



Complaints Procedure

Date Reviewed:	01.06.2026, 20.8.26, 1.9.26
Next Review Date:	01.06.2027
Policy Owner:	Mrs Gemma Mitchell

Mission Statement

We are committed to providing a supportive, enjoyable and family style environment in which every child is nurtured and encouraged to achieve their potential through a broad-based curriculum and opportunities for developing sporting, dramatic, artistic and musical talents.

Statement of Aims & Objectives

- To enable each child to fulfil their own academic and personal potential.
- To instil in every child the importance of developing personal initiative and to foster in them a belief that they can fulfil their potential in any area of school life.
- To provide a broad based academic and extra-curricular education that is delivered in such a way as to satisfy the learning needs of each and every pupil.
- To help each pupil to develop both a set of values and an understanding and appreciation of other religious beliefs.
- To learn the difference between right and wrong and to appreciate that rights and responsibilities are equally balanced.
- To develop and promote a sense of caring and community between the pupils within the school and the wider community as a whole.
- To instil in each pupil a high degree of self-respect and respect for their fellow pupils, teachers and other adults.
- To prepare each child for the transition to the next stage of their education and to be able to take advantage of any opportunities as they present themselves.



Oakhyrst Grange School

Safeguarding

Oakhyrst Grange School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. At this school we respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for our pupils so that they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We believe that every pupil should be able to participate in all school activities in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. This is the responsibility of every adult employed by, or invited to deliver services at Oakhyrst Grange School. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard all who access school and promote the welfare of all of our pupils by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and bullying. This should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy.

All staff will be asked to complete training annually following KCSIE updates. Further safeguard training will take place throughout the year. All staff must wear their lanyards at all times.

The Safeguarding governor is: Pauline Clark Pauline.clark@oakhyrstgrangeschool.co.uk

DSL: Roxann Dowling (Head of EYFS)

DDSL: Gemma Mitchell (Headteacher)

DDSL: Faye Dance (Deputy Headteacher)

Telephone: 01883 343344

Safeguarding Team: DSL@oakhyrstgrangeschool.co.uk



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1. Introduction

Oakhyrst Grange School takes pride in the quality of its teaching, pastoral care and relationships with families. The School welcomes open communication with parents and carers and aims to resolve concerns promptly, fairly and constructively.

From time to time, however, a parent or carer may have a concern or complaint. Where this occurs, they can expect the matter to be taken seriously and dealt with in accordance with this procedure.

This policy has regard to:

- Part 7 of the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended;
- Part 6 of the Independent School Standards relating to the provision of information;
- the Department for Education's *Independent School Standards: Guidance for Independent Schools*, April 2026;
- the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage framework for group and school-based providers, effective from 1 September 2026;
- the Equality Act 2010; and
- applicable data-protection legislation, including the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018, as amended.

The Complaints Policy and Procedure is available on the School website and from the School Office. A hard copy will be provided free of charge on request.

The procedure applies throughout Oakhyrst Grange School, including the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The number of formal complaints received in the previous year will be made available to parents upon request to the Head's PA.

2. Who may use this procedure?

For the purposes of the Independent School Standards, this procedure deals with complaints from parents and carers of current pupils about matters concerning their child.

For the purposes of this policy, the term **parent** includes a person with parental responsibility for a child or a person who has care of that child.

The School may, at its discretion, consider concerns raised by former parents, prospective parents or other individuals, but these do not necessarily fall within the statutory three-stage procedure set out in Part 7 of the Independent School Standards.

3. What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about a real or perceived problem where the complainant seeks a response or action from the School.



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A complaint may relate to:

- the School as a whole;
- a particular department or aspect of provision;
- an individual member of staff;
- an action or decision taken by the School; or
- something the complainant believes the School has failed to do.

A concern does not have to be expressed formally for the School to take it seriously.

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated under this procedure. However, information raising a safeguarding, welfare, regulatory or other serious concern will always be considered and acted upon as appropriate.

