

OAKDENE PRIMARY SCHOOL

POLICY FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS



COMPLAINTS POLICY

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Introduction

Oakdene Primary School staff are dedicated to giving all children the best possible education and caring properly for their health, safety and welfare at all times. We are committed to working closely with parents and carers. We believe that the school and parents must work together in partnership, each carrying out their own particular responsibilities to help pupils gain the most from their time in school. However, the school is obliged to have procedures in place in case there are complaints by parents or legal guardians. The following policy sets out the procedures that the school and parents/carers should follow in such cases.

Purpose of the Policy

This policy aims to reassure complainants that any complaint raised will be dealt with in a fair, open and responsive way with the aim of achieving a speedy and satisfactory resolution. The school recognises a willingness to listen to questions and criticisms and to respond positively and in a way in which improvements can be made to school practices.

Initial Concerns and Complaints

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The complainant should initially raise any concern directly with the *class teacher informally at a mutually agreed time.

Second Contact: Referral to the Executive Head Teacher

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response from the *class teacher/Key Stage Leader they should:

Raise any concerns that they have directly with the Executive Head Teacher, preferably in writing, using the attached formal complaints form (Appendix 1).

(NB In some cases it may be useful to use a recorded delivery service to ensure that written communication can be evidenced).

- The Executive Head Teacher will investigate the complaint via discussions with the parent/carer and those involved.
- Once all of the relevant facts have been established, the Executive Head Teacher will produce a written response to the complaint and/or may wish to speak to the parent/carer to resolve the matter directly.
- The response will document the decision reached and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, it will also include what action the school will take/has taken to resolve the complaint. (It is best practice for the Executive Head Teacher to include in the letter the right for the complainant to write to the Chair of Governors is not satisfied with the Executive Head Teacher decision)
- As far as is reasonable this will take place within **10 school working days** of the initial complaint being received by the Executive Head Teacher.

Third Contact: Referral to Chair of Governors

If the complainant is not satisfied with the Executive Head Teacher's response then they have the option to put their complaint in writing within 10 school working days of

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the Executive Head Teacher's response, addressing their correspondence to the Chair of Governors c/o the school in a sealed envelope.

It is helpful at this point if the complainant can indicate in writing how they would like the matter to be resolved and what outcome they would like to see achieved.

If the complaint relates to the Executive Head Teacher, the complainant should write directly to the Chair of Governors, c/o the school, with their complaint.

The Chair of Governors will acknowledge the complaint in writing within five school days of receipt.

The Chair of Governors will conduct their own investigation into the complaint and may provide an opportunity for the parents/carer to meet informally to discuss the complaint.

The Chair of Governors will make a decision, on the basis of the information gathered, and possible outcomes may include:

- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

All decisions will be recorded in writing within **10 school working days** of the Chair of Governors completing their investigation, as far as is reasonably practical, and a copy provided to the complainant. The letter to the complainant will offer the right of appeal to the Governing Body Complaints Committee.

Fourth Contact: Referral to the Complaints Committee

If the complainant wishes to appeal they must do so in writing to the Chair of Governors, c/o the school, within **10 school working days** providing a clear explanation as to why they wish to lodge an appeal.

Individual complaints would not be heard by the whole Governing Body at any stage, as this could compromise the impartiality of any panel set up for a disciplinary hearing against a member of staff following a serious complaint.

The complainant will be offered the opportunity to attend a meeting where they will have the opportunity to discuss their complaint with the committee (minimum of three governors, not previously involved) and explain why they are not satisfied with the Chair of Governor's decision. Should the complainant or school intend to call witnesses to the Complaints Committee meeting, their name/s should be notified to the Clerk to the Committee prior to the meeting in order that appropriate accommodation can be sought. It is the responsibility of the complainant and school to ensure that witnesses are invited to the meeting. (A checklist for a Complaints Committee meeting is attached as Appendix 2)

The complaints committee will consider the issue and write to inform the complainant within **10 school working days** of their decision. Possible outcomes may include:

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- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part;
- uphold the complaint in whole or in part;
- decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint;
- recommend changes to the school's systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

This is the last school-based stage of the complaints process and is not convened to merely rubber stamp previous decisions

Should the complainant not be satisfied with the outcome then they may complain to the Secretary of State for Education. Concerns, reasons why the complaint is being submitted and copies of all correspondence relevant to the complaint should be mailed to:

The Secretary of State
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Anonymous Complaints

The Governing Body **will not** consider anonymous complaints.

Vexatious Complaints

There may be occasions when, *despite all stages of the procedures having been followed*, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Chair of Governors will inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

In addition to this policy we also have a **Policy For Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints**.

Monitoring the Policy

As well as addressing an individual's complaint, the process of listening to and resolving complaints would contribute to school improvements. When individual complaints are heard, schools may identify issues that need to be addressed. The Governing Body should review this policy within their policy review cycle.

Rights Respecting Schools

Article 12 Respect for the views of the child.

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Appendix 1

Formal Complaint Form

Name:	
Address	
Postcode:	
Pupil's Name (if applicable)	
Pupil's Class Teacher (if applicable)	
Telephone Number – Daytime/Mobile	
Telephone Number – Evening	
Email Address:	
Relationship to the School i.e. parent, carer, neighbour, member of the public	

Please provide details of your concern/complaint

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Have you raised this with another member of staff?	Yes	No
If so, can you please provide details		

When did you do this?	Date:
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What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? Who did you speak to and what was the response?

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

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

Name: (please print)	
Signed:	
Date:	

Please return this form to the Executive Head Teacher

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Appendix 2

Proposed Format for a Complaints Meeting

- The hearing is as informal as possible.
- Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence.
- The Complainant and Chair of Governors will enter the room where the hearing is taking place together.
- A Chair for the Committee meeting will be appointed whom will introduce the panel members and the Clerk as well as outline the process for the meeting.
- The complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses.
- The Chair of Governors may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel will question the complainant.
- The Chair of Governors is then invited to explain the school's actions and be followed by the school's witnesses.
- The complainant may question both the Chair of Governors and the witnesses after each has spoken.
- The panel will question the Chair of Governors.
- The complainant is invited to sum up their complaint.
- The Chair of Governors is invited to sum up the school's actions and response to the complaint.
- Both parties leave together while the Committee decides on the issues.
- The Chair of the Committee explains that both parties will hear from the Committee within a set time scale.
- The Clerk will remain with the panel to clarify any issues.