



Odyssey House School – Bloomsbury

Complaints Procedure

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| Author / reviewer: | Gary Hawkins | Designation: | Headteacher |
| Date: | September 2023 | | |
| Approved by: | Charu Kashyap | Designation: | CEO & Co-Founder |
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Introduction

This procedure follows guidance provided by the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, paragraph 33.

Contentious issues can arise in any organisation, and this includes schools. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about the school, about a specific department or about an individual member of staff. The Odyssey complaints procedure is in place to provide a clear, fair and efficient procedure for dealing with any complaints relating to the school, so that they can be dealt with swiftly, fairly and effectively.

The complaints procedure is available to parents of current and prospective pupils on the Odyssey website and as a paper copy in the school office. The website also contains up-to-date information on how many formal complaints there have been in the preceding year. All concerns and complaints will be treated confidentially, with related paperwork kept in a secure place. Records will be kept for at least three years. If a complaint regards child protection or safeguarding, the issue will be immediately referred to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead and referred to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding team as necessary.

Any complaint received will be acknowledged **within five working days**, if received during term time and as quickly as possible if received during holiday periods. The school will complete all stages of the procedure within 28 days, but if for any reason this is not possible, the complainant/s will be immediately informed. More detail about the timescales involved is outlined on the following pages.

If the complaint is relating to the Headteacher, then complainants should address their concerns to the CEO and Co-Founder.

Stage 1 Informal resolution

It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally. It is always best to start with a conversation as this can usually sort matters out. Complainants should first contact the child's class teacher, or the Head of Education. Staff are all familiar with this complaints procedure and will follow it closely. A written record of the complaint will be made. If the matter is not resolved within **five working days**, complainants will be advised to move to Stage 2 of our complaints' procedure.

Stage 2 Formal resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved at the informal stage, then the complainant/s should put their complaint in writing to the *SLT who will decide on the appropriate course of action. The written complaint will be acknowledged within **three working days**.

The SLT will meet or speak to the complainants and any other parties concerned within **10 working days** of acknowledging the complaint. Written records of all meetings and interviews will be kept. Once the SLT has all the relevant information, a decision will be made as to the resolution of the complaint and the complainants informed of this decision and the underlying reasons in writing within **five working days**.*

If the complaint is against the Deputy Head, the Headteacher will follow the same procedure outlined between *...*in Stage 2 above. Similarly, if the complaint is against the Headteacher, the CEO and Co-founder will follow the same procedure outlined between *...* in Stage 2 above.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3 Appeals panel

If parents seek to move to Stage 3 following failure to reach an earlier resolution as indicated above, they must put their complaint in writing to the CEO & Co-Founder.

The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Appeal Panel. The Panel will consist of three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint and one of who is independent of the management of the running of the school.

The CEO will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place **within ten 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 these particulars shall be supplied **not later than five working days prior to the hearing**. The complainant/s may attend the hearing and be accompanied by one other person if they wish.

The Panel will issue findings and may make recommendations based on all the evidence presented. Within **five working days** of the Panel hearing, these will be sent by electronic mail or by letter to the complainant/s, and, where relevant, the person complained about. A copy will also be sent to the CEO and Co-Founder, SLT and Headteacher assuming s/he is not the subject of the complaint. The findings and recommendations will also be available for inspection on the school premises by the CEO and Co-Founder, Headteacher, SLT and Independent School Inspectorate (ISI) as appropriate.

If the complainant/s is/are unhappy with the outcome, they may refer the complaint to the Secretary of State. Complaints can be submitted online at <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school>.

If you wish to make a complaint directly to ISI about the school, you can contact their general helpline on 0207 600 0100; or request advice by email on concerns@isi.net

Recording complaints and use of personal data

Following resolution of a complaint, the school will keep a written record of all complaints and whether they are resolved at the informal stage, the formal stage or proceed to a panel hearing and the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints regardless of whether they are upheld.

The school processes data in accordance with its Privacy Notice, a copy of which is available on the school website. When dealing with complaints, the school (including any Panel member appointed under the Stage 3 process) may process a range of information, which is likely to include the following:

- Date when the issue was raised
- Name(s) of parent(s)
- 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)
- Notes/minutes of the hearing
- The Panel's written decision

This may include 'special category personal data' (as further detailed in the School's Privacy Notice, but potentially including sensitive data such as information relating to physical or mental health) where this is necessary owing to the nature of the complaint.

The school will keep records of formal complaints and Complaints Panel hearings, as required by regulation. It will do so in accordance with its Privacy Notice, but in most cases for a period of at least six years after the pupil leaves the school (subject to the supervening requirements of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse set out in Appendix 2).

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 or where any other legal obligation prevails.

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| Number of formal complaints made to Odyssey House School – Bloomsbury in the previous academic year: | |
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| Outcome: | |
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