4. Principles of complaint handling

All complaints will be handled seriously, sensitively, fairly, impartially and confidentially.

The School will seek to:

- resolve concerns at the earliest appropriate stage;
- investigate matters fairly and objectively;
- give those involved an appropriate opportunity to explain their position;
- avoid unreasonable delay;
- maintain appropriate written records;
- identify any learning or improvements arising from complaints; and
- ensure that no pupil is disadvantaged because they or their parent has raised a concern or complaint in good faith.

Reasonable adjustments will be made where appropriate to enable a parent with a disability or additional communication need to access this procedure.

Parents who have difficulty putting a complaint in writing may contact the School Office for assistance.

5. Matters dealt with under other procedures

Some concerns require a different procedure or an immediate response.

Safeguarding and child protection

Any concern that a child may be at risk of harm, or any allegation concerning a member of staff, supply staff member, volunteer or other person working with children, will be dealt with immediately in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and applicable statutory safeguarding procedures.

This Complaints Procedure will not be used in place of safeguarding procedures or where doing so could prejudice a safeguarding investigation.

However, a complaint about **the way in which the School has handled a safeguarding matter** may be considered under this Complaints Procedure where appropriate.



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Suspension, exclusion and required removal

Challenges to decisions concerning suspension, permanent exclusion or required removal will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusions Policy.

Where that policy provides for consideration by a panel, the relevant Stage 3 arrangements set out in this policy may be used where appropriate.

Admissions

Complaints relating solely to admissions decisions concerning prospective pupils will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Admissions Policy.

Staff matters

Staff grievances, disciplinary matters and capability procedures are dealt with under the School's relevant employment procedures. A parent may nevertheless complain about the School's actions or provision where those matters affect their child.

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing concerns are dealt with under the School's Whistleblowing Policy.

Third-party providers

Where a complaint concerns a service provided independently by a third party, parents will normally be directed to that provider's own complaints procedure. Where the complaint also concerns the School's management, oversight or response, those aspects may be considered under this policy.

6. Complaints involving the Headteacher or governance

A formal complaint concerning the **Headteacher** should be addressed to the Chair of the OGS Board, marked Private and Confidential.

The Chair will arrange for the complaint to be considered by an appropriate person who has not previously been directly involved in the matters complained about.

7. Governance oversight

The Headteacher will notify the Chair of the OGS Board promptly when a formal Stage 2 complaint is received.

Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis. Governors who may subsequently be required to participate in a Stage 3 Panel should not be unnecessarily involved in the detail of a complaint beforehand.

The OGS Board will receive appropriate anonymised information about formal complaints, themes, trends, actions taken and lessons learned as part of its oversight responsibilities.



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Timescales

8. General timescales

The School aims to resolve complaints as promptly as reasonably possible.

Complaints received during term time will normally be acknowledged within **five working days**.

Complaints received during School holiday periods will be acknowledged as soon as reasonably practicable. School holidays may affect the availability of staff, witnesses or governors and consequently the timescales set out below.

For the purposes of this procedure, a **working day** means a weekday, Monday to Friday, during School term time, excluding Bank Holidays and days on which the School is formally closed.

The School will seek to progress complaints without unreasonable delay.

9. Where the School is awaiting information

Where information or a response from the complainant is reasonably required in order to progress a complaint, the School will normally ask for this to be provided within **10 working days**.

If no response is received, the School may write to the complainant confirming that the complaint will be treated as inactive and closed administratively.

Any subsequent request to reopen or progress the complaint will be considered reasonably, taking account of all the circumstances, including any exceptional reason for the delay.



Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

10. Raising an informal concern or complaint

It is hoped that most concerns and complaints can be resolved quickly and informally.

In the first instance, parents should normally contact their child's **Form Teacher** or the member of staff most closely connected with the matter.

Depending upon the nature of the concern, it may be more appropriate to contact a subject leader, Head of Department, Deputy Headteacher or another member of the Senior Leadership Team.

The member of staff dealing with the concern will:

- listen carefully to the parent's concerns;
- establish the relevant facts as far as reasonably practicable;
- consult others where necessary; and
- seek an appropriate resolution.

The School aims to investigate and resolve Stage 1 complaints within **seven working days**.

Where this is not possible, the parent will be informed of the reason and given an indication of when a response can be expected.

The School may maintain a written record of informal concerns and their resolution where appropriate.

If the complaint has not been resolved within seven working days, or if the parent remains dissatisfied with the response, they may proceed to **Stage 2 – Formal Resolution**.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

11. Making a formal complaint

A parent who remains dissatisfied following Stage 1 should make their complaint in writing to the **Headteacher**, normally within **10 working days** of receiving the Stage 1 response.

The complaint may be sent by email or letter and should, where possible:

- explain the nature of the complaint;
- identify the relevant events or circumstances;
- explain what steps have already been taken to resolve it;
- include any relevant supporting information; and



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- explain what outcome or resolution the parent is seeking.

A parent will not be prevented from making a formal complaint simply because they have not included all of this information.

The School will acknowledge a formal complaint within **five working days**.

12. Investigation

The Headteacher will determine the most appropriate way to investigate the complaint.

The Headteacher may investigate personally or may appoint an appropriate senior member of staff or other suitable person who has not been directly involved in the matters complained about.

The investigation may include:

- meeting or speaking with the complainant;
- speaking with members of staff or other relevant individuals;
- reviewing correspondence and records;
- considering relevant policies and procedures; and
- obtaining further information where reasonably necessary.

Where appropriate, the Headteacher may meet with the parent to discuss the complaint and explore whether an agreed resolution can be achieved.

A written record will be maintained of relevant meetings, interviews and evidence considered.

13. Stage 2 outcome

The School will normally provide its written Stage 2 response within **15 working days** of receiving the formal complaint.

Where this is not reasonably possible, the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay and provided with a revised date.

The written response will normally:

- summarise the matters investigated;
- explain the School's findings;
- state whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld;
- explain any action or learning arising from the complaint where it is appropriate to disclose this; and
- explain how the parent may request a Stage 3 Panel Hearing if they remain dissatisfied.

Confidential information relating to individual staff members, pupils or third parties will not be disclosed where it would be inappropriate or unlawful to do so.



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The School does not require a complainant to confirm that they agree with the Stage 2 outcome.

If a request for Stage 3 is not received within the timescale set out below, the School will normally regard the internal complaints process as concluded, subject to consideration of exceptional circumstances.

Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

14. Requesting a Panel Hearing

If the parent remains dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response, they may request a Panel Hearing.

The request should normally be made within **10 working days** of receiving the Stage 2 response and should be sent to:

Chair of the OGS Board

Oakhyrst Grange School

Email: Pauline.clark@oakhyrstgrangeschool.co.uk

The request will normally be acknowledged within **five working days**.

A request received outside the 10-working-day period will be considered reasonably, including whether there are exceptional circumstances which explain the delay.

15. Constitution of the Panel

The Panel will be appointed by or on behalf of the OGS Chair.

It will consist of **at least three people**, none of whom has been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.

At least **one member of the Panel will be independent of the management and running of the School**.

The School will take reasonable steps to ensure that Panel members are impartial and able to approach the complaint with an open mind.

16. Arranging the hearing

The Panel Hearing will normally be convened within **28 working days** of receipt of the Stage 3 request.

Where this is not reasonably practicable, the complainant will be informed of the reason and given a revised timescale.



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The complainant will be given reasonable notice of the date, time and arrangements for the hearing.

The complainant is entitled to **attend the Panel Hearing and to be accompanied by another person if they wish.**

Reasonable adjustments will be made where required.

