



Complaints Policy

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Introduction

1. This policy applies to all complaints made against Oakwood Primary School.

Aims

2. To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
3. To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.
4. To ensure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
5. To ensure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired.
6. To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.
7. To support the mission, vision and values of the Trust and its establishments.

Who is responsible for this policy?

8. The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory. The Board of Trustees has delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy to the Headteacher.
9. The Board of Trustees and Senior Leadership Team has a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all members of staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success

Stage one – informal resolution

The Board of Trustees expects that before seeking to use formal procedures, the complainant:

10. Will have raised the issue with the relevant staff member within the school; and will have made reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution.
11. Where a minor problem arises at source, or where a minor complaint is made directly and verbally, this should be dealt with at source with explanation and mediation being the key forms of resolution.

Stage two - formal procedure

12. The Headteacher shall have a discretion, which will be exercised reasonably, not to allow a written complaint to be pursued where an Informal Resolution has not been sought.
13. The Complainant must put the complaint in writing using the Complaints Form (Appendix 1) unless the complainant has a disability which prevents this, in which case the complainant may contact the school for assistance. The complaint should be addressed to the school office.
14. The school office staff will acknowledge receipt of the complaint by letter.
15. An investigation of the complaint will be carried out by a senior leader at the school.
16. The investigation should aim to be concluded within 15 school days of the complaint being received. An extension of this deadline should only be considered where there is a genuine delay

in the availability of information required to consider the investigation and clear attempts to obtain the information in a timely manner can be demonstrated. If an extension to the investigation is required, this should be communicated along with the revised deadline, in writing, to the complainant.

17. The senior leader will discuss the findings of the investigation with the Headteacher who will then communicate with the complainant. This may be during a meeting or over the telephone. Whenever reasonably possible, such discussion will take place within 20 school days of the complaint being received. If there has been a delay in the investigation, this should be within 5 days of the revised deadline that was communicated to the complainant.
18. The Headteacher will then put their findings in writing and indicate what steps, if any, should be taken in order to resolve the matter. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 10 school days of the discussion with the complainant at paragraph 17 above.
19. A copy of the Complaint Form and the written response will be put away on file. Where a complaint relates directly to the Headteacher, a member of the Board of Trustees will take over this role. Otherwise, the procedure for the Stage Two will remain the same.

Stage three – panel hearing

21. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the first and second stage, the complainant may request that the complaint be considered by a Panel of members of the Board of Trustees.
22. A request to use the third stage must be in writing, addressed to the Headteacher within 10 school days of the Stage Two response being sent to the complainant and must set out clearly the reasons why the complainant is dissatisfied with the response.
23. The Headteacher will put in writing its response to the complainant's reasons for requesting the Appeal. The Establishment will do this within 15 working days (in the case of a school, this will be 15 school days).
24. At the end of that 15-day period (whether or not the Headteacher has responded to the complainant's reasons for requesting the Appeal) the Headteacher will convene a hearing of the Complaint Appeals Panel -The Board of Trustees. That hearing will be held as quickly as practicable given the need to find a date that is reasonably convenient for the complainant, the Head teacher and the members of the Panel. Whenever possible, the hearing will be held within 15 school days of the end of the Headteachers response time.
25. All parties will be provided with a minimum of 5 school days' notice of the date of the Complaints Appeals Panel -The Board of Trustees.
26. The following are entitled to attend the Panel hearing, submit written representations and address the Panel:
 - the complainant/s and/or one representative;
 - the Headteacher and/or one representative; and
 - any other interested person whom the Complaint Appeals Panel considers to have a reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the Panel in their decision-making.
27. The Panel – The Board of Trustees, will formulate its response as quickly as reasonably possible, aiming to do so within 10 school days.
28. The Panel findings and recommendations will be:

- sent in writing to the complainant within the 'Completion of Procedure' letter (template at Appendix 2);
 - sent, where relevant, to the person complained about; and available for inspection on the school's premises.
29. A written record will be kept of all complaints by Oakwood Primary School.
30. 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 162A of the Education Act 2002 requests access to them or where the School is otherwise required by law to disclose them.

