Kimichi School Worcester

Status: Approved by the Chair of Trustees and the Chair of Governors

Kirsty Henderson-Jones, Chair of Trustees, and Mark Aitchison, Chair of Governors

Policy owner: Headteacher
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Complaints Policy

1. Principles

a) Kimichi School Worcester values positive relationships with parents and aims to maintain open, respectful and transparent communication. We are committed to providing high-quality education and pastoral care.

b) Where concerns arise, we seek to resolve them promptly, fairly and proportionately. All complaints are handled in accordance with this procedure and with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended).

c) Where a conflict of interest arises, the member of staff must declare it immediately and take no further part in the investigation or decision-making.

d) A conflict of interest may include, but is not limited to: personal relationships, including a family member who is a child at the school; close personal or professional relationships; and prior involvement in the matter complained about.

e) In such circumstances responsibility is reassigned as follows: where the complaint would normally be handled by the Headteacher, it is referred to the Executive Headteacher or the Chair of Trustees; where it involves the Executive Headteacher, it is referred directly to the Chair of Trustees (Stage 3). The Chair of Trustees may appoint an independent investigating officer.

f) Complaints are handled impartially, transparently and free from bias.

g) "School days" means days during term time. It is not normally practical for a complaint investigation to take place outside the school's normal working terms, and timescales are calculated accordingly. **This does not apply where a complaint raises a safeguarding concern, which is acted on immediately regardless of the time of year, or where a delay would be unreasonable in the circumstances.** Where a school holiday will materially delay a complaint, the complainant is told at the outset and given an indicative timetable.

h) Personal data relating to complaints is processed in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Information is collected lawfully and only where necessary, shared strictly on a need-to-know basis, stored securely, and retained only as long as necessary.

i) **Support to make a complaint.** We recognise that making a complaint can be difficult. Where a parent needs assistance — for example with putting a complaint in writing, or with communication or accessibility needs — the school will make reasonable adjustments and can arrange support. A complaint will not be disadvantaged because of how it was expressed.

2. Who may complain, and what this policy covers

a) This procedure is available to parents and carers of current and prospective pupils, and to parents of former pupils in relation to matters arising while the pupil was on roll.

b) The following are dealt with under separate procedures, and the school will signpost the correct route: safeguarding concerns and allegations against staff (safeguarding policy and LADO); the content of an EHCP or a local authority decision (local authority and SEND Tribunal); examinations matters (Internal Appeals Procedure); admissions decisions, which may be raised here but follow the Admissions Policy in the first instance; and staff grievance or disciplinary matters.

c) A parent who wishes to challenge a permanent exclusion may bring the matter under this policy. Such complaints proceed through the stages below, including where unresolved a Stage 4 Complaints Panel. This should be read alongside the Exclusion Policy and its addendum on Reconsideration and Rescission of a Permanent Exclusion.

3. Timescales for raising complaints

a) Complaints should be raised within three months of the incident.

b) Complaints raised outside this period may be considered at the discretion of the Executive Headteacher or Headteacher where there is good reason. Where the decision is not to consider an out-of-time complaint, the reasons are given in writing.

c) Where the complaint concerns the person who would ordinarily take that decision, it is taken by the Chair of Trustees instead.

d) No time limit applies to a matter raising a safeguarding concern.

4. Scheme of delegation

Where Stage 1 has not resolved the matter, and no conflict of interest has been declared:

If the complaint is about	It is made in writing to
Volunteers, visiting music teachers, guest teachers, teaching staff, heads of subject, the Deputy Head or the SENDCo	The Headteacher
The Headteacher	The Executive Headteacher, as a Stage 2 formal complaint
The Executive Headteacher	The Chair of Trustees — straight to Stage 3

5. Stage 1 — informal resolution

Parents should initially raise concerns with the relevant member of staff. The Head of School, Caroline Channon (c.channon@kimichiworcester.co.uk), is made aware as soon as reasonably practicable, and the Executive Headteacher, Sally Alexander (s.alexander@kimichiworcester.co.uk), where the matter warrants it. Complaints in writing should be addressed to Kimichi School Worcester, Battenhall Avenue, Worcester; correspondence for the Chair of Trustees, Kirsty Henderson-Jones, should be sent to the same address marked private and confidential. Most concerns are resolved at this stage through discussion and clarification.

A brief written record of the concern and outcome is kept securely and accessible only on a need-to-know basis. Resolution is normally sought within 5 school days.

