



Title	<b>A8b: Complaints Procedure – Parents and Carers</b>
Purpose	To ensure that parents are empowered to make a complaint in an effective manner.  To enable staff to respond appropriately to parental concerns
Relevant to	<b>Parents, Staff and Governors</b>
Responsible Officer	<b>Chair of Governors</b>
Introduced	<b>2008</b>
Modification History	<b>04/2010, 06/2013/06/2016</b>
Related Policies	A8a Complaints Procedure - Staff
Date due for review	<b>06/2019</b>
Relevant Governors' subcommittee for review	<b>Full Governing Body</b>
Agreed at full meeting of Governors on	<b>12/7/2016</b>
Signed by Chair of Governors	
Filed as	<b>A8b Complaints Procedure-Parents V5 06/16</b>

## **Guide for Parents and Carers: Expressing Concerns**

### **1. Introduction**

*Why should you express your worries or concerns?*

Parents, carers and their children sometimes have worries about aspects of school life. These concerns may be to do with behaviour and codes of conduct, or matters to do with teaching and learning, or the way the school is organised. Sometimes the worries relate to things outside of school, which can affect life in the classroom. Oak Lodge School takes seriously all concerns raised by parents, carers and their children.

*How can you express a worry or concern?*

The important point to remember is that the school needs to know at the earliest opportunity if there are concerns. In the first instance it is usually the form teacher who can best deal with the problem although there may be situations where a senior member of staff would need to discuss the matter with the parent. The aim is to help put parents' minds at ease and experience shows that nearly all concerns raised by parents can be dealt with quickly and efficiently through an informal discussion. This helps everyone to understand the concern and agree a strategy to resolve it.

*When does a worry or concern become a formal complaint?*

There are rare and usually much more serious situations when a parent may not be satisfied with the way that the school is dealing with a problem. When this point is reached and all other avenues have been exhausted everyone needs to have a clear procedure to follow and the concern then becomes a formal complaint. The stages to follow are shown below:

### **2. Procedure for expressing a concern or arriving at the stage of making a complaint:**

#### **2.1 Informal Stage**

Expressing the concern to the form teacher (or the Headteacher in some instances to do with general school policy). Usually this informal approach resolves the worry but may involve further discussions. If this does not result in a satisfactory outcome then follows the

#### **2.2 Formal Stage with Headteacher**

A written explanation of the concern is made to the Headteacher who will investigate the matter, and meet with the parent/s raising the concern. The Headteacher will report to the parent with an assessment of the situation for the parents to discuss and consider. If this does not result in a satisfactory outcome then follows the

## **2.3 Formal Stage with Governing Body**

At this stage the concern or worry has become a Formal Complaint and the parent or carer then becomes the complainant. A formal complaint is made on **A Complaints Form** (found attached here in Appendix One and also available from the school office) addressed to the Chair of the Governing Body. The Chair will convene within fifteen school working days of receipt of the form, a meeting of the Governing Body Complaints Panel. This consists of three members of the Governing Body. The Complaints panel will meet separately with the complainants and the Headteacher and any other staff involved and report to all those involved with recommendations to try and resolve the issue. If this does not result in a satisfactory outcome then follows the

## **2.4 Formal Stage with Local Education Authority**

The formal complaint is made to the Local Authority who will appoint an officer to handle the investigation and report. If this does not result in a satisfactory outcome the complainant may then wish to involve Local Councillors, MP's or Local Government Ombudsman.

**It is important to remember that these stages exist in order to make what can be a difficult and time-consuming process as smooth as possible. It is not possible to miss out any stage.**

## **3. The roles of those involved at each stage?**

**3.1 The class teacher and/or Headteacher** will do all that they can to ensure the concern is dealt with at the first informal stage quickly and to the satisfaction of everyone involved. All meetings must be minuted and are confidential to those directly affected. It is clearly in everyone's interest that the concern is resolved at this stage and indeed this is usually the case.

**3.2 The Chair of Governors** will not be a part of the Governors Complaints panel because he or she may well be aware of the issue under investigation and will therefore only assist in setting up the meeting with parents, school and Complaints panel. The Chair of Governors may have a role in helping the complainants to clarify the specific nature of the complaint and the role and powers of the Complaints Panel.

The Chair of Governors will also notify the governing Body that a Formal Complaint has been received and that the Complaints panel has been convened. No information relating to the complaint will be given to the Governing Body. The Governing Body will be informed as to whether the outcome was satisfactory at the end of the stage involving the Complaints Panel.

**3.3 The Governors' Complaints Panel** will be completely impartial and members of the panel must not have been involved in the issue at any earlier stage. Staff Governors will not form part of the Complaints Panel. (The procedure for the Complaints Panel is outlined in detail on a separate sheet and a copy given to the complainant on receipt of the Complaint Form.)

**3.4 The Local Education Authority** is not directly involved at this stage but may give advice to parents through the Child Services Division. The Governors' complaints panel may also seek professional advice from the Local Education Authority before making their report.

