OAK GREEN SCHOOL
Believe, Achieve, Succeed

Statutory

Complaints and Resolutions Policy and Procedure

Introduction
Oak Green School is committed to working in close partnership with all members of the school community and providing the best possible education and support for all its children. The school places great value on the role which parents and carers can play in supporting children's learning. Staff and governors actively encourage a positive relationship between the school and the families of children who attend the school. We also desire to have good relations with our neighbours and the wider community. However, we appreciate that there may be times when the school has not met expectations. The complaint procedure is designed to ensure that concerns and complaints are properly investigated and are given careful and fair consideration.
Our policy is to:

- provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint;
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress
- publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint;
- make sure everyone at Oak Green School knows what to do if a complaint is received;
- make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way;
- make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired;
- respect people's desire for confidentiality, wherever possible (some information sharing may be necessary to carry out a thorough investigation)
- gather information which helps us to improve what we do.
- address all points of issue, providing an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary

Where any concerns are raised we aim to resolve these as quickly and as efficiently as possible. Usually concerns that are raised can be resolved very quickly through the school's day to day communication between parents and staff. However, for those situations where this is not the case, we have a more formal process to investigate and deal with complaints which is detailed on the following pages.

We will try to resolve every concern, difficulty or complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing the school's systems and procedures in the light of the matters raised.
This procedure will apply to most general complaints received by the school. It is not intended to cover those matters for which there is a specific statutory process to object, complain or appeal.
In all cases, we will put the interests of the child above all other issues.

Who can raise a complaint?
Complaints may come from any person or organisation that has an interest in the school. It can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. Anonymous complaints are not usually considered, and are at the discretion of the Co-Headteachers and the Chair of Governors.

Timescales for submitting a complaint
To enable a proper investigation, concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the school as soon as possible, usually within three months. This time limit does not apply if it can be shown that there were good reasons for not making the complaint earlier and it is still possible to investigate the complaint properly.
When complaints are made out of term time, we will consider them to have been raised on the first school day after the holiday period.

Confidentiality
All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements. (See Confidentiality Policy)

School Complaints Procedure
The school has four stages to its complaints procedure. The aim is to resolve the complaint, to the satisfaction of the complainant, at the earliest possible stage.

Ofsted has the power to investigate certain (qualifying) complaints about maintained schools, including those from parents. A qualifying complaint is one that affects the whole school, not an individual. More information can be obtained from the school or Ofsted.

Roles and responsibilities

The complainant will get a more effective and timely response to their complaint if they:

- follow these procedures
- co-operate with the school throughput the process, and respond to deadlines and communication promptly
- treat all those involved with respect
- not publish details about the complaint on social media

The investigator will:

- interview all relevant parties, keeping notes
- consider records and any written evidence and keep these securely
- prepare a comprehensive report to the Co-Headteachers or complaints committee which includes the facts and potential solutions

Clerk to the governing board will:

- be the contact point for the complainant and the complaints committee, including circulating the relevant papers and evidence before complaints committee meetings
- arrange the complaints hearing
- record and circulate the minutes and the outcome of the hearing

Stage 1: Informal concern

An initial concern should be raised with the class teacher or the member of staff concerned at the earliest opportunity. This can be done in writing, by telephone or in person by appointment. It is **not** appropriate to publicise any concerns you may have on social networking sites, anonymously or otherwise. The school will take informal concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve the matter quickly.

The vast majority of concerns can be dealt with at this stage however, if after speaking to your child's class teacher or the member of staff concerned, you are still concerned please discuss the matter with the Co-Headteachers. All members of staff work very hard to ensure that each child is happy at school and is making good progress and they always want to know if there is a problem so they can help to resolve it. It would be helpful to identify at this point what outcome you are looking for in order for us to address your concern quickly and effectively.

Any premises complaint will be dealt with by our School Business Manager.

Complaints about SEN provision in our school should be made to the SENCO team in the first instance. They will then be referred to this policy.

The member of staff dealing with the concern will make sure that you are clear on what action (if any) has been agreed. More than one member of staff may need to attend the meeting. If the matter is brought directly to the attention of the Co-Headteacher's they may decide to deal with your concerns directly or direct the matter to the appropriate staff member as per the process above. There is no suggested timescale for resolution at this stage given the importance of dialogue through informal discussion, we aim to deal with all complaints as soon as is practicably reasonable.

If you are not a parent/carer of a child at our school, please start at Stage 2 and make contact with the Co-Headteachers to discuss your concerns.

Stage 2: Formal complaint to the Co-Headteachers

Most concerns are resolved at Stage 1, however if your concern is not resolved at the informal stage you can make a formal complaint to the Co-Headteachers, within 10 days of Stage 1 being concluded. Your complaint should usually be made in writing, addressed to the Co-Headteachers. Set out briefly and clearly the facts and state what is it that the complainant consider, should have been done or where the school has not met reasonable expectations (see appendix one).

Your complaint will be acknowledged within five school days and will include an indicative date for a written response (usually within 15 working days). The Co-Headteachers will be responsible for ensuring that your complaint

is investigated appropriately. They may meet with you to clarify details of your complaint and the resolution that is being sought. Due to GDPR, any attempts made to record the conversation held during the meeting are strictly forbidden, electronic devices will be requested to be switched off. The meeting will be terminated if recordings are seen, or suspected, to be happening. The Co-Headteachers will investigate the complaint further and make every effort to resolve the issue.

Dependent upon the nature of the issues raised, the matter will either continue to be dealt with through the school complaints procedure, or by other procedures such as the disciplinary or safeguarding procedures. If this happens you will be informed of this fact but you will not be advised of the outcome of these proceedings.

On conclusion of the investigation the Co-Headteachers will write to you with all appropriate information in relation to the complaint and information on any outcome(s). The response should also inform you of the next stage of the procedure in case you are not satisfied with the way your complaint has been handled. If you feel your concern has not been resolved, you may choose to move to Stage 3 of the procedure. You must let the school know if you wish to do this, within 10 school days of the completion of Stage 2.

Stage 3: Formal complaint to the chair of governors
If you are dissatisfied with the Co-Headteacher's response, or your complaint concerns the conduct of the Co-Headteachers, then you can make a formal complaint to the Chair of Governors. Your complaint should be made in writing to the chair of governors, care of the school, within 10 school days of the date of the Co-Headteacher's response to you. Please provide a copy of the written complaint, a copy of the Co-Headteacher's letter concluding Stage 2 and give details in writing of why you are not satisfied with the outcome.

At this stage the chair of governors will generally handle the complaint but can delegate this to a nominated governor. In exceptional circumstances, the chair of governors may commission an independent investigator to undertake an investigation on behalf of the academy. You will receive an acknowledgment of receipt of your complaint within five school days and an indicative timescale for response.

The governor will investigate the complaint and make every effort to resolve the issue. They may meet with you if they need clarification or further information is necessary. Due to GDPR, any attempts made to record the conversation held during the meeting are strictly forbidden, electronic devices will be requested to be switched off. The meeting will be terminated if recordings are seen, or suspected, to be happening. On conclusion of the investigation you will receive a written response of the outcome reached and the process for appeal.

Stage 4: Formal complaint to the complaints panel hearing
If you remain dissatisfied with the response to your complaint you may request a complaints panel hearing by writing to the clerk to the governing body within 15 school days of the date of the letter notifying you of the outcome of Stage 3.

The clerk will write to acknowledge receipt of your complaint within five school days. The letter will explain the process which is to be followed and information about the how the panel will operate.
The clerk will convene a complaints panel and ask you to provide details of your appeal and any relevant supporting evidence. The panel will consist of the first three members of the governing board available who do not have direct knowledge of the complaint. These individuals will have access to the existing record of the complaint's progress.

The governors will select a panel chair from amongst themselves. If not enough impartial governors are available, we will seek panel members from other schools or the local authority. Panel members will have no detailed prior knowledge of the complaint, or connection with the complainant. You will have the opportunity to submit evidence on the complaint prior to the meeting of the panel and also to attend, accompanied by a friend/partner if you wish, to put your case. Any attempts made to record the meeting are strictly forbidden. The Co-Headteachers will be given the same opportunities.

The remit of the complaints appeal panel is to:

- 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.

You will be notified in writing of the panel's decision, usually within five days of the meeting, and its decision is final. The letter will confirm the end of the school's and governors' involvement with the complaint and explain any further rights of appeal.

If you are still not satisfied, you may wish to put your complaint to the Secretary of State for Education, who can review whether the school has acted reasonably and followed the correct procedures.

Complaints against a headteacher:
Complaints that involve or are about one or both of the headteachers should be addressed to the Chair of Governors, via the school office. Please mark them as Private and Confidential.

Complaints against an individual governor
If your complaint concerns the Chair of Governors or an individual governor you should write to the clerk to governors. The clerk will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within five school days. The letter will explain the process that will be followed and the expected timescale for response.
The Chair of Governors will consider complaints about an individual governor and the vice chair will consider complaints against the chair. If for any reason this is not appropriate then another governor will be nominated.
On conclusion of the investigation you will receive a written response detailing all appropriate information in relation to the complaint and information on any outcome(s). There will be no further right of appeal for complaints against an individual governor.

Timescales for response
Our aim is to address your complaint in a timely and efficient manner. However, there may be occasions when we are unable to achieve the timescale indicated. In this event, we will write to you outlining the reason for the delay and provide you with a new timescale for the conclusion of that part of the process.

Persistent complaints
Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complaint may become unreasonable if the person:

- has made the same complaint before, and it has already been resolved by following the school complaints procedure
- makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory or repetitive knowingly provides false information
- insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of scope of the complaints procedure
- pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner e.g., refuses to co-operate with the complaints procedure
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on
- makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance or excessive demands on school time
- seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

Record keeping
The school will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the final outcome. The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally, and will be viewed only by those involved in investigating the complaint or on the review panel.

Data Protection Complaints

Further to the new statutory requirements for handling any data protection complaints and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 ("DUAA"), any data protection complaints should be addressed to the GDPR Lead and emailed to GDPR@oakgreen.bucks.sch.uk.

Individuals have the right to make a complaint directly to us if they believe their data protection rights have been breached.

We will acknowledge receipt within 30 days in line with out Complaints Policy and provide a substantive response without undue delay.

This will enable us to keep track of any data protection complaints and log them as soon as possible. An acknowledgement of the complaint will be sent by the GDPR Lead within 30 days of receiving said complaint. Any data protection complaints will be handled in the first instance by the GDPR Lead for Oak Green School with the support of the Data Protection Officer where required. The Data Protection Officer can be contacted at Judicium Education, 98 Theobalds Rd. London, WC1X 8WB. Should you have any reason to escalate any data protection complaint this can be forwarded to the Information Commissioner's Office at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or by filing out the online form available here: https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/data-protection-complaints/?p=start

You can check your data rights here: https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/

Privacy notices are available on request or downloadable from the school website: https://www.oakgreen.bucks.sch.uk/privacy-notices-data-protection-and-freedom-of-inf/.

Complaints Received During School Closure Periods

The School will endeavour to acknowledge and investigate complaints as soon as reasonably practicable. However, during school closure periods, offices and systems may not be routinely monitored, which could delay acknowledgement and investigation. Where a complaint is received during such a period, the School will:

- Set an automatic acknowledgement for any data protection complaints sent via its GDPR account, GDPR@oakgreen.bucks.sch.uk; and
- Provide an update to the complainant once the School reopens.
- Keep a record of the date of receipt

Complainants who require an urgent response are encouraged to submit their complaint during term time wherever possible.

Monitoring and Review

The governing body monitors the complaints procedure, in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Co-Headteachers log all formal complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure.

Appendix One - Complaint form

Please complete and return to ……..(complaints co-ordinator) who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name: **Pupil's name:** **Your relationship to the pupil:** **Address:**   **Postcode:** **Day time telephone number:** **Evening telephone number:** **Please give concise details of your complaint, including dates, names of witnesses etc, to allow the matter to be fully investigated**   **What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint.** **(Who did you speak to/write 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.   **Signature:** **Date:** **Official use** **Date acknowledgement sent:** **By whom:**   **Complaint referred to:** **Date:**