



Knightsfield School

Complaints Policy

Approved by Trustees of Knightsfield School : September 2025

Review Date: September 2026

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Chair of Trustees

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Date

Who can make a complaint?

Anyone can make a complaint about any provision of facilities or services provided by Knightsfield School. Unless complaints are dealt with under separate statutory procedures, we will use this complaints procedure.

Note:

- a A parent is defined as any person who has parental responsibility or who has care of the named student on roll at Knightsfield School, or on roll at the school at the point a complaint was initiated. The welfare of the student is our paramount consideration and we will seek permission from the person(s) with parental responsibility before responding to a concern or complaint from someone not registered on our system.*
- b Complaints made by members of the public will be dealt with by the headteacher and beyond that the chair of the board of trustees only.*

The difference between a concern and a complaint

A concern may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.

A complaint may be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

It is in everyone's interest that concerns and complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Many issues can be resolved informally, without the need to use the formal stages of the complaints procedure. Knightsfield School takes concerns seriously and will make every effort to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

We understand however that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, Knightsfield School will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within this complaints procedure.

How to raise a concern or make a complaint

A concern or complaint can be made in writing (including by email) or by telephone, initially to the school office (admin@knightsfield.herts.sch.uk or 01707 376874). Complaints may be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant as long as they have appropriate consent to do so. Complainants should not attend school without an appointment.

Complaints against school staff (except the headteacher) should be made in the first instance to the headteacher via the school office. Please mark them as 'Private and Confidential'.

Complaints that involve or are about the headteacher should be addressed to Helen Mellor, chair of trustees, via the School office (hmellor@knightsfield.herts.sch.uk). Please mark them as 'Private and Confidential'.

Complaints about the chair or the vice chair of trustees, any individual trustee or the majority or the whole board of trustees should be addressed to Kayleigh Kingsland, clerk to the board

of trustees, via the School office (admin@knightsfield.herts.sch.uk). Please mark them as 'Private and Confidential'. The school office will ensure the clerk receives this promptly.

For ease of use, a template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure. If you require help in completing the form, please contact the school office. You can also ask a third-party organisation for example Citizens Advice to help you.

In accordance with equality law we will consider making reasonable adjustments, if required, to enable you to access and complete this complaints procedure for instance by providing information in alternative formats, assisting you in raising a formal complaint or holding meetings in accessible locations/remotely.

Serial, persistent and unreasonable complaints

Knightsfield School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. We will not normally limit the contact complainants have with our school. However, we do not expect our staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening. Further information is provided in the appendix.

Anonymous complaints

We will not normally investigate anonymous complaints except in extreme circumstances and where the safety of a student may be compromised.

Complaint campaigns

If we receive large volumes of complaints either based on the same subject or from complainants unconnected with the school we will send a template response to all complainants or publish a single response on the school website.

Time scales

You must raise the complaint within three calendar months of the incident or, where a series of associated incidents have occurred, within three calendar months of the last of these incidents. We will consider complaints made outside of this time frame only if exceptional circumstances apply.

Complaints received outside of term time

We will consider complaints made outside of term time to have been received on the first school day after the holiday period.

A school day is defined as a weekday during term time (term dates are published on the School's website).

Maintaining confidentiality

Informal concerns and complaints will be dealt with confidentially at all stages and at the conclusion of the procedure. Confidentiality should be maintained at all times by everyone involved. The board of trustees of Knightsfield School requests that complaints are not discussed publicly, including via social media.

Scope of this complaints procedure

This procedure covers all complaints about any provision of community facilities or services by Knightsfield School other than complaints that are dealt with under other statutory procedures, including those listed below.

