



Complaints Policy

December 2025

Knowle CE Primary Academy

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Principal: Mr M Stonehill

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Business and Facilities Manager: Mrs R Justice



Approved by: Full Board of Governors

Date: December 2025

Last reviewed in: October 2023

Next review due by: September 2027

Our Academy Vision

Growing in God's Love; Flourishing Together

At Knowle CE Primary Academy, we provide a nurturing environment for all children and adults to grow in mind, body and spirit, enabling everyone to fulfil their potential. Individuals are celebrated for their unique gifts and flourish together through living out our school values, as we make a positive impact on each other, our local community and the wider world. As a result, children are well prepared for a future in which they will bear lasting fruit and make the world a better place.

Our Christian vision shapes the identity of our academy, provides a framework for decision-making and impacts all areas of school life. Our vision sets the ethos and culture within our academy and guides all interactions, learning, the development of our provision and community engagement. As such, our vision has driven the development of this policy.

LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This document meets the requirements of section 29 of the Education Act 2002, which states that schools must have and make available a procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides.

It is also based on guidance for schools on complaints procedures from the Department for Education (DfE), including the model procedures for complaints

In addition, it addresses duties set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework with regards to dealing with complaints about the school's fulfilment of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements.

AIMS

Our school aims to meet its statutory obligations when responding to complaints from parents/carers of pupils at the school, and others. When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- › Be impartial and non-adversarial
- › Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person or panel, where necessary
- › Address all the points at issue and provide an effective and prompt response
- › Respect complainants' desire for confidentiality
- › Treat complainants with respect and courtesy
- › Make sure that any decisions we make are lawful, rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate, in line with the principles of administrative law
- › Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process
- › Consider how the complaint can feed into school improvement evaluation processes

The majority of issues raised by parents, the community or pupils, are concerns rather than complaints. Knowle CE Primary Academy is committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and so reducing the use of formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, it may become necessary to follow the school's formal complaints procedure.

The prime aim of Knowle CE Primary Academy's policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner. Malicious complaints may incur appropriate action by the Academy.

The Academy reserves the right not to investigate complaints that have been made more than three months after the subject of the complaint took place, except in exceptional circumstances. What is meant by exceptional circumstances is where new evidence has come to light, where the complaint is of an especially serious nature or where there is reasonable justification for why the complainant has been unable to raise the complaint before this time. The Principal will review the situation and decide whether or not to enact the complaints procedure, informing the Chair of Governors of the decision.

STAGE OF COMPLAINT

In summary they are as follows:

- **Stage 1 (informal)**

A concern is raised informally with an appropriate member of staff

- **Stage 2 (formal)**

Formal complaint is heard by the Vice Principal, the Academy Business and Facilities Manager or, in the case of a concern about our Extended Services, the Extended Services Manager.

- **Stage 3 (formal)**

Complaint is heard by the Principal or, in the case of a concern about our Extended Services, the Extended Services Management Board.

- **Stage 4 (formal)**

Complaint is heard by the Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel.

STAGE 1 – RAISING A CONCERN

Concerns can be raised with the Academy at any time and will often generate an immediate response, which will resolve the concern. The Academy requests that parents/guardians, community members make their first contact either to the appropriate class teacher, member of the Extended Services Team or to a member of the Admin. Team (depending on the nature of the concern). On some occasions the concern raised may require investigation or discussion with others, in which case there will be an informal but informed response within a day or two. It is anticipated that the vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way. However, if the complainant is not satisfied with the result at Stage 1, they should complete the Formal Complaints Form

(Appendix i) and submit it within 10 academy working days. The Academy will then look at the complaint at the next stage.

STAGE 2 – Complaint heard by the Vice Principal, Academy Business and Facilities Manager or Extended Services Manager

The formal complaint will be directed to the appropriate member of the Academy's Senior Leadership Team. The complaint will be logged, including the date it was received. The Academy will normally acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days of receiving it and a meeting may be convened to discuss the matter further. Following an investigation, the Academy will aim to provide a written response within 10 academy working days. However, if a complaint is more complex to review then this can be extended to a maximum of 20 academy working days. The Academy will provide the complainant with details of the new deadline and an explanation on the delay. If the complainant is not satisfied with the result at Stage 2 they should write to the academy within 10 academy working days of getting the response to explain why they are still not satisfied and what they would like the Academy to do further.