## **4. The Complaints Panel, Complaints Meeting and the Final Report**

### **4.1 General Guidance**

Everyone involved needs to be given as much notice as possible but the meeting must take place within fifteen working school days upon receipt of the complaint form by the Chair of Governors.

The Chair of Governors will circulate the date, time, place, format and names of those attending the Complaints panel meeting in advance to all parties involved.

The Headteacher will supply the Complaints panel with all appropriate documentation prior to the Panel meeting. This will include the Complaint Form, incident Reports, Notes of meetings and School Policies relating to the complaint. (NB If the Complaint is directed personally against the Headteacher then a Deputy will assume the roles normally carried out by the Headteacher.)

The Complaints Panel will consist of three members of the Governing Body. Another Governor will attend to note the proceedings of the Complaints Meeting. The Chair of Governors will nominate one of Governor to Chair the meeting. An agenda will be circulated to everyone involved prior to the meeting.

Support and advice will be offered by the Headteacher to any teaching/non teaching staff required to attend the Complaints Panel Meeting.

### **4.2 Agenda and the procedure to be followed at the Complaints Panel Meeting**

It is essential that the panel is sensitive to the stresses created on all sides in issues of complaint.

The Headteacher and Chair of Governors will ensure that the organisation of the meeting is such that all are put at their ease and clearly understand the arrangements. Both sides may be accompanied by a friend or professional representative if they wish. Refreshments will be available and the seating and environment made as informal and comfortable as possible.

The meeting will be structured in order to ensure that everyone has a full opportunity to present their views in the best possible light. The Formal Agenda will

1	Complaints panel meet to review the complaint	30 minutes
2	Complainants meet with the Panel.	45 minutes
3	Break	15 minutes
4	Headteacher/Class teacher meet with the Panel	45 minutes

be as follows:

5 The Panel will arrange a date and time to meet to agree their final report.

The Chair of the Panel will ensure that all parties are given full opportunity to add to, question or clarify any issues under discussion. The Chair will attempt to summarise points in order to ensure a clear understanding. Members of the panel will be able to ask any questions they feel are necessary, but will be mindful of the constraints upon school staff relating to issues of confidentiality and the rights of other parents/carers and their children. All questions will be asked in a polite and courteous manner. The Chair will remind everyone of how and when it will report it's findings.

The Report will be completed by the Complaints panel within fifteen school working days of the meeting. This Report will be circulated to all the parties involved. The Complainants will be expected to respond in writing to the Chair of the Complaints panel within five school working days of receiving the Report to indicate whether they are satisfied with the outcome or wish to take it to the next stage with the Local Education Authority.

### **4.3 The Report of the Panel**

The Sections of this will be as follows:

1 Introduction:Complainants  
Complaint  
Framework for the Meeting (This Complaints Policy)  
Names of the Panel, Dates of Meetings  
Names of those interviewed  
Purpose of the Report

2 Information presented by Complainants:  
Concise and numbered points for easy reference  
Points to be grouped appropriately  
Views should be expressed as "The complainants believed/were concerned that ..."

3 Information presented by Staff: As for 2 above

4 Assessment by Panel: Question and Answer format to establish the rationale for the decisions and recommendations made by the Panel

5 Appendices: Including key documents

The Panel will prepare a Draft Report of Section 1, 2 and 3. A Draft Report will be issued in the following way within five school working days of the complaints Panel Meeting with a copy to the Chair of Governors:

Draft Section 1 and 2 to Complainants for factual accuracy  
Draft Section 1 and 3 to Staff for factual accuracy

The drafts should be accompanied by a letter thanking the parties for attending and requesting comments within five working days to the Chair of the Panel.

The Chair of the panel will confirm receipt of comments in writing, to the parties.  
NB These draft sections need not wait for the drafting of section 4.

The Complaints Panel will arrange a meeting to prepare and agree the Final Report at which the Panel will take account of any appropriate suggested amendments.

The panel will complete the Report and issue this to all those involved within a further five school working days with a copy to the Chair of Governors. This should be accompanied by a letter explaining to the complainants of their right to take their complaint to the next stage of the procedure should they be dissatisfied with the conclusions and recommendations of the Complaints panel. The letter should also close the responsibility of the panel by handing back the issue to the Chair of Governors.

The Complainants should inform the Chair of Governors in writing as to whether they accept the outcome from the Complaints panel and if they wish to take the matter to the next stage with the Local Education Authority.

If this is the case and parents wish to appeal against the procedure followed by the school in considering their complaint, they can write to the Education and Skills director, Building 4, North London Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, London N11 1NP. The Chief Education Officer will only consider complaints about the school's procedure and not about the decision reached by the Complaints Appeal Panel.

## **Appendix One: Formal Complaint to the Governing Body**



This form is to be used by a parent or carer wishing to make a formal complaint to the Governing Body and only after all other avenues for informally resolving the concern have been exhausted. The form should be sent to the Chair of the Governing Body c/o Oak Lodge School.

**Name and Address of Complainant:**

**Child's Class:**

**The Complaint:**

**Background to the Complaint:**

**Complainant's view of what should be done by the School:**

**Signed:**

**Date:**