




Complaints Policy

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Signed		Date	1/2/26

Aim

At Oakwood Education, we strive to maintain an open and positive environment where all concerns and complaints are dealt with fairly, effectively, and promptly. A transparent complaints procedure ensures that parents, carers, and others feel confident that their concerns will be heard and addressed.

The DfE guidance explains the difference between a concern and a complaint:

- A concern is defined as “an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought”
- A complaint is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action”

This policy aims to handle complaints systematically and resolve them as quickly as possible while upholding the setting’s values and safeguarding everyone involved.

This policy applies to all stakeholders, including:

- Parents and carers of students currently attending the provision.
- Visitors, volunteers, and members of the public.
- Former students or their parents/carers in cases where the complaint was initially raised when the student was still enrolled.

Time Limits

Complaints should be raised as soon as possible after the incident or concern arises. To ensure the timely resolution of issues, complaints should normally be made within three months of the incident. Complaints made outside this time frame may not be considered, except in exceptional circumstances.

Complaints Process Stage 1

Concerns and Difficulties Resolved Informally

Concerns or difficulties should first be raised directly with the appropriate member of staff. Most issues can be resolved quickly and effectively through informal discussion, and the aim is to reach a resolution without the need for a formal complaint. If the issue cannot be resolved informally, it may progress to Stage 2.

Stage 2

Formal Complaints

If a concern or difficulty remains unresolved, or if the issue is of a serious nature from the outset, the individual may make a formal complaint in writing to the DSL. The complaint should include details of the issue and the desired resolution. A formal investigation will be conducted by a designated member of staff, with a written

response provided to the complainant within a reasonable time frame (usually within 10 days). If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may escalate the matter to Stage 3.

Stage 3

Review by the Directors

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the resolution at Stage 2, they may refer the complaint to the Directors for further review. The Director will investigate the complaint and provide an independent review. A written response from the Director will be provided within a specified time frame, typically within 20 school days. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may escalate to Stage 4.

Stage 4

Panel Hearing

If the complaint is not resolved satisfactorily they may pass their complaint to the Local Authority. The complainant will have the opportunity to present their case, and the provision will also have the opportunity to respond. The Local Authority will make a final decision, and their findings will be communicated in writing within 5 working days of the hearing. This decision is final, and no further internal stages are available.

Serial or Persistent Complainants

Oakwood reserves the right to deal differently with serial or persistent complainants, who raise the same or similar issues repeatedly without grounds for further review. If a complainant's behaviour becomes unreasonable, the provision may take steps to restrict communication, ensuring that it does not interfere with normal provision operations.

Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled with the utmost confidentiality. Information will only be shared with those directly involved in resolving the complaint or where legally required. Complaints and their outcomes will not be disclosed publicly and will be stored securely in line with the provision's data protection policies.

Complaints Involving Staff

If the complaint is about a staff member, they will be informed of the allegation and given an opportunity to respond. Oakwood will ensure that all parties are treated fairly. If child protection issues are raised, the manager will refer the situation to the setting's DSL, who will then contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and follow the procedures of the Safeguarding Policy. If a criminal act may have been committed, the manager will contact the police.