



ST. EDWARD'S OXFORD

Complaints Procedure for Parents

Introduction

The School prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provide to its parents. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by the School with care and concern, and in accordance with this procedure. A copy of this policy is included in the joining papers for all new pupils.

In accordance with paragraph 32 (1b) of Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulation 2014, the School will make this procedure available to parents and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The School website also contains the list of policies, specified under paragraph 32(3) of the Regulations 2014, which are available to current parents and parents of prospective pupils.

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 house or about an individual member of staff. A complaint is likely to arise if a parent believes that the School has done something wrong or failed to do something that it should have done or acted unfairly.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Parents should be confident that their son or daughter will not be penalized for a complaint that they or their children raise in good faith.

There are three stages to the School's complaint procedure:

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

It is hoped that nearly all complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.

If parents have a complaint or a concern, they should normally contact their son's Housemaster (HM) or daughter's Housemistress (HM). In most cases, the matter will be resolved straightaway to parents' satisfaction. If the HM cannot resolve the matter alone, it may be necessary for the HM to consult a relevant Head of Department (HoD) and/or Sub-Warden, Deputy Head (Academic) or Deputy Head (Pastoral).

Complaints made directly to the HoD, the Deputy Heads, Sub-Warden or Warden will usually be referred to the HM unless the HoD, Deputy Heads, Sub-Warden or Warden deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

All concerns relating to child protection or child welfare must be referred directly to the Deputy Head (Pastoral) who acts as the School's Designated Lead on all matters relating to child welfare.

The HM 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 7 days or in the event that the HM and parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, then parents will be advised to proceed with their complaint to the next stage of this procedure. At this stage, parents will be given a copy of the School's complaint policy and asked to write to the Warden, detailing their complaint and completing the Formal Complaint form. The form is an important record of the complaint.

If the complaint is against the Warden, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors through the Secretary of the Governing Body.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then parents should put their complaint, in writing and complete the Formal Complaint form, to the Warden who will then decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate course of action to take; he may decide to delegate responsibility to another senior member of staff such as the Sub-Warden or Deputy Heads.

In most cases, the Warden will meet with or speak to the parents concerned, within 7 days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, an agreement will be reached at this stage.

It may be necessary for the Warden (or his nominee) to carry out further investigations.

The Warden will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.

Once the Warden 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 Warden will also give reasons for his decision. The Warden would normally seek to reach a decision within 14 days.

If the complaint is against the Warden, the Chair of the Governors will call for a full report from the Warden and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Governors 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 of Governors 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 of Governors 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 the Bursar, 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, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. The Panel members will be appointed by Governors and the Panel will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 days.

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 not later than 3 days prior to the hearing.

The parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately 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 reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 7 days of the Hearing. The Panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing to:

- (i) the parents;
- (ii) the Warden and the Governors;
- (iii) the person complained about;
- (iv) be available for inspection on the school premises by the Chair of the Governors and the Warden

It is expected that, rather than merely send a copy to that person, the Warden will take them through the Panel's findings. The decision of the Panel will be final.

Record Keeping

In accordance with the Independent Schools Regulations, a written record will be kept of all complaints that are dealt with at either Stage 2 or 3. The School will keep a written record of all action taken as a result of any complaints regardless of whether they are upheld.

The number of complaints dealt with at Stage 2 or 3 will also be available to all current or prospective parents. The school will also keep records of informal complaints or concerns for management purposes to enable patterns of concern to be monitored.

Parents can be assured that all concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Education Act requests access to them.

Number of complaints registered under the formal procedure, in the past year	3
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St Edward's, Oxford

Formal complaint form

1.	Name of complainant	
2.	Date of complaint	
3.	Nature of complaint	
4.	Name of other person(s) involved	
5.	Actions taken so far to resolve the complaint	
6.	Person to whom the initial complaint was made	
7.	Signature of complainant	

This form will be retained in the 'Complaints folder' and available for inspection by Governors and the Independent Schools Inspectorate

Appendix 1. Independent Panel member

The Department of Education has given the following guidance on the identity of an independent panel member.

“Our general view is that people who have held a position of responsibility and are used to analyzing 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.”

Appendix 2. Exclusions

The Department of Education takes the view that the complaints regulations do not cover pupil exclusions. Parents should use the appeal procedure outlined in the School’s Exclusion Policy.