



# Policy

## Complaints Policy

### Parental Complaints Policy

#### Introduction

Oakham School has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents or pupils do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the school with care and in accordance with this policy. The Complaints Policy is available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website as well as in the Red Book.

In accordance with paragraph 24(3)(g) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, Oakham School will provide to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or the ISI for the purposes of section 162A(1) of the Education Act 2002 (as subsequently amended), details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

This policy covers complaints from parents and members of the public, and is made available to parents on the parent portal of the school website.

A separate policy exists to cover complaints raised by pupils. This is published in the Student Organiser.

#### 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. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the school has done something wrong, or failed to do so something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

**Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Parents and pupils are assured that a parent and/or pupil will not be penalised for a complaint that is raised in good faith.**

#### Timeframe for Dealing with Complaints

All complaints will be handled seriously and sensitively. 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 28 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 28 days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time and as soon as practicable during holiday periods.**

## Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel hearing. At the school's discretion, additional records may be kept which may contain the following information:

- 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 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)

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except to the extent required by paragraph (k) of Schedule 1 to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, by the Secretary of State or where disclosure is required by the ISI under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended), or under other legal authority.

## 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 or daughter's Housemaster/Housemistress or Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' or pupils' satisfaction.
- Complaints made directly to another member of staff will usually be referred to the relevant Housemaster/Housemistress or Tutor unless the member of staff deems it appropriate for him/her to deal with the matter personally.
- The Housemaster/Housemistress will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 days or in the event that the Housemaster/Housemistress and the parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.
- If, however, the complaint is against the Head, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Trustees.

## Stage 2 - Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then the parents should put their complaint in writing to the Head. The Head will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.  
In most cases, the Head will speak to the parents concerned, normally within 7 days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head to carry out further investigations.
- The Head will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head 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 Head will also give reasons for his/her decision.

- If the complaint is against the Head, the Chair of Trustees will call for a full report from the Head 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 will be referred to Chair of Trustees who has the responsibility call hearings of the Complaints Panel. [If the Chair of Trustees has already been involved earlier in proceedings, parents will be referred to the Deputy Chair of Trustees.]
- The matter will then be referred 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 Chair [or Deputy Chair], on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 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 7 days prior to the hearing.
- The parents may attend the hearing and 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.
- 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 and may make recommendations.
- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 7 days of 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 Trustees and the Head.

*It is a requirement of the Independent Schools' Regulations that schools publish the number of complaints in the previous academic year that required a Panel Hearing.*

*During the 2017-18 academic year the number of complaints at Oakham School requiring a Panel Hearing = 0*

## **Pupil Complaints Policy**

### **Informal complaints**

The guiding principle for pupils is for them to feel comfortable in raising an issue about which they are uncomfortable or upset.

Pupils are therefore encouraged to raise concerns; this would normally be through their tutor or Housemaster, but may be through another pupil, prefect, or another member of staff. Concerns and complaints will always be treated seriously and no pupil will be in any way penalised for making a complaint.

### **Formal pupil complaints**

Where discussion with friends, staff or others, has proved ineffective, or where the severity of the episode merits it, pupils may wish to make a formal complaint. A formal complaint should be clearly labelled as such as should follow this procedure:

- i. Write to the Senior Deputy Head making it clear that you are making a formal complaint. Your complaint will then be registered.
- ii. The Senior Deputy Head will make the Head aware that there is a formal complaint and will reply within two days of receiving the complaint.
- iii. A meeting will then be arranged to discuss the matter. The pupil raising the complaint will normally be accompanied by their Housemaster or Housemistress, but may also request for another member of staff or pupil to be present.
- iv. After the meeting the pupil will be kept informed of any decisions or developments.

Pupils who are dissatisfied with the outcome may of course take their complaint to the Head or to their parents to resolve the matter.

### **Complaints from external parties**

Complaints from external parties such as visiting schools and members of the public will be directed to the Senior Deputy Head. The Senior Deputy Head will aim to resolve these complaints through dialogue, over the phone or in person. Where an issue cannot be resolved informally, the Senior Deputy Head will refer the matter to the Head who may decide to address the complaint as per Stage 2 and 3 of the Parental Complaints policy.

### **Recording complaints**

The School keeps a written record of all formal complaints, and the way and stage at which they are resolved. Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 162A of the 2002 Education Act requests access to them.

### **Welfare of Boarding Pupils**

ISI is responsible for inspecting welfare arrangements for boarding pupils in all boarding schools in England. They can be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or [isi.net](http://isi.net)

JLMN May 2018

Review date May 2019