6. Stage 2 — formal complaint

a) If the matter is not resolved informally, parents should submit a formal complaint in writing to the Executive Headteacher or Headteacher, stating clearly that it is a formal complaint.

b) Receipt is acknowledged within 2 school days.

c) The complaint is investigated. This may include meeting the parents, speaking to relevant staff and reviewing documentation.

d) A written outcome is provided setting out the findings, the decision and the reasons for it.

e) A full response is normally provided within 10 school days. Where more time is needed, parents are told and given a revised date.

f) Information gathered is handled in accordance with data protection requirements, with redaction where it relates to third parties.

7. Stage 3 — review by the Chair of Trustees

a) If parents remain dissatisfied they may escalate in writing to the Chair of Trustees.

b) The Chair reviews the process followed and the decision reached, and may uphold the decision, request further investigation, or offer a meeting with parents.

c) The Chair responds within 15 school days.

d) Where the matter presents a conflict of interest for the Chair, or falls outside their expertise, they may refer it to another Trustee or to an independent person to conduct a review, investigation or report. This is a **sub-Stage 3** investigation.

e) The investigatory powers of the reviewing person replicate those available at Stage 4. This describes their powers of investigation only; it does not constitute or replace the Stage 4 Complaints Panel Hearing provided for at clause 8.

f) A sub-Stage 3 investigation must be completed and reported on within 60 calendar days of the official reassignment of the complaint. Where reasonable circumstances require an extension, this is at the discretion of the investigating person, who will inform the complainant in writing with a revised date.

g) A sub-Stage 3 investigation concludes the school's investigation of the complaint and is the final investigatory stage carried out on the school's behalf. It is not the final stage of the internal complaints procedure. A complainant who remains dissatisfied may proceed to a Stage 4 Complaints Panel Hearing by requesting one in writing **within 10 school days** of the sub-Stage 3 outcome.

h) Where a Stage 3 or sub-Stage 3 outcome receives no reply from the complainant within 10 school days, the matter is considered closed.

8. Stage 4 — Complaints Panel Hearing

a) If the complaint remains unresolved, including following a sub-Stage 3 investigation, parents may request a hearing before a Complaints Panel, in writing within 10 school days of the outcome.

b) **Panel composition.** Three individuals not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, including any person who conducted a sub-Stage 3 investigation of it. At least one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school, as required by the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended).

c) **Procedure.** The school acknowledges the request and arranges a hearing within 10 school days. Parents may attend and be accompanied by one other person; this is not normally legal representation, as the panel is not a legal forum. Relevant documentation is shared in advance, limited to what the panel needs and redacted to protect personal data. All panel members maintain strict confidentiality.

d) **Outcome.** The panel considers all the evidence, reaches a decision and makes recommendations where appropriate. A copy of the panel's written findings and recommendations, with reasons, is

issued within 7 school days to the complainant and, where relevant, to the person complained about, and is available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher.

e) The panel's decision is final within the school's internal procedures. Parents may raise unresolved concerns with the Department for Education or the relevant inspectorate.

9. Record keeping and confidentiality

a) A written record is kept of all complaints, formal and informal; whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or proceeded to a panel hearing; and the outcomes and actions taken.

b) **The number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year is published, and is available to parents on request, as required by the regulations. A nil return is published as nil. For the 2025-26 school year, the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure at Kimichi School Worcester was nil.**

c) Records are processed in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018: lawfully, fairly and transparently; limited to what is necessary; access restricted to those handling the complaint; and stored securely.

d) Complaint records are retained in line with the school's retention schedule, normally a minimum of six years, unless a longer period is required for safeguarding, legal or regulatory reasons.

e) Individuals may request access to personal data held about them. Subject access requests are answered in accordance with data protection legislation, with third-party information redacted where appropriate.

f) Records remain confidential except where disclosure is required by law, to inspection bodies on request, or under safeguarding obligations.

g) A central complaints register is maintained recording all formal complaints, their stage, outcomes and actions. Complaint records are held separately from individual pupil files unless safeguarding considerations require otherwise.

10. Serial, persistent or vexatious complaints

a) Where a complainant's behaviour is unreasonable, excessively repetitive, abusive, threatening or vexatious, the school may manage communications proportionately. This may include limiting communication to a single point of contact, restricting methods of communication, acknowledging correspondence without a substantive response, declining to respond on matters already fully addressed, or concluding communication.

b) Any such decision is made reasonably and proportionately, having regard to the circumstances, and is confirmed in writing with reasons and a review date.

c) The decision is normally taken by the Headteacher, Executive Headteacher or Chair of Trustees.

d) Applying these measures does not prevent a complainant raising a genuinely new matter, and does not affect safeguarding reporting routes.

11. Monitoring and review

a) The school monitors complaints to identify patterns or systemic issues and uses this to inform school improvement. Anonymised summary data is reported to Trustees termly.

b) Where complaints are reviewed for monitoring purposes, data is anonymised.

c) This policy is reviewed annually.