Dealing with unreasonably persistent or vexatious complaints

31. We define unreasonably persistent and vexatious complaints as those which, because of the frequency or nature of the complainants' contacts, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints. The description 'unreasonably persistent' and 'vexatious' may apply separately or jointly to a particular complaint.
32. Features of an unreasonably persistent and/or vexatious complaint include those detailed within Appendix 3. Please note that this list is not exhaustive, nor does one single feature on its own necessarily imply that the complaint will be so defined.
33. The Office Manager will ensure that the complaint is being, or has been, investigated in accordance with this Complaints Policy. If there are concerns that a complaint may fall within the category of being unreasonably persistent and/or vexatious the Office Manager will seek guidance and advice from the Headteacher.
34. If a complainant is found to be unreasonably persistent and/or vexatious the Headteacher will write to the complainant advising them of the decision and the reasons for this. The letter should state that all future correspondence from them with regards to complaints should be directed to them who will consider whether it raises any substantive new issue(s).
35. The complainant will be advised that if no substantive new issue is raised, any future complaints will not receive a response. They will also be advised of their right to complain about the decision to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).
36. There is no internal route of appeal against the decision that a complaint is persistent and/or vexatious.
37. If future complaints do raise substantive new issues, it will be investigated in accordance with the Complaints Policy.

Accountability

38. The Headteacher holds delegated responsibility for discharging the sound application of all establishment policies.
39. Senior Leaders should inform the Headteacher of all matters relating to serious breaches of this policy including any major incident to be addressed under this policy promptly, preferably prior to action being taken insofar as is reasonably practicable.

Monitoring, evaluation and review

40. The policy will be promoted and implemented.
41. The Headteacher will monitor the operation and effectiveness of arrangements referred to in this policy.
42. The Headteacher will review this policy every 2 years.

Appendix 1: Complaint reporting form

Complaint Reporting Form

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS and return to the Headteacher, who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:	
Pupil's name (if applicable):	
Your relationship to the pupil (if applicable):	

Address, incl. Postcode:	
Daytime telephone number:	
Evening telephone number:	

Please give details of your complaint:

**What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint?
To whom did you speak to and what was the response? (An informal resolution should have been sought)**

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so please give details.

Signature:		Date:	
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For official use only			
Date acknowledgement sent		Complaint referred to	
Acknowledgement sent by		Complaint referred on (date)	

Appendix 2: Template completion of procedures letter

Please add required detail/ deletion options as appropriate. Do NOT delete any non* parts within the letter as it is a statutory template.

<School Letter Head> Dear <*Name of complainant>

Completion of Procedures Letter

This letter confirms that the internal procedures of this establishment in relation to your complaint regarding <*please describe> have been completed.

The issues that you raised in your complaint were <*please summarise>.

The issues that were considered in relation to complaint were: <*brief summary of the complaint >.

The final decision of the school is <*detail> because <*reasons>.

The <*procedure/ policy / regulation> applied were: <*details >.

Appendix 3: Examples of unreasonably persistent and/or vexatious complaints

Please note that this list is not exhaustive, nor does one single feature on its own necessarily imply that the complaint will be so defined.

- a. There are insufficient or no grounds for the complaint and it is made only to annoy (or for reasons that the complainant does not admit or make obvious).
- b. There are no specified grounds for the complaint despite offers of assistance.
- c. The complainant refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- d. The complaint is about issues not within the power of the school to investigate, change or influence and where the complainant refuses to accept this.
- e. The complainant insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the Complaints Policy (insisting, for example, that there must not be any written record of the complaint or insisting the complaint is only dealt with by the Trust Chief Executive).
- f. There appears to be groundless complaints about the staff dealing with the complaint investigation, and an attempt to have them replaced.
- g. There is an unreasonable number of contacts with us, by any means, in relation to a specific complaint or complaints.
- h. There are persistent and unreasonable demands or expectations of staff and/or the complaints process after the unreasonableness has been explained to the complainant (an example of this

could be a complainant who insists on immediate responses to numerous, frequent and/or complex communication.

- i. Attempts to harass, verbally abuse or otherwise seek to intimidate staff dealing with their complaint by use of foul or inappropriate language or by the use of offensive or discriminatory language.
- j. Subsidiary or new issues are raised whilst a complaint is being addressed that were not part of the complaint at the start of the complaint process.
- k. Trivial or irrelevant new information is introduced whilst the complaint is being investigated and an expectation that this to be taken into account and commented on.
- l. There is a change to the substance or basis of the complaint without reasonable justification whilst the complaint is being addressed.
- m. The complainant denies statements he or she made at an earlier stage in the complaint process.
- n. The complainant electronically records meetings and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other person involved.
- o. The complainant refuses to accept the outcome of the complaint process after its conclusion, repeatedly arguing the point, complaining about the outcome, and/or denying that an adequate response has been given.
- p. The same complaint is made repeatedly, perhaps with minor differences, after the complaints process has been concluded and where the complainant insists that the minor differences make these 'new' complaints which should be put through the full complaints process.
- q. Documented evidence is not accepted as factual by the complainant.
- r. The complaint relates to an issue based on a historic and irreversible decision or incident.