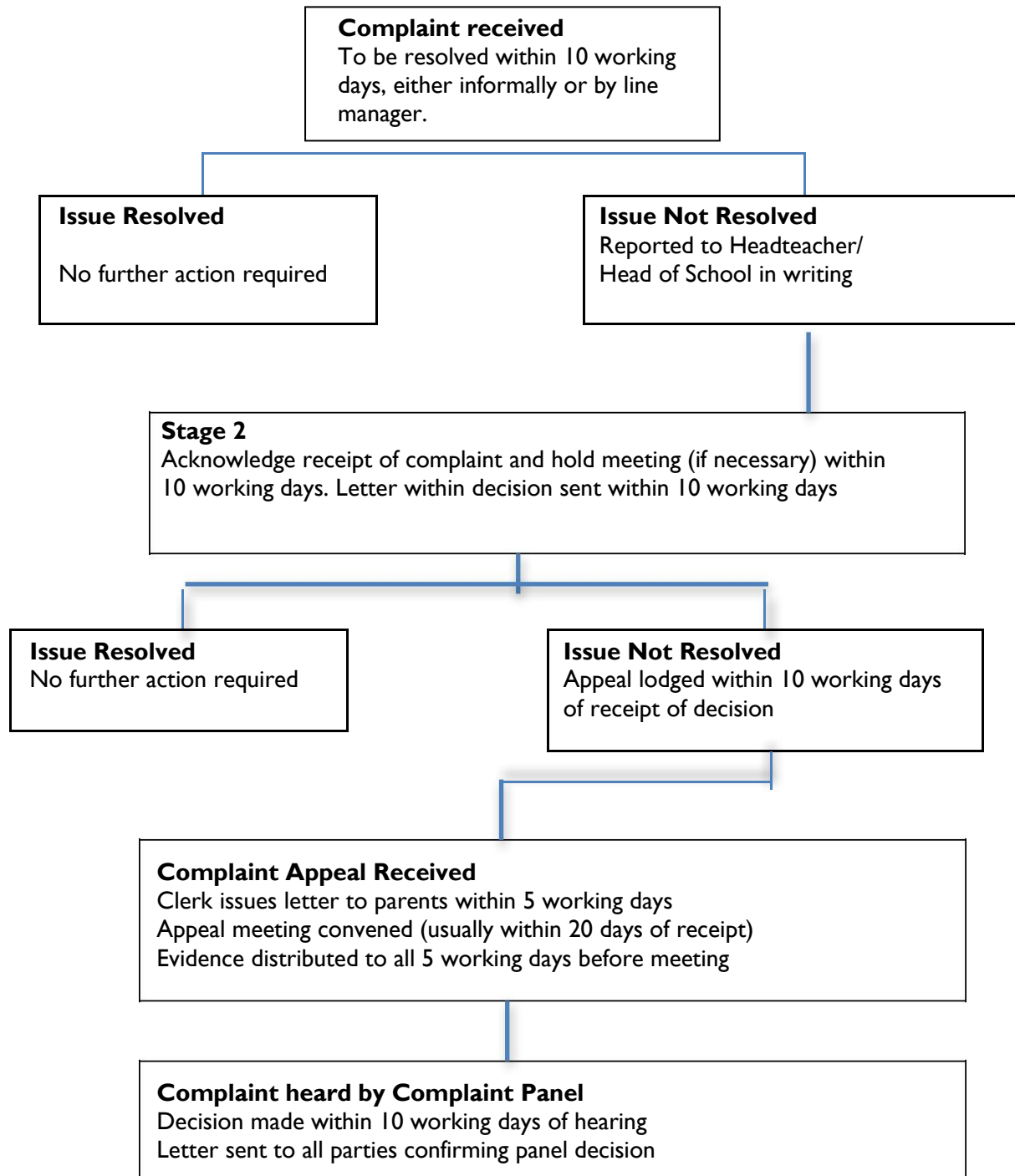
## Appendix A: Complaint Form

<p><b>Your name:</b></p> <p><b>Student's name:</b></p> <p><b>Your relationship to the student:</b></p> <p><b>Address:</b></p> <p><b>Postcode:</b></p> <p><b>Day time telephone number:</b></p> <p><b>Evening telephone number:</b></p> <p><b>Please give details of your complaint.</b></p> <p><b>What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint. (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?</b></p>
<p><b>What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?</b></p> <p><b>Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.</b></p> <p><b>Signature:</b></p> <p><b>Date:</b></p> <p><b>Official use</b></p> <p><b>Date acknowledgement sent:</b></p> <p><b>By who:</b></p> <p><b>Complaint referred to:</b></p> <p><b>Date:</b></p>

**Please complete and return to the Assistant Headteacher or Deputy Head who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.**



## Appendix B: Process Flowchart



### **Complaint Appeal Received**

Clerk issues letter to parents within 5 working days  
Appeal meeting convened (usually within 20 days of receipt)

Evidence distributed to all 5 working days before meeting

### **Complaint heard by Complaint Panel**

Decision made within 10 working days of hearing  
Letter sent to all parties confirming panel decision

September 2019