



## Complaints Policy

This policy applies to the whole school including those in the EYFS.

### Introduction

Oakwood School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this procedure. Oakwood School makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and in the school office during the school day, and Oakwood School will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and of the form in which it is published or available, and of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

In accordance with paragraph 32(1) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Oakwood School will also make available, on request, to Ofsted, the Department for Education (DfE) or the Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI), details of this complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

### What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school as a whole, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff, and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the school is within the scope of this procedure. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you [or your child] raises in good faith.

### The three-stage Complaints Procedure

#### Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If parents have a complaint they should normally contact their son/daughter's Class Teacher. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the

parents' satisfaction. If the Class Teacher cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for him/her to consult the appropriate Head of Key Stage (Senior Management Team) and/or one of the Assistant Heads (Senior Leadership Team).

- Complaints made directly to a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or Headteacher will usually be referred to the relevant Class Teacher or SMT unless the member of SLT or the Headteacher deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Class Teacher and/or member of SMT will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. These records are stored securely and confidentially on CPOMS (electronic internal management system). Should the matter not be resolved within five working days or in the event that the Class Teacher/Head of Key Stage and/or Assistant Head(s) and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents may meet with the Headteacher. If appropriate they will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Headteacher, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors whose contact details are available from the school office upon request.

## **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis (as detailed in Stage 1), then the parents should formalise their complaint in writing to the Headteacher. The Headteacher will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headteacher will speak to the parents concerned, normally within 2 working days of receiving the complaint, to acknowledge and discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Headteacher to carry out further investigations.
- The Headteacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. All records of complaints are held securely and confidentially on CPOMS.
- Once the Headteacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing. The Headteacher will also give reasons for her decision. In most cases, the Headteacher will make her decision and provide the parents with reasons within 15 working days of the complaint being out in writing.
- If the complaint is against the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Headteacher and for all the relevant documents. The Chair may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the parents to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the parents will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair will give reasons for his / her decision.
- If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

### Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

- If parents seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution) they should do so in writing to the Clerk to the Governors within 14 days of receiving the decision at Stage 2, setting out their grounds of appeal. Any supporting evidence which the parents wish to rely on should also be provided with their grounds of appeal.
- The Clerk to the Governors, who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel, will then refer the appeal to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel will consist of three persons not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Complaints Panel will appoint one of the Panel members to act as the Chair of the Panel. The convenor, on behalf of the panel, will acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 20 working days.
- If the panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matter be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such particulars shall be supplied to all parties normally not later than 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. The Headteacher shall also be entitled to be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate. The panel will decide whether it would be helpful for witnesses to attend.
- The manner in which the hearing is conducted shall be at the discretion of the Panel.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.
- After due consideration of all facts they consider relevant, the Panel will make findings as to whether or not the Stage 2 decision was a reasonable one and accordingly decide whether to:
  - Dismiss the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
  - Uphold the complaint(s) in whole or in part;
  - May make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 5 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the parents, and where relevant, the person complained about as well as the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher.

## **Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints**

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively and within clear and reasonable timescales. They will be acknowledged within five working days if received during term time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

It is in everyone's interest to resolve a complaint as speedily as possible: the school's target is to complete the first two stages of the procedure within 20 working days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods. Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 working days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.

Please note that, for the purposes of this procedure, 'working days' refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time, excluding bank holidays. This means that during School holidays it may take longer to resolve a complaint although the School will do what is reasonably practicable to avoid undue delay.

It may also take longer to resolve a complaint during periods of significant disruption to school life or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence, however deviation from the normal timescale for resolving a complaint during term time will only be permitted on an exceptional basis, and the school will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.

## **Recording Complaints**

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at Stage 1 (informal stage), Stage 2 (formal stage) or proceed to Stage 3 with a panel hearing and any action taken by the school as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). Written records are held securely and confidentially using CPOMS.

The School processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice. When dealing with complaints the School (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name of parent
- Name of pupil
- Description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations (if appropriate)
- Witness statements (if appropriate)
- Name and contact details of member (s) of staff handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of all correspondence on the issue (including emails and records of phone conversations)
- Notes and minutes of the hearing, and
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint. This data will be processed in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy.

The School will keep records of complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy.

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under Section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

## **EYFS**

Parents of EYFS children should follow the three stages of this Complaints Procedure. If parents remain dissatisfied and their complaint is about the School's fulfilment of the EYFS requirements, then parents may take their complaint to the ISI or Ofsted. Parents will be notified by ISI or Ofsted of the outcome of the investigation into their complaint within 28 days of the complaint being received.

Oakwood School will provide ISI / Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.

Parents may complain directly to Ofsted or to ISI if they believe Oakwood School is not meeting the EYFS requirements. Details of how to contact Ofsted and / or ISI are as follows:

- Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or by email: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD
- ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by email: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net)  
ISI, CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA

The number of formal written complaints in the preceding year was zero.

Reviewed: Aug 2015	By:	Ian Brittain, Bursar
Reviewed: July 2016	By:	Ian Brittain, Bursar
Reviewed: Jan 2017	By:	Ian Brittain, Bursar
Reviewed: Aug 2017	By:	Ian Brittain, Bursar
Reviewed: Sept 2018	By:	Ian Brittain, Bursar
Reviewed: Sept 2019	By:	Ian Brittain, Bursar
Reviewed: Jan 2020	By:	Ian Brittain, Bursar
Reviewed: Aug 2020	By:	Ian Brittain, Bursar
Reviewed: Sept 2021	By:	Ian Brittain, Bursar
Signed: 	By:	Clare Bradbury Headteacher
Next Review Date:		Sept 2022