



Complaints Procedure

At Hazrat Khadijatul Kubra Girls School

Approved by: Board Trustees **Date:** 03/06/2023

Last reviewed on: March 2026

Next review due by: March 2028

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“Indeed, Allah commands justice, excellence, and giving to relatives, and forbids immorality, bad conduct, and oppression.”

(Qur’an 16:90)

1. Aims

The school aims to meet its statutory obligations and to follow recognised good practice when responding to complaints from parents of pupils and other stakeholders.

In responding to complaints, the school seeks to:

- Act fairly, impartially and in a non-adversarial manner
- Facilitate a full, thorough and fair investigation, including the use of an independent person or panel where required
- Address all matters raised and provide a clear, timely and reasoned response
- Respect complainants’ wishes for confidentiality wherever reasonably possible
- Treat complainants with courtesy, dignity and respect throughout the process
- Ensure decisions are lawful, rational, fair, proportionate and reasonable, in accordance with the principles of administrative law
- Keep complainants informed of the progress and outcome of their complaint
- Use complaints constructively to inform school self-evaluation and improvement

The school seeks to resolve concerns and complaints informally and at the earliest possible stage wherever appropriate. Where this is not possible, or where an informal resolution has not been successful, the formal procedures set out in this policy will be followed.

The school will ensure that:

- Complainants are given a clear opportunity to complete the complaints procedure in full
- This policy is publicised and made available on the school website
- Reasonable adjustments are made to ensure equitable access to the complaints process

These aims reflect the school’s commitment to justice, fairness, transparency and respect, in keeping with both statutory duties and Islamic values.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy is written in accordance with the following legislation and statutory guidance:

Education Act 2002 – Section 29, which places a duty on governing bodies and proprietors to establish procedures for dealing with complaints relating to the school

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/section/29>

Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 – Part 7, which requires independent schools to have and make available a written procedure for handling complaints from parents of pupils

This policy also has regard to relevant guidance issued by:

- The Department for Education (DfE)
- The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

3. Definitions and Scope

Department for Education (DfE) guidance distinguishes between a **concern** and a **complaint**:

- A **concern** is *“an expression of worry or doubt over an issue that is considered to be important, for which reassurances are sought.”*
- A **complaint** is *“an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action.”*

The school encourages concerns to be raised and resolved promptly and informally, where possible.

3.2 Scope of the Policy

The school aims to resolve complaints **informally and at the earliest appropriate stage** wherever possible. Where this is not appropriate or where informal resolution is unsuccessful, the formal procedures set out in this policy will apply.

This policy applies to complaints relating to:

- Teaching and learning
- Pastoral care and wellbeing
- Behaviour management
- Communication with the school
- Application of school policies
- School-run activities or services

This policy **does not apply** to complaints relating to:

- Admissions
- Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Safeguarding matters
- Suspension or permanent exclusion
- Whistleblowing
- Staff grievances
- Staff discipline

Separate published policies and procedures govern these matters.

Complaints concerning services provided by third-party organisations that use school premises or facilities should be directed to the relevant provider.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 The Complainant

To enable a timely and effective response, complainants are expected to:

- Follow the complaints procedure set out in this policy
- Cooperate with the school and respond to communications within stated timescales
- Request reasonable assistance where required
- Treat all individuals involved with courtesy and respect
- Refrain from publishing details of the complaint on social media at any stage of the process

4.2 The Investigator

An investigator will be appointed to establish the facts relating to the complaint. The investigator will:

- Meet with and interview relevant parties, keeping accurate written records
- Review relevant documentation and evidence, storing these securely
- Prepare a clear and comprehensive report for the Headteacher or Complaints Committee, setting out findings and, where appropriate, recommendations

4.3 The Complaints Co-ordinator

The complaints co-ordinator may be:

- The Headteacher
- The designated complaints trustee
- Another staff member providing administrative support

The complaints co-ordinator will:

- Act as the main point of contact for the complainant during the process
- Ensure the procedure is followed correctly and within published timescales
- Liaise with staff, the Headteacher, and the Chair of Trustees as required
- Be mindful of issues relating to information sharing, confidentiality and third-party data
- Ensure reasonable adjustments are made where required (for example, language support or support for children and young people)
- Maintain accurate and secure records of the complaint

