



YOUR SUGGESTIONS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

This policy applies to our current schools, Khalsa Secondary Academy (KSA), ATAM, and The Khalsa Academy Wolverhampton, and any other schools we open.

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YOUR SUGGESTIONS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Your suggestions are a very valuable way of helping us to improve the services that we provide to you and your child. If you can think of a way in which we can improve, we want to hear from you!

We will take all suggestions seriously and consider each on its merits. If we decide not to take up your suggestion, we will explain to you the reason for your decision.

If you want to make a suggestion, you should write to the Headteacher. Unfortunately, there are sometimes occasions when things go wrong.

All complaints are important to us – there is always room to improve, and as part of our commitment to excellence, we strive to identify areas for improvement and put things right as quickly as we can.

We aim to deal with your suggestions and complaints in an efficient and understanding way. To do this, we will:

- acknowledge your complaint within 24 hours
- take all complaints seriously and deal with them as quickly as possible
- investigate your complaint thoroughly
- treat your complaint in confidence
- make sure you get a letter explaining the outcome of your complaint

We will always investigate your complaint, provided it is lodged with us within 3 months of the incident arising. Complaints lodged more than 3-months after the relevant incident will not be investigated other than in very exceptional circumstances.

If you do have a complaint you want to raise with us, you should follow the following guidelines:

Stage 1 Where possible, we try to deal with your complaint as near its source as possible. This usually means raising your complaint with the relevant Head of Department, Head of Year, or Deputy Head, depending on the nature of the complaint. We can usually sort out simple mistakes or misunderstandings straight away. You can make your complaint in person, on the phone, or in writing.

Stage 2 If you are unhappy with the way your complaint has been dealt with at Stage 1, you should contact the Headteacher and explain the nature of your complaint. The Headteacher will look into your complaint and let you know, in writing, the results of their findings. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, a response will be provided within 15 working days of the complaint reaching Stage 2. If there are exceptional circumstances, the complainant will be notified to this effect and told when a substantive response could be expected. A log of all complaints from Stage 2 onwards is maintained and reviewed by the Local Advisory Board.

If your complaint is about the Headteacher, it will be referred straight onto Stage 3 of this process.

We will need to receive your request to escalate your complaint to Stage 3 within 10 working days of our response to you at Stage 2. If you do not inform us of your wish to proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure within this timescale, we will consider your complaint closed and will not review or investigate the complaint again.

Stage 3 If you are still unhappy, you can write to the Clerk to the Local Advisory Board, who will refer your complaint to the Chair of Governors for further investigation. The Chair of Governors will look at the evidence collected by the Headteacher and, if necessary, conduct further investigations to thoroughly examine all aspects. The Chair will examine both the process and the outcome of your complaint at the earlier stages. They will write to you about their conclusions unless there are exceptional circumstances, a response will be provided within 21 working days of the complaint reaching Stage 3. If there are exceptional circumstances, the complainant will be notified to this effect and told when a substantive response could be expected.

We will need to receive your request to escalate your complaint to Stage 4 within 10 working days of our written response to you at Stage 3. If you do not inform us of your wish to proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure within this timescale, we will consider your complaint closed and will not review or investigate the complaint again.

Stage 4 If you remain unhappy at this stage, you should write to the Chief Executive of the Trust who will arrange for a panel of three people, who will be appointed by the Trust Board of Trustees and who will have had no prior involvement in the issue, to hear your complaint. One member of the panel will be independent of the management and running of the school. At this meeting, you will be invited to make written and oral representations to the panel and to be accompanied/represented if you wish. The panel will communicate their findings and recommendations to you in writing. Their findings will be communicated both to the complainant, and the person complained about, if relevant.

VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

The Chief Executive and Board of Trustees (the Trust) are committed to improving trust schools. They welcome feedback from parents/carers and always try to resolve any concerns as quickly as possible (see the above procedure). Sometimes, however, parents or carers pursuing complaints or other issues unacceptably treat staff and others or behave unacceptably. While it is recognised that some complaints may relate to serious and distressing incidents, the Trust will not accept threatening, inappropriate, or harassing behaviour.

This policy aims to clarify the process for dealing with unreasonable complainants or parents who do not act appropriately.

What do we mean by an unreasonable complaint?

An unreasonable complaint may be so classified if the complainant engages in unreasonable behaviour when making the complaint. This will include parents and carers who unreasonably pursue complaints and do not act appropriately towards staff in Trust schools.

Unreasonable behaviour may include:

- Actions which are
 - Out of proportion to the nature of the complaint, or
 - Persistent – even when the complaints procedure has been exhausted, or
 - Personally harassing, or
 - Unjustifiably repetitious, or
 - Obsessive, harassing, or prolific
- Prolific correspondence or excessive email or telephone contact about a concern

or complaint.

- Repetitious complaints where the complainant has no view about what would satisfy him/her and/or no intention to resolve the complaint.
- Acting in a way, not in line to reach a resolution and work with the school/Trust
- An insistence on
 - Pursuing unjustified or unmeritorious complaints and/or
 - Unrealistic outcomes to unjustified complaints
 - An insistence on unreasonably pursuing justifiable complaints, e.g., using abusive or threatening language;
 - Making complaints in public; or
 - Refusing to attend appointments to discuss the complaint.

What is Harassment?

Harassment is regarded as the unreasonable pursuit of issues or complaints, particularly if the matter appears to be pursued in a way intended to cause personal distress rather than seek a resolution.

Behaviour will fall within the scope of this policy if:

- It appears to be deliberately targeted over a significant period at one or more school staff members or others.
- How a complaint or other issues is pursued (as opposed to the complaint itself) causes ongoing distress to school staff or others;
- It has a significant and disproportionate adverse effect on the school community.
- Actions are pursued aggressively or in any manner not appropriate to an effective resolution.

What can you expect from the Trust and its schools?

Anyone who raises informal or formal issues and complaints with the school can expect the school to:

- Follow the school's complaints procedure
- Respond within a reasonable time;
- Be available for consultation within a reasonable time limit, bearing in mind the needs of pupils at the school and the nature of the complaint
- Respond with courtesy and respect;
- Attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with the school's complaints procedure, other policies, and practice and in line with guidance from Local Authority;
- Keep those involved informed of the progress towards a resolution.

What the Trust and its schools expect of you

The Trust expects anyone who wishes to raise concerns to:

- Treat all staff with courtesy and respect
- Respect the needs of pupils and staff within the school;
- Never to use violence (including threats of violence) towards people or property;
- Recognise the time constraints under which members of staff in schools work and allow the school a reasonable time to respond to a complaint;
- Recognise that some problems may not be resolved in a short time;
- Follow the Trust/school's complaints procedure.
- Speak politely and respectfully using appropriate language and avoid any aggression or verbal abuse, including name-calling
- Raise concerns/complaints in an appropriate place and at a proper time (for example, not in front of other parents or pupils and not in an open public space)
- To be prepared to work towards a resolution and in partnership with the school

Trust/school's responses to unreasonably persistent complaints, vexatious complainants, unreasonable complaints, or harassment

This document sets out how we will always seek to work with parents, carers, and others with a legitimate complaint to resolve a difficulty and reach a resolution.

However, in cases of unreasonably persistent complaints or harassment, the Trust/school may take any or all of the following steps, as appropriate: Inform the complainant informally that his/her behaviour is now considered by the Trust/school to be unreasonable or unacceptable, and request a changed approach;

- Require all future meetings with a member of staff to be conducted with a third person present. In the interest of all parties, notes of these meetings may be taken;
- Inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, the Trust/school will respond only to written communication.
- Inform the complainant in writing that his/her behaviour is now considered to fall under the terms of this policy and that any complaint will not be investigated further until it is pursued in a manner the Trust/school considers to be reasonable
- Place restrictions on the individual's access to school and/or Trust/school staff.
- Cease all correspondence and communication with the complainant other than that necessary for the health and safety of any adult/child in school.
- Involve the police
- Involve officers of the local authority

The Trust/school has a duty of care to staff and pupils and will take emergency measures should these become necessary in extreme cases.

Physical or verbal aggression

Neither the Trust nor the school Local Advisory Board will tolerate **any** form of physical or verbal aggression or personal harassment against Trust/school staff. If staff are subject to this type of aggression, the Trust/school may:

- Prohibit the individual from entering the school site, with immediate effect;
- Inform the individual that communication with them will cease other than in an emergency
- Request an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO);
- Prosecute under Anti-Harassment legislation.

Time Frame and Review

If a complainant's harassing/persistent behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date within a reasonable period of time, the Trust/school may resume the process identified above.

Suppose a complainant's harassing/persistent complaining behaviour is modified, and the complaint still lies within the time limit specified within the Trust/schools complaints policy. In that case, the Trust/school will use its discretion and may resume the investigation of the complaint. The Trust/school will review as appropriate, and at a minimum of once a year to a minimum every two years, any sanctions applied in the context of this policy.

If not pursued in a harassing or unreasonable way, legitimate new complaints will still be considered, even if the person making them is (or has been) subject to the vexatious or persistent complaints policy. The Trust/school nevertheless reserves the right not to respond to communications from individuals subject to the policy.

Next steps

Suppose you continue to feel that your complaint is unresolved. In that case, you are entitled to complain to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if you believe the Trust or Local Advisory Board has exercised any of its functions unreasonably. You can do this by writing to: Education and Skills Funding Agency, Academies Complaint and Customer Insight Unit, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT. You can find out more about how to complain to the ESFA by visiting

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complain-about-an-academy/complain-about-an-academy>

Monitoring and Review

The Trustees of Khalsa Academies Trust are responsible for ensuring that the Headteacher and Senior Leaders implement this policy consistently.

However, all staff is responsible for keeping themselves informed of the policies and procedures.

This policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier, if necessary.