If the complainant chooses not to attend, the Panel Hearing will still take place and the Panel will consider the complaint on the basis of the available evidence.

17. Documentation

The complainant and the School may provide documents relevant to the complaint for consideration by the Panel.

Wherever possible, documents should be submitted at least **five working days before the hearing** so that they can be circulated to all parties in advance.

The Panel Chair may permit relevant information to be considered after that point where it would be fair and reasonable to do so.

18. Conduct of the hearing

The hearing will be conducted fairly and with due regard for confidentiality.

The Panel will determine the procedure for the hearing, but will normally:

1. explain the purpose and procedure;
2. invite the complainant to explain their complaint;
3. invite the School to explain its response;
4. allow Panel members to ask questions;
5. consider the relevant written evidence;
6. allow the parties an appropriate opportunity to respond to relevant matters; and
7. consider the complaint privately before reaching its findings.

Where the complaint concerns an individual member of staff or another person, that individual may be invited to provide information or representations where appropriate.

The purpose of the Panel is to consider the complaint fairly and independently. It is not a disciplinary hearing.

19. Panel findings and recommendations

After considering the relevant evidence, the Panel will make findings and may make recommendations.

The Panel may:

- uphold the complaint;
- partially uphold the complaint; or



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- not uphold the complaint.

Where appropriate, it may make recommendations to the School arising from its findings.

The Panel will normally provide its written findings and recommendations within **seven working days** of the hearing.

A copy will be provided in writing to:

- the complainant;
- the Headteacher;
- the Chair of the OGS Board; and
- where relevant, the person complained about.

A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations will be available for inspection on the School premises and for the Headteacher.

The Stage 3 Panel Hearing represents the **final stage of the School's Complaints Procedure**.

Early Years Foundation Stage

20. Complaints relating to the EYFS

Additional statutory requirements apply where a written complaint relates to the School's fulfilment of the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.

The School will:

- investigate any written complaint relating to how it is fulfilling the EYFS requirements;
- notify the person who made the complaint of the outcome of the investigation **within 28 calendar days of receiving the complaint**;
- maintain a written record of the complaint and its outcome; and

These requirements do not prevent a parent from using or progressing through the three stages of the School's Complaints Procedure where applicable.

Data Protection Complaints

21. Data protection

Requests to exercise data-protection rights, including Subject Access Requests, are dealt with in accordance with the School's Data Protection Policy.

Where an individual makes a complaint that the School has infringed their data-protection rights, the School will comply with the applicable requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018, as amended.



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In particular, the School will:

- facilitate the making of a data-protection complaint;
- acknowledge receipt within the statutory period of **30 days**;
- take appropriate steps to investigate the complaint without undue delay;
- keep the complainant appropriately informed; and
- notify the complainant of the outcome.

The School's normal five-working-day acknowledgement target means that data-protection complaints will ordinarily be acknowledged considerably sooner than the statutory maximum.

Where a data-protection concern forms part of a wider parental complaint, the School may deal with the different aspects under the appropriate procedures without preventing the parent from progressing a complaint under this policy.

Individuals also have the right to raise concerns about the handling of their personal data with the **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)**.

Records and Confidentiality

22. Complaints record

The School will keep a written record of all complaints made at **Stage 2 under the formal procedure** and will record:

- whether the complaint was resolved at Stage 2 or proceeded to a Stage 3 Panel Hearing; and
- action taken by the School as a result of the complaint, regardless of whether the complaint was upheld.

The School may also retain appropriate records of Stage 1 concerns.

Records may include, where relevant:

- the date the complaint was received;
- the name of the complainant;
- the name of the pupil;
- the nature of the complaint;
- correspondence;
- relevant investigation records;
- notes of meetings or conversations;
- witness information where applicable;
- the individuals responsible for considering the complaint;
- findings and outcomes; and
- action taken or learning arising from the complaint.

