Complaints Policy and Procedure

This policy reflects current legislation and guidance including the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), Working Together to Safeguard Children, the Equality Act 2010, the EYFS Statutory Framework where relevant, the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and section 103 of the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, which inserted section 164A into the Data Protection Act 2018.

It is available on the school website www.oakhillschool.co.uk and from the school office on request from parents and prospective parents.

Introduction

Oakhill prides itself on the quality of teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. We welcome suggestions and comments from parents and take seriously any concerns you may have. These will be treated in a professional and appropriate manner in accordance with this procedure. Oakhill will make details of this policy available to parents and prospective parents (as above) and will also provide details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year. The whole school policy applies as well to the EYFS and Out of School care. We are committed to handling complaints fairly, proportionately, consistently and with due regard to confidentiality and safeguarding.

Stage 1- Informal Resolution

- It is hoped most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If a parent/parents have a complaint they should normally contact their child's class/form teacher or key worker. In many cases the matter will be resolved straight away by this means to the parents' satisfaction. If the teacher cannot resolve the matter themselves it may be necessary to contact a senior member of staff or the Principal.
- Complaints made directly to a senior member of staff or the Principal will usually be referred to the relevant teacher unless they deem it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.
- The member of staff will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. Any concern about the handling of personal data must be forwarded immediately to the Data Protection Lead (dpl@oakhillschool.co.uk) and dealt with under the Data Protection Complaints section below. Should another matter not be resolved within 5 school working days, or where the member of staff and parent fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, the parent will be advised to proceed to Stage 2.

- If the complaint is against the Principal, parents should make their complaint directly to the Chair of Governors whose contact details are available on the School website.

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis then parents should put their complaint in writing to the Principal. The Principal will decide, after considering the complaint, the appropriate action to take. Parents wishing to pursue Stage 2 are asked to complete the Complaint Record Form in Appendix A and send it to the Principal, or the Chair of Governors if the complaint concerns the Principal. Please explain your complaint clearly, including relevant dates, what has already been done to resolve it and the outcome you are seeking. Assistance and reasonable adjustments are available. An equivalent written submission containing this information will also be accepted.
- The Principal will respond to parents **within 5 school working days** of receiving the complaint. If possible a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Principal to carry out further investigations.
- The Principal will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Where information or clarification is reasonably required from parents to progress a Stage 2 complaint, the School will request it in writing and specify a response deadline of 10 school working days, starting on the school working day after the request is sent. The request will explain the possible consequences of non-response.
- If no response has been received after five school working days, the School will send a written reminder confirming the original deadline. The reminder will not restart or extend that deadline.
- If no response is received by the deadline, the School will consider whether it can determine the complaint on the information available. Where it can, it will issue a written Stage 2 decision. Where the missing information prevents proper consideration, the School may close the complaint without a substantive decision and will explain its reasons in writing. Such closure is not a finding that the complaint is upheld or rejected.
- Once the Principal is satisfied that all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and parents will be informed of this decision in writing normally **within 28 school working days** of receiving the written complaint. The Principal will also give reasons for her/his decision. The School may close a complaint without a substantive Stage 2 decision only where missing information prevents proper consideration and the non-response provision above has been followed.
- If the parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.
- Parents wishing to proceed to Stage 3 should write to the Chair of Governors within 10 school working days, starting on the school working day after the Stage 2 decision is sent. If no request is received, the complaint will be closed and no further action will be taken under this complaints procedure. The Stage 2 decision letter will explain this deadline. There is no requirement for parents to confirm acceptance of the decision.
- For all timescales in this policy expressed in school working days, school working days are days when the School is open to pupils. The School will make reasonable adjustments and consider extensions, late responses or late requests where there is a good reason, such as illness or communication difficulties. Existing complaints will be given written notice of any new deadline before it is applied. Closure does not end any

separate safeguarding, statutory reporting, EYFS complaints or data protection obligations. The deadlines in the Data Protection Complaints and EYFS sections operate separately and are not extended or displaced by the non-response provision.

- Where the parent is not satisfied with the school's response to their complaint at stage two and indicates a wish to continue to stage three, a panel hearing should take place unless the parent later indicates that they are now satisfied and do not wish to proceed further. If a parent does not exercise the right to attend a panel hearing, this does not remove the school's obligation to hold the hearing in conformity with its complaints policy. The school's arrangements for the panel hearing should be reasonable in order to facilitate the parents exercising the right of attendance.
- If the complaint is against the Principal, the complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors. The Chair of Governors will nominate someone to determine the complaint. The Stage 2 process described above will then be followed as if the references to the Principal (or their nominee) is to the individual nominated by the Chair of Governors to determine the complaint against the Principal.

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 Chair of Governors who will call a hearing of the Complaints Panel.
- The Complaints Panel will consist of three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of the school. Each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the Board of Governors. The Chair of Panel will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable and normally **within 14** school **working 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 5 school working days prior to the hearing.
- Once Stage 3 has been requested, failure to reply or attend will not be treated as withdrawal. After reasonable attempts to arrange the hearing and written notice inviting attendance or written representations, the Panel will proceed on the evidence available and send its findings and recommendations. The School will seek written confirmation of any withdrawal.
- The parents may attend the hearing and be accompanied by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher or friend. Legal representation would 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 the facts they consider relevant, the Panel will form a decision and may make recommendations which it shall complete within 7 school working days of the Hearing. The decision of the Panel will be final.
- The Panel's findings and recommendations, if any, will be sent, normally **within 21** school **working days of the Hearing,** in writing or electronic mail or otherwise to the complainant, and, where relevant, the person complained about. These findings will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the Governors and the Principal.

A written record will be kept of all complaints, including whether ordinary parental complaints are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a Panel hearing. Data protection complaints will additionally be recorded in the data protection complaints register described above. Complaints without safeguarding implications will be retained for a minimum of 7 years. Where there is a safeguarding angle, records concerning allegations of abuse will be preserved for the term of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and at least until the accused has reached normal pension age, or for 10 years from the allegation if longer.

If repeated attempts are made by a parent to raise the same complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, this will be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy.

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 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, requests access to them, or where other legal obligation prevails. Information will be processed in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Data Protection Complaints

This section applies from 19 June 2026 to a complaint by any data subject - including a parent, pupil, member of staff or other individual - who considers that Oakhill has infringed the UK GDPR or Part 3 of the Data Protection Act 2018 in connection with personal data relating to them. It operates within this policy but is not restricted to complaints made by parents and does not require completion of the three-stage parental complaints procedure.

How to complain

Data protection complaints should be addressed to the Data Protection Lead and may be submitted by email to dpl@oakhillschool.co.uk . A complainant is not required to use a particular form or expressly refer to data protection legislation.

Acknowledgement and investigation

The Data Protection Lead will ensure that receipt is acknowledged as soon as practicable and in every case within 30 calendar days of receipt. The acknowledgement will identify the person handling the complaint, explain the next steps and provide a means of contact. Oakhill will, without undue delay, take appropriate steps to investigate the complaint, obtain any information needed fairly and proportionately, and keep the complainant informed of progress. Where clarification or further information is required, this will be requested promptly.

Outcome

The outcome will be communicated to the complainant without undue delay and within a reasonable period following acknowledgement. The response will explain the investigation undertaken, the findings, any action or remedy proposed, and the reasons for the decision. It will also explain that, if the complainant remains dissatisfied after Oakhill has considered the matter, they may raise their concern with the Information Commissioner's Office at ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint or telephone 0303 123 1113.

Records

Oakhill will maintain a data protection complaints register. For each complaint, it will record: the date and method of receipt; the complainant's identity and contact details; the nature of the concern and the personal data or processing involved; the acknowledgement date; the investigator; evidence considered and investigative steps; all progress communications; findings, outcome and reasons; remedial or follow-up action; any referral to or contact with the ICO; and the closure date. Records will be stored securely, access will be limited to those who need it, and retention will follow Oakhill's data-retention schedule.

Related rights and urgent incidents

A data protection complaint may also contain a request to exercise a data-subject right, such as access, correction or erasure. Any such request will be identified and handled within the applicable statutory timescale as well as being considered through this complaints route. A complaint does not replace Oakhill's separate duty to assess and, where required, report a personal data breach to the ICO within the statutory breach-reporting timescale.

EYFS and Out of School Provision

This policy applies to the EYFS and Out of School setting with the following additions:

- Each record of complaint is kept for 3 years
- Oakhill will investigate written complaints relating to its fulfilment of the EYFS requirements and notify complainants of the outcome within 28 calendar days of receipt. This deadline is not extended by school holidays or the non-response provision above.
- The Nursery Managers will maintain the EYFS complaints log and make it available to Ofsted on request.
- Where a complaint relates specifically to the EYFS statutory requirements, it will be recorded in the EYFS complaints log as well as being handled through the School's complaints procedure where applicable.

Parents can make a complaint to the ISI or Ofsted, whose contact details are:

Email: info@isi.net
Telephone: 020 7600 0100
Address: Independent Schools Inspectorate
CAP House
9-12 Long Lane
London EC1A 9HA

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Telephone: 030 0123 1231
Address: Ofsted National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

Monitoring and Review

These procedures will be monitored annually by the Principal and Governing Body and updated as necessary. The Data Protection Lead will review the data protection complaints register for themes, recurring risks, timeliness and completion of remedial action, and will report relevant assurance information to senior leaders and governors without disclosing personal data unnecessarily.

Number of formal complaints

During the academic year 2025–2026, the School registered three complaints under its formal complaints procedure.

Revised: August 2025. Updated: September 2026 to reflect section 164A of the Data Protection Act 2018. J Buttery. Updated November 2026 to clarify inactive complaints, closure and hearings in a parent's absence.

APPENDIX A
STAGE 2 COMPLAINT RECORD FORM

FOR PARENTS TO COMPLETE

Please explain your complaint clearly and concisely, using the sections below. Contact the School if you need help completing the form or require a reasonable adjustment.

1 Your details

Parent or carer: ..... Date: .....

Pupil and year group: .....

2 What has already been done to resolve the matter?

Please tell us who you have spoken or written to, when, and why the matter remains unresolved.

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3 Your complaint

Please explain what happened, including relevant dates and who was involved, and why you are dissatisfied.

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4 What would you like the School to do to resolve the matter?

Please explain the outcome you are seeking.

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5 Supporting information

Please identify any relevant documents or correspondence. If these have already been supplied, you can refer to them here.

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I request consideration at Stage 2. The information above is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Name or signature: ..... Date: .....

APPENDIX B - DATA PROTECTION COMPLAINT RECORD

Date and method received:

Complainant's name and contact details:

Personal data or processing concerned and details of complaint:

Date acknowledged (must be within 30 calendar days):

Investigator and any conflict-of-interest considerations:

Evidence considered and investigative steps:

Progress updates, with dates:

Outcome, reasons and date communicated:

Remedial or follow-up action:

Any ICO contact or referral:

Date closed: