



# OLD BUCKENHAM HALL

*A leading co-educational preparatory school for children aged 2-13 years*

## Complaints Policy

OBHP05

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# Complaints Policy

## Introduction

Old Buckenham Hall has long prided itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents of either day children or boarders do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and in accordance with this procedure. Old Buckenham Hall makes its complaints procedure available to all parents of pupils and of prospective pupils on the school's website and in the school office during the school day, and we will ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils who request it are made aware that this document is published or available and the form in which it is published or available.

In accordance with paragraph 33 of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2019, Old Buckenham Hall will make available to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils and provide, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate, details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year.

**This Policy applies to the EYFS and Pre-Prep department.**

## 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 and any matter about which a parent is unhappy and seeks action by the school is within the scope of this procedure. 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. The school is here for your child and you can be assured that your child will not be penalised for a complaint that you (or your child) raises in good faith.

## Time frame 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 20 working days if the complaint is lodged during term-time and within 30 working days during holiday periods.

Stage 3, the Appeal Panel Hearing, will be completed within a further 20 working days, if the appeal is lodged during term-time or during holiday periods.

Please note that for the purposes of this procedure, 'working days' refers to weekdays (Monday to Friday) during term time.

## Recording Complaints

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all formal complaints, whether they are resolved at the informal stage, the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and any action taken by the school a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld). 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 where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them.

## The Complaints Procedure

### 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/daughter's Form Teacher or Tutor. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the Form teacher cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult the Senior Deputy Head and/or the Headmaster.
- Complaints made directly to the Headmaster will usually be referred to the relevant Form Teacher/Tutor, one of the Deputy Heads, Head of Boarding or another member of the Senior Management Team unless the Headmaster deems it appropriate for him to deal with the matter personally.
- The Form teacher 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 **5 working days** (or 10 working days during a holiday period), or in the event that the Form teacher 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 Headmaster, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors.

### 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 Headmaster. The Headmaster will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Headmaster will meet or speak to the parents concerned, normally within 5 working days of receiving the complaint (or 10 working days during a holiday period), 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 Headmaster will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Headmaster 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 Headmaster will also give reasons for his decision.
- If the complaint is against the Headmaster, the Chair of Governors will call for a full report from the Headmaster 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 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 Mr Duncan Liddell who has been appointed by the Governors to call hearings of the Complaints Panel.
- 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.<sup>1</sup> The appointed Clerk, on behalf of the Panel, will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place within 10 working days (or 15 working days during a holiday period).
- 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 5 working 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.

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<sup>1</sup> \* DfE guidance for 'Independent Person' - Whilst we do not wish to be prescriptive about who schools should appoint as an independent person our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and who are used to analysing evidence and putting forward balanced arguments would be suitable. Examples of persons likely to be suitable are serving or retired business people, civil servants, heads or senior members of staff at other schools, people with a legal background and retired members of the Police Force might be considered by schools. Schools will of course have their own views.

- The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it, normally within 5 working days of the hearing (although additional time may be required if it is necessary to carry out further investigations following the hearing). The decision of the Panel will be final. A copy of the Panel's findings and recommendations (if any), including Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) information, 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 Governors and the Headmaster.
- Copies of panel findings and recommendations (if any) will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of Governors and the Headmaster.

### Written Complaints relating to the requirements under EYFS

- OBH will investigate written complaints relating to their fulfilment of the EYFS requirements & notify complainants of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of having received the complaint.
- OBH will provide ISI and Ofsted, on request, with a written record of all complaints made during any specified period, and the action which was taken as a result of each complaint. The record of any such complaints will be kept for at least three years.
- ***COMPLAINTS TO ISI/OFSTED REGARDING EYFS SERVICE PROVIDERS:*** Parents may complain to ISI/OfSTED if they believe OBH is not meeting the EYFS requirements.
- ISI may be contacted on 020 7600 0100 or by e-mail: [concerns@isi.net](mailto:concerns@isi.net) .
- Ofsted may be contacted on 0300 123 1231 or e-mail [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) .

### Monitoring and Review

This Policy and the Recording of Complaints will be monitored by the Chair of Governors on a termly basis.

This Policy will be reviewed annually or when there are changes in legislation or regulations.