Exceptions	Who to contact
Admissions	Concerns about admissions should be handled through a separate process through the student's home local authority (LA)
Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation	Complaints about child protection matters are handled under our child protection and safeguarding policy (available to view on school website) and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have concerns about any child, these should be directed to Lucy Pope, Designated Safeguarding Lead lpope@knightsfield.herts.sch.uk
Allegations against a member of staff	Allegations against members of staff are handled under our <u>child protection policy</u> and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. If you have concerns you should contact the headteacher or, if it is about the headteacher, the chair of the board of trustees. Do so via admin@knightsfield.herts.sch.uk (marked confidential) or by telephoning the school.
Suspensions or exclusion of children from school	Further information about raising concerns about suspensions and exclusions can be found at: School discipline and exclusions Full details about how to raise a concern or appeal against a suspension or exclusion can be found in the suspension/exclusion letter or the school's Parents' Guide to Suspension or Exclusion which is provided with the letter.
Complaints about behaviour in school	Complaints about behaviour in school or about the application of the school's behaviour policy are handled through this policy
Whistleblowing	We have an internal whistleblowing procedure for all our employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for whistleblowers in education who do not want to raise matters direct with their employer. Referrals can be made at: www.education.gov.uk/contactus. Volunteer staff who have concerns about our school should complain through the school's complaints procedure. You may also be able to complain direct to the LA or the Department for Education (see link above), depending on the substance of your complaint.
Staff grievances	Complaints from staff will be dealt with under the school's internal grievance procedures.

Staff conduct	Complaints about staff will be dealt with under the school's internal disciplinary procedures, if appropriate. Complainants will not be informed of any disciplinary action taken against a staff member as a result of a complaint. However, the complainant will be notified that the matter is being addressed.
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Some examples of issues that may be complained about are as follows:

- Complaints from individuals, including members of the public, about the provision of facilities or services by the school
- Issues from parents or carers of children who attend the school
- Complaints regarding pupil welfare and wellbeing
- Complaints regarding bullying
- Complaints regarding staff behaviour
- A trustee complaining about a member of staff
- A member of staff complaining about a trustee
- A trustee complaining about another trustee
- Complaints about the school's handling of a Subject Access Request (SAR) or a Freedom of Information (FOI) Request

The following matters cannot be dealt with as a formal complaint:

- Complaints about pupil behaviour outside of school hours, e.g. weekends and holiday periods – such issues are not the school's responsibility
- Complaints regarding third parties using or hiring school premises – third party providers should have their own complaints process and you should contact them directly
- Complaints about the school carrying out a statutory duty, e.g. making a child protection referral – the school's complaints process cannot be invoked to stop it from doing something it has a duty to do
- Complaints about the legitimate sharing of child protection or behaviour information with an appropriate third party, e.g. another school or setting
- Complaints about the sharing of information with the police or local authority
- Matters likely to require a child protection investigation – complaints about child protection matters are handled under the school's child protection and safeguarding policy and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance
- A member of staff complaining about another member of staff – refer to the school's internal grievance procedures
- A member of staff complaining about an action or a decision of the school's board of trustees which will have already given the matter full consideration
- Whistleblowing – refer to the school's Whistleblowing Procedure for all employees, including temporary staff and contractors. The Secretary of State for Education is the prescribed person for matters relating to education for Whistleblowing in education who do not wish to raise matters directly with their employer. Referrals can be made at www.education.gov.uk/contactus
- Complaints regarding internal management decisions, e.g. class and teacher allocations and school session time changes
- National curriculum content – contact the Department for Education at www.education.gov.uk/contactus

- Complaints about a decision or process that has been subject to a full consultation and subsequently approved by the full board of trustees – the board of trustees has already given the matter full consideration
- Unsuccessful school admission applications – may ultimately be appealed to an independent appeal panel
- Complaints about suspensions or exclusions – permanent exclusions may ultimately be appealed to an Independent Review Panel (IRP). See the suspension/exclusion letter for appeals mechanisms or the school's Parents' Guide to Suspension and Exclusion.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint for example, the police, LA safeguarding teams or tribunals, this may impact on our ability to adhere to the timescales within this procedure or result in the procedure being suspended until those public bodies have completed their investigations. If this happens, we will inform you of a proposed new timescale.

If a complainant commences legal action against Knightsfield School in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the complaints procedure until those legal proceedings have concluded.

Resolving complaints

At each stage in this procedure Knightsfield School wants to resolve the complaint and will do so honestly, politely and in confidence. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
- an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
- an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made
- an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint
- an apology

Withdrawal of a complaint

If you wish to withdraw your complaint, we will ask you to confirm this in writing.

It is hoped that most concerns can be expressed and resolved on an informal basis. Concerns about any aspect of the provision for your child should, in the first instance, be discussed with the relevant member of staff as below. Please note that you should not approach individual trustees to raise concerns or complaints. They have no power to act on an individual basis and it may also prevent them from considering complaints at Stage 2 of the procedure.

- education issues & pastoral care – if the matter relates to the classroom, the curriculum or special educational needs, you should speak to the Form Tutor or deputy headteacher, as appropriate
- disciplinary matters – a problem over any disciplinary action taken or a sanction imposed should be raised with the Form Tutor in the first instance. If not resolved you should speak to the deputy headteacher

- financial and administrative matters – concerns relating to fees, extras or other administrative matters should be raised with the school business manager
- an issue with a specific member of staff – often, the best way to resolve an issue with a specific member of staff is to raise it with that member of staff directly, so that they are given the opportunity to address and resolve the concern or difficulty. If you feel uncomfortable doing this the issue should be raised with a member of the senior leadership team.

Stage 1: Formal complaints

Formal complaints must be made to the headteacher (unless they are about the headteacher), via the school office (admin@knightsfield.herts.sch.uk). This should be in writing, preferably on the complaint form (at the end of this procedure and on the school website).

The headteacher will record the date the complaint is received and will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (either by letter or email) within 3 school days.

Within this response, the headteacher will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint, ask what remains unsolved and what outcome you would like to see. The headteacher can consider whether a face-to-face meeting is the most appropriate way of doing this.

Note: The headteacher may delegate the investigation to another member of the school's senior leadership team but not the decision to be taken.

During the investigation the headteacher (or investigator) will:

- if necessary, interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish. The decision in terms of who should be interviewed and how is up to the Headteacher or Investigator
- keep a written record of any meetings/interviews in relation to their investigation

At the conclusion of their investigation the headteacher will provide a formal written response within 10 school days of the date of receipt of the complaint.

If the headteacher is unable to meet this deadline they will provide you with an update and revised response date.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate it will include details of actions Knightsfield School will take to resolve the complaint.

The headteacher will advise you on how to escalate your complaint should you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1.

If your complaint is about the headteacher or a member of the board of trustees (including the chair or vice chair) a suitably skilled trustee will be appointed to complete all the actions at Stage 1 as set out above.

If your complaint is (a) jointly about the chair or vice chair or (b) the entire board of trustees or (c) the majority of the board of trustees Stage 1 will be considered by an independent

investigator appointed by the board of trustees. At the conclusion of their investigation the independent investigator will provide a formal written response to the complainant.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 1 response to their complaint, they have 10 School days in which to request escalation to Stage 2 of the complaints process.

Escalation requests made outside of this timeframe do not have to be accepted.

If the request is late, the complainant will be asked to explain why they have taken longer than 10 School days to request escalation of their complaint to the next stage. If the complainant does not provide any explanation or the School deems that the explanation given is not compelling or exceptional enough to warrant accepting the escalation request out of timescale, the School will confirm this in writing and take no further action.

Stage 2: Trustees Complaint Panel Hearing

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 1 and wishes to take the matter further, they can escalate the complaint to Stage 2 – where the complaint is heard by a Panel of Trustees. The Panel is comprised of 3 impartial Trustees, usually from the School's Trustee Body. In exceptional circumstances however, a decision may be taken to use Trustees from other Schools to make up the Panel. Stage 2 is the final stage of the School's complaints process.

A request to escalate to Stage 2 must be made by the complainant to the Chair of the Trustee Body (or the Clerk to the Trustee Body if the complaint is about the Chair) via the School office, within 10 School days of the Stage 1 response being issued.

The chair of the board of trustees will record the date the Stage 2 escalation request is received and acknowledge your letter within 3 school days.

Requests received outside of this timeframe will only be considered if the School deems that exceptional circumstances apply. Stage 2 will only consider complaints that have already been lodged and investigated at Stage 1. It is not an opportunity to raise new complaints. Any complainant wishing to do so must first complete Stage 1 of the School's complaints process.

The chair of the board of trustees will write to the complainant to inform them of the date of the Stage 2 Complaints Panel hearing. They will aim to convene a Panel within 20 school days from the date of the stage 2 request.

If the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates and without good reason, the Chair of Trustees (or the Clerk) will decide when the Panel Hearing will be. It is permitted to proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis that the Panel will consider all written submissions from both parties.

The Stage 2 Complaints Panel Hearing will consist of at least three Trustees with no prior involvement or knowledge of the complaint. Prior to the meeting, they will decide amongst themselves who will serve as the Chair of the Panel. If there are fewer than three Trustees from Knightsfield School available (for example due to sickness or other prior commitments), the Chair of Trustees (or the Clerk) will source any additional, impartial Trustees/Governors

through another local School or through the Local Authority's Governor Services Unit, in order to make up the committee. On some occasions, a Panel comprised entirely of external Trustees/Governors may be convened to hear the complaint at Stage 2. This will depend on the circumstances of the complaint and the decision will be made by the Chair of Trustees (or the Clerk).

The Complaints Panel will decide whether to deal with the complaint by inviting parties to a Hearing or by way of written representations, but in making their decision they will be sensitive to the complainant's needs. The Hearing may take place with both parties present or attending separately at different times. Once again, this will depend on the circumstances of the complaint.

Both parties (i.e. the complainant and the respondent on behalf of the School) may bring someone along with them to provide support. This could be a friend, relative or independent supporter. Generally, whilst not prohibited, we do not encourage either party to bring Legal Representatives to the Panel Hearing as it is not a Court of Law and cross questioning is not permitted. All questioning throughout the Hearing is conducted by the Panel. Witnesses, including members of staff, may be invited to give evidence during the course of the Panel Hearing. They may also bring someone along with them to provide support, such as a friend, relative or independent supporter.

If a complaint is made regarding the behaviour or conduct of a member of staff and it is upheld in full or in part, this may result in some form of disciplinary action taking place. Where this is the case, complainants will be informed that the matter will be progressed through Staff Disciplinary Procedures, if appropriate, but the outcome(s) cannot be shared with them as this information is confidential between the employer and employee.

Representatives from the media are not permitted to attend a Stage 2 Complaints Panel Hearing.

At least 14 School days before the meeting, the Chair of Trustees (or the Clerk) will:

- Confirm and notify the complainant (and the respondent on behalf of the School) of the date, time and venue of the Panel Hearing. Every effort should be made to try and ensure that that Hearing date and time is convenient for both parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible. Please note however, that if the complainant rejects the offer of three proposed dates and without good reason, the Chair of Trustees (or the Clerk) will decide when the Panel Hearing will be and it is permitted to proceed in the complainant's absence on the basis that the Panel will consider all written submissions from both parties. Similarly, if either party elects to leave the Hearing before it has finished, it is permitted to continue in their absence.
- Request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the Panel at least 7 School days before the meeting. Late evidence will not be accepted.

Any written material submitted will be circulated to all parties at least 5 School days before the date of the Hearing. The Complaints Panel will not normally accept as evidence audio or video recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and/or without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.

The Complaints Panel will not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint that may have been included. Any new complaints must be dealt with at Stage 1 of the complaints process first.

The Stage 2 Complaints Panel Hearing will be held in private. Electronic recording of the Hearing is not normally permitted unless a complainant's own disability or special needs require a reasonable adjustment to be made. Complainants cannot insist on a Hearing being recorded without good reason. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought and obtained before recording of the Hearing can take place. Any request to audio or video record the meeting and whether this was consented to or not by all parties present should be documented in the Clerk's detailed notes of the Hearing. The final decision as to what reasonable adjustments will be made, if any, rests with the school.

Procedure at the panel hearing

1. The chair of the panel will welcome everyone and make introductions
2. The chair will invite you to give an account of your complaint
3. The chair will invite questions from the headteacher, the person who dealt with the complaint under Stage 1
4. If applicable, the chair will invite your witness(es) into the room individually to give an account of what they saw or know and they will be asked to leave the room after answering any questions
5. The chair will invite the headteacher and the person who dealt with the complaint under Stage 1 to respond to the complaint
6. The chair will invite questions from yourself and other members of the panel
7. If applicable, the chair will invite the school's witness(es) into the room individually to give an account of what they saw or know and they will be asked to leave the room after answering any questions
8. The chair will ask you to summarise your complaint
9. The chair will ask the headteacher to summarise their response and the school's stance
10. The panel hearing will then conclude and the chair will ask you and the school representatives to leave

The Stage 2 complaints panel will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented. The panel can:

- uphold the complaint in whole or in part
- reject the complaint in whole or in part
- Make a finding of No Judgement if there is insufficient evidence to reach a definitive conclusion.

If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part the Stage 2 complaints panel will:

- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to try and resolve the complaint
- where appropriate, recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to prevent the same or similar issues happening in the future

The chair of the panel will provide the complainant and the respondent on behalf of Knightsfield School with a full explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it in writing within 5 school days.

The outcome letter to the complainant (and copied to the respondent on behalf of Knightsfield School) will include details of how to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) if they are dissatisfied with the way their complaint has been handled by Knightsfield School.

If the complaint is:

- jointly about the Chair and the Vice Chair of the Trustee Body or
- the majority of the Trustee Body or
- the entire Trustee Body,

Stage 2 will be heard by a Panel of Independent Trustees/Governors.

The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision(s) made and the reason(s) for them. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions Knightsfield School will take to try and resolve the complaint and to prevent the same issues from reoccurring.

The response will also advise the complainant how to escalate their complaint should they remain dissatisfied.

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except under certain circumstances including the Secretary of State request and inspection.

All personal information or records relating to complaints will be treated in confidence and in accordance with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Stage 2

Trustee Review - Complaints where a child no longer attends Knightsfield School and is no longer on roll

The purpose of this complaints process is to ensure that if an error has been made, or an injustice has occurred, action can be taken to try and provide a remedy. Where the complainant has removed their child from Knightsfield School, it is impossible for the School to provide a remedy that will directly benefit them or their child.

However, as the Trustee Body has a duty of care to pupils who remain on roll, where a child has left the School, it will ensure that the circumstances of any complaint made are reviewed so that the Trustee Body is satisfied that the School had acted appropriately and that the relevant policies and procedures had been followed correctly.

Under this policy and procedure, where a child no longer attends Knightsfield School and their name has been removed from the School roll, the Chair of Trustees has the discretion to commission a Stage 2 Trustee Review instead of a Stage 2 Complaints Panel. The Chair of Trustees will choose one of the two options, to ensure that the complaint is investigated

appropriately and that the complaints process can be concluded, however, the final decision as to which option they choose is entirely at their discretion.

If a decision is taken to commission a Stage 2 Trustee Review instead of a Stage 2 Complaints Panel Hearing, the Chair of Trustees will appoint a Trustee who has had no prior involvement in the complaint to undertake this. If a Trustee cannot be appointed from the School's own Trustee Body (for example due to sickness or other prior commitments), the Chair of Trustees will appoint an independent Trustee/Governor from another local School or through the Local Authority's Governor Services Unit.

Once a Trustee/Governor has been appointed, they will review the original complaint, the Stage 1 Investigation and response, the complainant's reply to the Stage 1 response (including their escalation request) and any further evidence the complainant has submitted (this must relate to the complaint and cannot be in relation to new matters).

When the review is complete, either the Chair of Trustees or the Trustee/Governor who conducted the review will write to the complainant to inform them whether the complaint has been upheld or rejected, in full or in part, and of any changes to practice and procedures which have been agreed by the Trustee Body.

Further recourse

The decision of the trustees' complaints panel is final and will not be investigated further. However, if you believe the school did not handle your complaint in accordance with the published complaints procedure or acted unlawfully or unreasonably in the exercise of our duties under education law, you can contact the ESFA after you have completed Stage 2.

The ESFA will not normally reinvestigate the substance of complaints or overturn any decisions made by Knightsfield School. They will consider whether Knightsfield School has adhered to education legislation and any statutory policies connected with the complaint and whether they have followed this complaints policy correctly.

You can refer your complaint to the DfE online at www.gov.uk/complain-to-dfe.

After you have submitted your complain online, you can send additional information and evidence by post to:

Ministerial and Public Communication Division
Department for education
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

It should be noted that if you wish to pursue this route, you must do so within 20 working days of receiving the written outcome of the hearing into your complaint. After 20 working days neither the school nor the DfE are under any obligation to investigate or progress your complaint further.

Reporting of formal complaints to the board of trustees

The number and nature of complaints will be reported to trustees via the Headteacher's reports to the full board of trustees. The number of complaints in any one year will be reported annually to the board of trustees.

Statistics relating to formal complaints for the academic year 2024/25

*The number refers to the stage at which the complaint ended.

Type of complaint	Number*
Stage 1	0
Stage 2	0

Statistics relating to formal complaints for the academic year 2023/24

*The number refers to the stage at which the complaint ended.

Type of complaint	Number*
Stage 1	1
Stage 2	1

Appendix 1

Knightsfield School formal complaints form

Name	
Name of student year group and your relationship to them (where applicable)	
Contact address	
Contact telephone day	
Contact telephone mobile	
Contact email address	
Details of the 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:
Official use
Date received:

Appendix 2

Policy and Procedure for Managing Serial Persistent and Vexatious Behaviour and complaints

Knightsfield School is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and in accordance with the complaints policy and procedure that the Trustee Body has adopted.

Knightsfield School will not normally limit the amount of contact that parents, carers or complainants have with us; however, the School does not expect its staff to tolerate unreasonable behaviour and we will take decisive action to protect staff from such behaviour, including any that the School deems to be abusive, offensive or threatening.

Knightsfield School defines a serial and/or persistent complaint if it relates to the same issue that was the subject of a previous complaint (made by the same complainant) and has already been through a formal complaints procedure. In such cases it is likely that you will be informed that the matter is now closed and that Knightsfield School will provide no further response.

Knightsfield School defines unreasonable behaviour as that which affects the smooth and efficient running of the School on a daily basis, or that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of your contact with the school, such as, if the complainant:

- 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 at any stage
- 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, or only in ways that suit themselves
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which you expect to be taken into account and commented on
- raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insist they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
- makes unfounded complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seek to have them replaced
- seeks to change the basis of some or all of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- repeatedly makes the same complaint(s) (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is unfounded or has been fully addressed)
- makes repeated, serial complaints, seemingly in response to dissatisfaction with how the school has handled previous complaints
- refuses to accept the outcome of the complaints process despite the fact that the school's complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed including following a referral to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
- seeks an unrealistic outcome
- make excessive demands on school time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact(s) with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
- use threats to intimidate
- use abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
- makes and breaks contact the School on an ongoing basis with varying time delays in

between

- knowingly provides false information, including to third parties such as Ofsted or the ESFA
- Persistently approaches various individuals at Knightsfield School, as well as the Local Authority, Ofsted and the Department of Education, etc, through different routes about the same issue(s) in the hope of eliciting a different response
- publish what the school deems to be inappropriate or unacceptable information on social media or other public forums

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

Wherever possible, the headteacher or the chair of trustees will discuss any concerns with the Complainant/Parent/Carer about their behaviour informally before deciding to invoke this policy and procedure for managing persistent and vexatious behaviour and complaints.

If any unreasonable behaviour continues after the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees has spoken informally with the Complainant/Parent/Carer, the Headteacher will write to them. The Headteacher will confirm that the School deems their behaviour to be persistent and/or vexatious and will ask them to stop behaving in this way.

Wherever Complainants/Parents/Carers continue to contact Knightsfield School excessively, causing a significant level of disruption, the School will consider whether to impose some or all of the following communication restrictions and confirm this in writing accordingly:

- Requesting that contact only takes place in a particular form (e.g. letters only).
- Requiring contact to take place with a designated member of Staff (e.g. the Headteacher).
- Restricting telephone calls to specified days and times.
- Asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about their future contact with the School.
- Informing the complainant that if they do not follow this advice (as stated above), any further communication/correspondence that does not present significant new matters or new information will only be kept on file and will not be acknowledged or responded to.
- If the complainant tries to re-open an issue that has already been considered through the complaints process, the Chair of Trustees will inform them in writing that the process has been exhausted, that the matter is now closed, and that the School will not enter into any further correspondence about it.

The decision of the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees to invoke this policy and procedure (and any communication restrictions imposed as a result) is final and cannot be challenged or overturned through the School's complaints process. This is because the decision will be reviewed by the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees after six months. If the Complainant/Parent/Carer's behaviour has remained the same or worsened, the Headteacher or Chair of Trustees reserves the right to extend the communication

restrictions for a further six months each time they review the situation. If the Complainant/Parent/Carer's behaviour has improved to a level that the School deems acceptable, then communication restrictions will be lifted on the proviso that should matters regress, the School reserves the right to reinstate the communication restrictions that previously applied.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, Knightsfield School will immediately inform the Police and communicate our actions in writing. This may include barring the individual(s) from the School premises. Should the School deem this necessary, it will ensure that it adheres to the guidance issued by the Department for Education (DFE) entitled [Controlling access to School premises](#).

Knightsfield School also reserves the right to use and adapt this policy and procedure whenever it deems it appropriate to manage unreasonable or persistent contact not directly associated with, or resulting from, formal complaints.