23. Confidentiality



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Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where:

- the Secretary of State requests access;
- a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access;
- disclosure is required by law;
- disclosure is necessary for safeguarding purposes; or
- disclosure is otherwise lawfully required or permitted.

Information will be shared internally only where there is a legitimate need to know.

Formal complaints records will be retained in accordance with the School's Records Retention Schedule and applicable data-protection legislation.

For ordinary complaints, the School will normally retain records for **seven years following the conclusion of the complaint**, unless there is a safeguarding, legal, regulatory or other reason to retain them for a different period.

Safeguarding records will be retained in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and applicable record-retention requirements.

24. Reporting and learning from complaints

The School regards appropriate learning from concerns and complaints as an important part of continuous improvement.

The Headteacher will ensure that significant themes, learning and actions arising from complaints are reviewed and, where appropriate, incorporated into changes to practice, procedure, training or policy.

Governors will receive appropriate anonymised information to enable them to monitor themes and assure themselves that complaints are being managed effectively.

Repeated Complaints and Unreasonable Behaviour

25. Repeated correspondence

Where stages of this procedure have been completed and a complainant continues to raise substantially the same matter without material new evidence, the School may determine that its complaints procedure has been exhausted.

The School may then write to the complainant confirming that the matter is closed and that further correspondence raising substantially the same matters will not receive a substantive response.

This will not prevent the School from considering:

- a genuinely new complaint;



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- material new evidence;
- a safeguarding concern;
- a significant regulatory concern; or
- another matter which it would be appropriate or necessary for the School to consider.

26. Unreasonable behaviour

The School will not refuse to consider a complaint simply because a complainant is persistent or strongly disagrees with the School.

However, threatening, abusive, discriminatory or seriously disruptive behaviour towards staff, governors, pupils or others is not acceptable.

Where communication becomes unreasonable, the School may put proportionate arrangements in place, including:

- identifying a single point of contact;
- requiring communication to be made in writing;
- setting reasonable arrangements for meetings or telephone contact; or
- taking other proportionate steps to protect staff and enable the complaint to be handled effectively.

Any such arrangements will not remove the complainant's right to complete the complaints procedure.

Complaints from Third Parties and Complaint Campaigns

27. Complaints from persons unconnected with the School

The statutory procedure under Part 7 principally concerns complaints from parents of current pupils.

The School will nevertheless consider information received from other individuals appropriately, particularly where it raises safeguarding, welfare or regulatory concerns.

28. Complaint campaigns

Occasionally, the School may receive a large volume of substantially identical complaints about the same issue, including from individuals who have no direct connection with the School.

In such circumstances, the School may seek legal or professional advice and may respond proportionately by:

- using a standard or template response; or
- publishing a single response or statement.



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Any individual safeguarding, welfare or other serious concern contained within such correspondence will be considered separately and acted upon as appropriate.

Equality

29. Equality and non-discrimination

Oakhurst Grange School is committed to applying this policy fairly and without unlawful discrimination, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

The School will make reasonable adjustments where required to enable parents and carers to access and participate in the complaints process.

Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside the School's:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
 - Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusions Policy;
 - Admissions Policy;
 - Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notices;
 - Whistleblowing Policy;
 - Equality and Equal Opportunities Policy; and
 - Records Retention Policy/Schedule.
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Regulatory References

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Schedule, Parts 6 and 7
- Department for Education, *Independent School Standards: Guidance for Independent Schools*, April 2026
- Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective 1 September 2026
- Education and Skills Act 2008
- Childcare Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- UK GDPR
- Data Protection Act 2018, as amended



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Contact Details

The Independent Schools Inspectorate - ISI, CAP House, 9 – 12 Long Lane, London EC1A 9HA.

Tel: 020 76000100 or contact ISI via their website, www.isi.net

OFSTED – Piccadilly Gate Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD Tel: 0300 123 1231

Source for guidance in creating the policy/procedure;

The Independent School Standards - Guidance for independent schools

(publishing.service.gov.uk)