
The Olive Tree Primary School Bolton

Complaints Policy

July 2019



Believe you can

trust peace fairness respect equality compassion

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Introduction

This policy applies to all complaints made against The Olive Tree Primary School about any provision of facilities or services provided with the following exceptions, for which there are separate (statutory) procedures:

- Admissions to schools;
- Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN);
- School re-organisation proposals; and
- Matters likely to require a Child Protection Investigation.

Aims

1. To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
2. To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.
3. To ensure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
4. To ensure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired.
5. To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.
6. To support the mission, vision and values of the Trust.

Who is responsible for this policy?

- The Trust has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory or Trust framework. The Trust has delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy to the Principal and Senior Leadership team of the school.
- The Board of Trustees and Senior Leadership Team has a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all members of staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success.

Stage one – informal resolution

The Trust expects that before seeking to use formal procedures, the complainant:

- Will complete the Parent Concern Form (to arrange a 1:1 meeting with the relevant member of staff).
- Will have raised their concerns with the relevant staff member within school; and
- Will have made reasonable attempts to seek an informal resolution - including addressing their concerns with the relevant class teacher / Phase Leader / Assistant Principal (in order of organisational seniority).

Where a minor problem arises at source, or where a minor complaint is made directly and verbally, this should be dealt with at source with explanation and mediation being the key forms of resolution.

Stage two - formal procedure

The Principal shall have a discretion, which will be exercised reasonably, not to allow a written complaint to be pursued where an Informal Resolution has not been sought.

The Complainant must put the complaint in writing using the school's Complaints Form (Appendix 2) unless the complainant has a disability that prevents this, in which case the complainant may contact the school for assistance. The complaint should be addressed to the 'Principal at The Olive Tree Primary School'.

The Principal will acknowledge receipt of the complaint by letter, and pass the complaint to a nominated senior member of staff as appropriate for investigation.

An investigation of the complaint will be carried out by the nominated senior member of staff who will report to the Principal.

The investigation should aim to be concluded within 15 working days of the complaint being received. An extension of this deadline should only be considered where there is a genuine delay in the availability of information required to consider the investigation and clear attempts to obtain the information in a timely manner can be demonstrated. If an extension to the investigation is required, this should be communicated along with the revised deadline, in writing, to the complainant.

The Principal will communicate the findings of the investigation with the complainant - or delegate the responsibility to an appropriate member of the Senior Leadership Team. This may be during a meeting, over the telephone or via email / letter. Whenever reasonably possible, such discussion will take place within 20 working days (IE 20 school days) of the complaint being received. If there has been a delay in the investigation, this should be within 5 days of the revised deadline that was communicated to the complainant.

The Principal will then ensure the findings have been put in writing and indicate what steps, if any, should be taken in order to resolve the matter. Whenever reasonably possible, this will be done within 10 working days of the discussion with the complainant.

Where a complaint relates directly to the Principal, the Chair of Trustees will assume the role of investigating the complaint. Otherwise, the procedure for Stage Two will remain the same.

Stage three – panel hearing

21. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the first and second stage, they may request that the complaint be considered by the Complaint Appeals Panel of The Olive Tree Primary School, which will comprise of two members of the Board of Trustees who have not previously been involved in the complaint, and one person independent of the management and running of The Olive Tree Primary School.
22. A request to use the third stage must be in writing, addressed to the Principal within 10 working days of the Stage Two response being sent to the complainant and must set out clearly the reasons why the complainant is dissatisfied with the response.
23. The Principal will put in writing a response to the complainant's reasons for requesting the Appeal. This will be within 15 school days.

At the end of that 15 day period the Clerk to the Board of Trustees will convene a hearing of the Complaint Appeals Panel. That hearing will be held as quickly as practicable given the need to find a date that is reasonably convenient for the complainant, the school and the members of the Panel. Whenever possible, the hearing will be held within 15 school days since the end of the school's response time.

25. All parties will be provided with a minimum of 5 school days' notice of the date of the Complaints Appeals Panel.
26. The following are entitled to attend the Panel hearing, submit written representations and address the Panel:
 - the complainant/s and/or one representative;
 - the Principal and/or one representative; and
 - any other interested person whom the Complaint Appeals Panel considers to have a reasonable and just interest in the appeal and whose contribution would assist the Panel in their decision-making.
27. The Panel will formulate its response as quickly as reasonably possible, aiming to do so within 10 school days and the Clerk to the Board of Trustees will notify all concerned.
28. The Panel findings and recommendations will be:
 - sent in writing to the complainant within the 'Completion of Procedure' letter (template at Appendix 3);
 - sent, where relevant, to the person complained about; and
 - available for inspection on the school's premises.
29. A written record will be kept of all complaints by the school.
30. 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 162A of the Education Act 2002 requests access to them or where the Trust is otherwise required by law to disclose them.

Dealing with unreasonably persistent or vexatious complaints

31. We define unreasonably persistent and vexatious complaints as those, which because of the frequency or nature of the complainants' contacts hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints. The description 'unreasonably persistent' and 'vexatious' may apply separately or jointly to a particular complaint.
32. Features of an unreasonably persistent and/or vexatious complaint include those detailed within Appendix 4. Please note that this list is not exhaustive, nor does one single feature on its own necessarily imply that the complaint will be so defined.
33. The school will ensure that the complaint is being, or has been, investigated in accordance with this Complaints Policy. If there are concerns that a complaint may fall within the category of being unreasonably persistent and/or vexatious the Principal will seek guidance and advice from the Board of Trustees.
34. If a complainant is found to be unreasonably persistent and/or vexatious, the Board of Trustees will write to the complainant advising them of the decision and the reasons for this. The letter should state that all future correspondence from them with regards to complaints should be directed to them so they can consider whether it raises any substantive new issue(s).
35. The complainant will be advised that if no substantive new issue is raised, any future complaints will not receive a response. They will also be advised of their right to complain about the decision to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).
36. There is no internal route of appeal against the decision that a complaint is persistent and/or vexatious.
37. If future complaints do raise substantive new issues, they will be investigated in accordance with the Complaints Policy.

Accountability

38. The Principal holds delegated responsibility for discharging the sound application of all school policies.
39. The Principal should inform the Board of Trustees of all matters relating to serious breaches of this policy including any major incident to be addressed under this policy promptly, preferably prior to action being taken in so far as is reasonably practicable.

Monitoring, evaluation and review

40. The policy will be promoted and implemented upon being ratified by the Board of Trustees.
41. The Trust will monitor the operation and effectiveness of arrangements referred to in this policy at the school.

Appendix 1: Concern reporting form
Concern Reporting Form



Name of person raising the concern:	
Pupil's name (if applicable):	
Class (if applicable):	
Daytime telephone number:	
Evening telephone number:	
Staff name (who meeting will be arranged with)	
Please give details of your concern/query:	
I would like to be contacted through:	
1:1 meeting: <input type="checkbox"/>	Email: <input type="checkbox"/>
Phone call: <input type="checkbox"/>	Other: <input type="checkbox"/>
A meeting with the relevant member of staff will be arranged for either 8:30am or 3:30pm, Monday – Thursday or 8:30am or 12:30pm on Friday.	
Date/Time arranged:	
For official use only:	
Outcome:	



Appendix 2: Complaint reporting form

Complaint Reporting Form

Name of person making the complaint	
Pupil's name (if applicable):	
Your relationship to the pupil (if applicable):	
Address, incl. Postcode:	
Daytime telephone number:	
Evening telephone number:	
Please give details of your complaint:	

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS and return for the attention of the Principal who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.



What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? To whom did you speak to and what was the response? (An informal resolution should have been sought before making a complaint - as indicated in the school's complaints policy.)

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What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

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Are you attaching any paperwork? If so please give details.

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Signature:		Date:	
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For official use only:

Date acknowledgement sent		Complaint referred to	
Acknowledgement sent by		Complaint referred on (date)	

Appendix 3: Template completion of procedures letter

Dear <*Name of complainant>

Completion of Procedures Letter

This letter confirms that the internal procedures of this establishment in relation to your complaint regarding <*please describe> have been completed.

The issues that you raised in your complaint were <*please summarise>.

The issues that were considered in relation to complaint were: <*brief summary of the complaint>.

The final decision of is <*detail> because <*reasons>.

The <*procedure/ policy / regulation> applied were: <*details >.

Complainants who are dissatisfied about the handling of their complaint may contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) using their online school complaints form (www.gov.uk/complain-about-school).

Yours sincerely,

<Authorised signatory>

Appendix 4: Examples of unreasonably persistent and/or vexatious complaints

Please note that this list is not exhaustive, nor does one single feature on its own necessarily imply that the complaint will be so defined.

- a. There are insufficient or no grounds for the complaint and it is made only to annoy (or for reasons that the complainant does not admit or make obvious).
- b. There are no specified grounds for the complaint despite offers of assistance.
- c. The complainant refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- d. The complaint is about issues not within the power of the school to investigate, change or influence and where the complainant refuses to accept this.
- e. The complainant insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways that are incompatible with the Complaints Policy (insisting, for example, that there must not be any written record of the complaint or insisting the complaint is only dealt with by certain individuals within the school / Trust).
- f. There appears to be groundless complaints about the staff dealing with the complaint investigation, and an attempt to have them replaced.
- g. There is an unreasonable number of contacts with us, by any means, in relation to a specific complaint or complaints.
- h. There are persistent and unreasonable demands or expectations of staff and/or the complaints process after the unreasonableness has been explained to the complainant (an example of this could be a complainant who insists on immediate responses to numerous, frequent and/or complex communication).
- i. Attempts to harass, verbally abuse or otherwise seek to intimidate staff dealing with their complaint by use of foul or inappropriate language or by the use of offensive or discriminatory language.

- j. Subsidiary or new issues are raised whilst a complaint is being addressed that were not part of the complaint at the start of the complaint process.
- k. Trivial or irrelevant new information is introduced whilst the complaint is being investigated and an expectation that this be taken into account and commented on.
- l. There is a change to the substance or basis of the complaint without reasonable justification whilst the complaint is being addressed.
- m. The complainant denies statements he or she made at an earlier stage in the complaint process.
- n. The complainant electronically records meetings and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other person involved.
- o. The complainant refuses to accept the outcome of the complaint process after its conclusion, repeatedly arguing the point, complaining about the outcome, and/or denying that an adequate response has been given.
- p. The same complaint is made repeatedly, perhaps with minor differences, after the complaints process has been concluded and where the complainant insists that the minor differences make these 'new' complaints, which should be put through the full complaints process.
- q. Documented evidence is not accepted as factual by the complainant.
- r. The complaint relates to an issue based on a historic and irreversible decision or incident.