STAGE 3 – Complaint heard by the Principal or the Extended Services Management Board

If the matter has not been resolved at Stage 2, the Principal or the Extended Services Management Board will arrange for a further investigation. This will take the form of a consideration/review of all relevant evidence; this may include but is not limited to:

- A statement from the complainant
- Where relevant, a statement from an individual who is the subject of the complaint
- Any previous correspondence regarding the complaint
- Any supporting documentation
- Interviews/meetings with anyone related to the complaint

After considering all the available evidence, the Principal or the Extended Services Management Board can:

- Uphold the complaint and direct certain action be taken to resolve it
- Reject the complaint and provide the complainant with details of the Stage 4 appeals process
- Uphold the complaint in part: i.e. the Principal or the Extended Services Management Board may find one aspect of the complaint to be valid, but not another aspect. They may direct for certain action to be taken to resolve the aspect that they find in favour of the complainant.

The Academy will aim to provide a written response within 10 academy working days. However, if a complaint is more complex to review then this can be extended to a maximum of 20 academy working days. The Academy will provide the complainant with details of the new deadline and an explanation on the delay.

If the complainant wishes to appeal a decision made at Stage 3 of the process, or they are not satisfied with the action that the Principal or the Extended Services Management Board took in relation to the complaint, the complainant should write to the Clerk to the Governing Body. This should be done no later than 4 weeks after receiving notice of the Principal's/Extended Services Management Board's decision and should briefly outline the content of the complaint and request that the Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel is convened.

STAGE 4 – Complaint heard by the Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel

The Clerk will notify the Chair of Governors who will arrange for the Governing Body's Complaints Appeal Panel to be convened. The Chair of Governors will ensure that the Panel includes two nominated academy Governors and one independent member with no connection to the academy. The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 academy working days of receiving it. The hearing will normally take place within 20 academy working days of sending the acknowledgement.

Governors reserve the right to refer complainants back to an earlier stage of the procedure. A complaints panel will only be convened if the correct procedure has been followed.

In addition to the panel, the following parties will be invited, where applicable:

- Either the Principal or a representative of the Extended Services Management Board (whomever investigated the complaint at Stage 3)
- The complainant/s
- Where the subject of the complaint is a member of staff, that staff member who is the subject of the complaint

The complainant/s is/are also able to bring a companion with them to the hearing if they wish. Where the subject of the complaint is a member of staff, that member of staff is also able to bring a companion with them.

The companion will be a friend or a colleague. Neither party is able to bring legal representation with them.

Where the complaint is about a Governor, the complainant/s may request that the appeal is heard by an entirely independent panel. This is at the discretion of the Governing Body who will notify the Clerk of their decision. Where the complaint is about the entire Governing Body (or majority), the appeal will be heard by an entirely independent panel. Where an entirely independent panel is required, timescales may be affected whilst the school sources appropriate individuals for this purpose.

The panel can make the following decisions:

- Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
- Uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
- Recommend changes to the academy's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not reoccur.

The main aim of the Appeal panel hearing is to impartially resolve the complaint and to achieve reconciliation between the Academy and the complainant/s. All parties will be notified of the outcome of the appeal in writing within 5 academy working days after the date of the hearing. The letter will also contain what the complainant needs to do if they wish to take the matter further.

Complaints about our fulfilment of early years requirements

We will investigate all written complaints relating to our school's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements (EYFS) and notify the complainant of the outcome within 28 days of receiving the complaint. The school will keep a record of the complaint (see section 10) and make this available to Ofsted on request.

Parents and carers can notify Ofsted if they believe that our school is not meeting the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements, by:

- Calling 0300 123 4666
- Emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

➤ Using the online contact form available at
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted#org-contacts>

We will notify parents and carers if we become aware that our school is to be inspected by Ofsted. We will also supply a copy of the inspection report to parents and carers of children attending the setting on a regular basis.

Complaints about the Principal or the Governors

Where a complaint regards the Principal the complainant should first directly approach the Principal in an attempt to resolve the issue informally. If the complainant is not satisfied with this outcome they should notify the Clerk to the Governors. The Stage 2 process will then commence, but with the Chair of Governors as the individual responsible for the investigation.

Where the complaint regards a Governor, the same process applies as for the Principal. Where a complaint concerns the Chair of Governors, the individual should contact the Clerk to the Governors. Informal resolution will be sought, but where this fails, the complaints procedure at Stage 4 will take immediate effect.

The Governors' appeal hearing is the last academy-based stage of the complaints process.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied and feels that the Governing Body acted 'unreasonably' in the handling of the complaint, they can complain to the Department for Education as the academy's complaints procedure has been exhausted. 'Unreasonably' is used in the legal sense and means acting in a way that no reasonable school or authority would act in the same circumstances.

Record Keeping

Our school will record the progress of all complaints, 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.

This material will be treated as confidential and stored securely, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or through a subject access request under the terms of the Data Protection Act, or where the material must be made available during a school inspection.