4.4 Complaints Trustee

The complaints trustee will:

- Act as the link between the complainant and the Complaints Committee
- Circulate relevant papers and evidence in advance of committee meetings

- Arrange the complaints hearing
- Ensure accurate minutes are taken and outcomes formally communicated

4.5 Complaints Committee Chair

The Committee Chair will:

- Chair the hearing and ensure proceedings are conducted fairly and respectfully
- Ensure all parties understand the purpose and process of the hearing
- Ensure all parties are given a reasonable opportunity to present their case

5. Principles for Investigation

When investigating a complaint, the school will seek to establish:

- What has occurred
- Who has been involved
- What outcome the complainant is seeking

Investigations will be conducted impartially, proportionately and in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

5.1 Timescales

- Complaints should be raised within **three months** of the incident concerned.
- Where a complaint relates to a series of incidents, it must be raised within **three months of the final incident**.

Exceptions to these time limits may be considered where there are valid reasons for delay and where a fair investigation remains possible.

Complaints submitted during school holidays will be treated as having been received on the **first school day after the holiday period**.

Where it becomes apparent that published timescales cannot be met, the school will:

- Inform the complainant promptly
- Explain the reason for the delay
- Agree and communicate revised timescales

6. Stages of complaint (not complaints against the headteacher or trustees)

6.1 Stage 1: Informal

- The school takes informal concerns seriously and will seek to resolve them **promptly and informally** wherever possible. In some cases, clarification or provision of information may resolve the matter.
- The complainant should raise the concern as soon as possible with the relevant member of staff or the Headteacher, either in person, by telephone, or in writing.
- If the complainant is unsure who to contact, they should contact the school office on **0121 773 7496** or email **admin@hkgg.bhm.sch.uk**.
Complaints must not be submitted via the admin email and will be redirected to the appropriate person.
- The school will acknowledge informal complaints within **5 school days** and aim to respond within **14 school days**.
- The informal stage may include a meeting with the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Pastoral Lead and/or the subject of the complaint, where appropriate.
- If the matter cannot be resolved informally, it will progress to **Stage 2 (Formal)**.

6.2 Stage 2: Formal

- A formal complaint should be submitted to the Headteacher:
 - In writing (letter or email – a complaint proforma is available in the appendix)
 - In person
 - Via a third party acting on the complainant's behalf
- The complainant should provide relevant details (dates, times, witnesses, supporting documents) and state the outcome they are seeking.
- Support to submit a formal complaint is available via the school office.
- The Headteacher will acknowledge receipt within **5 school days**.
- The Headteacher (or a delegated investigator) will conduct an investigation and issue a written response within **14 school days**.
- If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they must notify the **Complaints Trustee** in writing within **5 school days** to request escalation to Stage 3.

6.3 Stage 3: Review Panel

- A review panel will be convened where the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 2.
- The panel will consist of **at least three individuals** not previously involved, including **at least one independent member**. It must not consist solely of trustees.
- The panel will have access to the complaint record.
- Reasonable notice will be given. The Complaints Trustee will aim to arrange a date within **5 school days** of the request.
- If proposed dates are unreasonably refused, the panel may proceed using written submissions.
- All documentation will be circulated **at least 2 school days** in advance.

At the Meeting

- Hearings are private. Recording is not permitted unless required for disability or access needs and agreed by all parties.
- The complainant may attend and be accompanied. Legal representation is discouraged but may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

- Both parties may present evidence and call witnesses.
- After submissions, parties will withdraw while the panel considers its decision.

Outcome

The panel may:

- Uphold the complaint (in whole or in part), or
- Dismiss the complaint (in whole or in part)

Where upheld, the panel may:

- Specify actions to resolve the complaint
- Recommend improvements to school procedures

A written outcome will be issued within **21 school days**.

7. Complaints Against the Headteacher or Trustees

Stage 1: Informal

- Complaints against the Headteacher or a Trustee should be directed to the **Complaints Trustee**.
- A suitably skilled and impartial trustee will manage the informal stage.

Stage 2: Formal

- Where the complaint concerns:
 - The Headteacher and/or
 - The majority or entirety of the Board
 an **independent investigator** will be appointed to carry out the formal investigation and issue a written outcome.

8. Referral to the Department for Education (DfE)

If dissatisfied following completion of the school's procedure, and where the complaint relates to failure to meet DfE standards (including education, welfare, safeguarding, premises, staff suitability or SMSC), the complainant may refer the matter to the DfE:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>

The DfE will consider complaints indicating **serious or systemic failures**.

9. Persistent, Duplicate and Campaign Complaints

9.1 Unreasonably Persistent Complaints

A complaint may be considered unreasonable where it is repetitive, harassing, unfounded, disruptive, or pursued in an unreasonable manner.

The school may:

- Restrict contact to a single point of communication
- Limit frequency of contact
- Require third-party representation
- Implement other proportionate measures

Where the school ceases engagement, this will be confirmed in writing. New complaints will still be considered.

Serious aggression or threats will be reported to the police and may result in site restrictions.

9.2 Duplicate Complaints

Where a complaint has been concluded and a duplicate is received, the school will assess whether new matters are raised. If not, the complainant will be informed and directed to the DfE.

9.3 Complaint Campaigns

Where multiple similar complaints are received, the school may issue a **single published or template response**, while retaining the right for individuals to follow the formal process.

10. Record Keeping

- All complaints will be recorded, including actions taken, outcomes and correspondence.
- Records will be kept confidentially, securely and in line with data protection law and retention schedules.
- Records will be shared only where legally required (e.g. inspection, FOI or SAR requests).
- Trustees will not be routinely informed of complaint details prior to panel stage, to preserve impartiality.

11. Learning Lessons

The Complaints Trustee will review themes arising from complaints with senior leaders, respecting confidentiality, to identify improvements to policy, practice or procedure.

12. Monitoring Arrangements

- The Complaints Trustee monitors effectiveness and trends.
- Records are maintained by the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher.
- This policy is reviewed **every 3 years**, approved by the Board of Trustees.

13. Links with Other Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Staff Disciplinary Procedures
- SEN Policy and Information Report
- Privacy Notices

Guidance for All Parties Attending a Complaints Review Panel (Stage 2)

Complaints Panel meetings are conducted in a **spirit of reconciliation**, with the aim of reaching a fair and proportionate resolution to the issues raised.

The Panel:

- Is **not part of a legal process**, and parties are not expected to have legal representation
- Will be chaired in a manner that ensures **all parties are heard, respected and understood**
- Will be conducted in line with the principles of **fairness, impartiality and confidentiality**

The Panel Chair is responsible for determining how the hearing is conducted. Where the complaint is heard in person, both the complainant and the Stage 2 investigator (or school representative) will be invited to attend.

Guidance for Attendees

All parties attending a Complaints Panel are asked to observe the following:

1. Make every reasonable effort to arrive **promptly** for the meeting.
2. Be available for the hearing. If three reasonable dates are offered and declined without good reason, the Panel may proceed using written submissions only.
3. Inform the Complaints Trustee in advance of any **access or support needs**, so reasonable adjustments can be made.
4. Be prepared to focus on the **outstanding issues** and what resolution is sought.
5. Treat all participants with **courtesy and respect**, and address questions through the Chair.
6. Meetings are **not recorded**. Accurate minutes will be taken by the Complaints Trustee.
7. Representatives of the media are **not permitted** to attend.
8. The Complaints Trustee will retain electronic copies and one master hard copy of all documentation. All additional copies will be collected and securely destroyed.

Complaints Panel Meeting Agenda (Stage 3):

1. **Welcome and introductions** by the Chair of the Complaints Committee
2. **Explanation of the process**, roles and how the decision will be reached
3. **Presentation of the complaint** by the parent/carer
4. **Response from the Stage 2 investigator / school representative**
5. **Questions**, addressed through the Chair, from all parties
6. **Final statements** from both parties
7. **Adjournment** – all parties leave while the Panel deliberates
 - The Chair will confirm that the written outcome will be issued within **5 school days**
8. **Panel decision and recommendations** recorded by the Complaints Trustee
9. **Written outcome** circulated to the complainant and relevant parties
10. **Secure retention of records** by the Complaints Trustee