Records of complaints will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and the local authority retention guidance.

The details of the complaint, including the names of individuals involved, will not be shared with the whole governing board in case a review panel needs to be organised at a later point.

Where the governing board is aware of the substance of the complaint before the review panel stage, the school will (where reasonably practicable) arrange for an independent panel to hear the complaint.

Complainants also have the right to request an independent panel if they believe there is likely to be bias in the proceedings. The decision to approve this request is made by the governing board, who will not unreasonably withhold consent.

Referring complaints on completion of the school's procedure

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of the school's complaints procedure, they can refer their complaint to the DfE.

The DfE will not re-investigate the matter of the complaint. It will look at whether the school's complaints policy and any other relevant statutory policies that the school holds were adhered to. The DfE also looks at whether the school's statutory policies adhere to education legislation.

The DfE will intervene where a school has:

- Failed to act in line with its duties under education law
- Acted (or is proposing to act) unreasonably when exercising its functions

If the complaints procedure is found to not meet regulations, the school will be asked to correct its procedure accordingly.

For more information or to refer a complaint, see the following webpage:

www.gov.uk/complain-about-school

We will include this information in the outcome letter to complainants.

Unreasonable and persistent complaints

Unreasonable complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints procedure
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaints procedure or with good practice
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information that they expect to be taken into account and commented on
- Raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint where the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed, including referral to the Department for Education
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome
- Makes excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- Uses threats to intimidate
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- Knowingly provides falsified information

- Publishes unacceptable information on social media or other public forums

Complainants should try to limit their communication with the school while the complaint is being progressed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text), as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Steps we will take

We will take every reasonable step to address the complainant's comments and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) and, whenever possible, the principal or chair of governors will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' marking. If the behaviour continues, the headteacher will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable, refer them to this policy and remind them to act in accordance with it. For complainants who excessively contact the school causing a significant level of disruption, we may:

- Give the complainant a single point of contact via an email address
- Limit the number of times the complainant can make contact, such as a fixed number per term
- Ask the complainant to engage a third party to act on their behalf, such as Citizens Advice
- Put any other strategy in place as necessary

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, we will immediately inform the police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring an individual from school premises and ensuring appropriate measures of support are provided to staff where they are the subject of aggression and/or violence.

Serial/persistent complaints

If the complainant contacts the school again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent'. We may stop responding to the complainant when the following conditions are met:

- We have taken every reasonable step to address the complainant's concerns
- The complainant has been given a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts the school repeatedly, making substantially the same points each time

The case to stop responding is stronger if:

- The complainant's communications are often or always abusive or aggressive
- The complainant makes insulting personal comments about or threats towards staff
- We have reason to believe the individual is contacting the school with the intention of causing disruption or inconvenience

Where we decide to stop responding, we will inform the individual that we intend to do so. We will also explain that we will consider any new complaints they make provided the concerns raised are materially different to those raised previously and/or are unconnected to the previous concern.

Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there are aspects that we hadn't previously considered, or any new information we need to take into account.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will:

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and that the local process is complete
- Direct them to the DfE if they are dissatisfied with our original handling of the complaint

If a duplicate complaint is raised, which in the view of the school, warrants further consideration, the procedure outlined in stages 1-4 will be repeated.

Complaint campaigns

Where the school receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with the school, the school may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the school website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If complainants are not satisfied with the school's response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

Learning lessons

The Governing Board will review any underlying issues raised by complaints with the Principal, where appropriate, and respecting confidentiality, to determine whether there are any improvements that the school can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

Monitoring arrangements

The Governing Board will monitor the effectiveness of the complaints procedure in making sure that complaints are handled properly. The Governing Board will track the number and nature of complaints, and review any underlying issues. The complaints records are logged and managed by the Principal. This policy will be reviewed by the Principal every two years. At each review, the policy will be approved by Governing Board (Scrutiny and Standards Committee).

Useful contact details:

The Clerk to the Governors: katie.pell@entrustclerk.com

The Chair of Governors: Miss S Covington – c/o the Clerk - g74scovington@knowle.solihull.sch.uk

The Department of Education: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

Reviewed December 2025

FORMAL COMPLAINTS FORM



Appendix i

Your name	
The name of the pupil, the year group and relationship to you (where applicable)	
Contact address	
Contact telephone number	
Contact email address	
Details of complaint	
Action taken so far (including staff member who has dealt with it so far) or solutions offered	
The reason that this was not a satisfactory resolution for you	
What action would you like to be taken to resolve the problem?	

Signed:

Date

Official use

Date received:

Signed: