



Policy No: 13a(1)

OUR LADY'S ABINGDON (OLA) COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

Document Details

Information Sharing Category	School Domain
Version	1
Date Published	September 2022
Authorised by (if required)	Head
Responsible Area	Leadership Team

We comply with the Government guidance and regulations, currently in force, regarding COVID.

Availability: This Procedure, (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) applies to the whole school, is publicly available on OLA's website <http://www.ola.org.uk/> and upon request a copy may be obtained from the School Office. A copy is also provided in the information for prospective parents/guardians, on enquiry for admission.

The purpose of this complaints procedure is to deal with complaints from the parents of pupils. This complaints procedure does not apply to parents of prospective pupils and it does not cover exclusions. This complaints procedure does apply to past pupils but only if the complaint was initially raised when the pupil was still a registered child at Our Lady's Abingdon. OLA will not normally investigate any anonymous complaints. However, the Head or COO, as appropriate, will determine whether the complaint warrants an investigation. Any references to communications in writing may be sent by email to the address of the parents currently held by OLA. Parents should not approach individual members of the Governing Board to raise concerns or complaints as members have no power to act on an individual basis and it may prevent them from considering complaints if escalated to Stage 3 of the procedure.

Legal Status: This procedure incorporates the manner in which complaints are to be managed in accordance with The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations currently in force.

Timescale: The process of dealing with a complaint in writing from the moment that it is received by the school to resolution will take no more than twenty-eight (28) working days except in circumstances in which the normal timescales are affected by issues that delay resolution; namely school holidays and other factors such as:




- If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint
- periods of significant disruption to school life due to COVID-19 or as a consequence of unavoidable staff absence.

OLA will take all reasonable steps to limit any such delay.

Monitoring and Review: The Head and the Chair of Governors monitor the complaints procedure to ensure that all complaints are handled properly and also undertake a formal annual review of this procedure, for the purpose of monitoring the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged.

Date reviewed: 09 September 2022

Next review: no later than 09 September 2023

Head	Chief Operating Officer	Chair of Governors
Mr Daniel Gibbons	Prav Karian	Freddy El Turk
Signed: 	Signed: 	Signed: 

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Complaints Procedure for Parents: Reviewed September 2022

1. Introduction and aim:

OLA prides itself on the quality of the teaching and pastoral care provided to its pupils. However, if parents do have a complaint, they can expect it to be treated by OLA in accordance with this procedure. Parents can be assured that all complaints relating to their child or to any wider aspect of school life, will be treated seriously and confidentially. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. It may be made about OLA 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 OLA is within the scope of this procedure.

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear and logical guidance to parents/guardians who wish to complain about any aspect of their child's education. A complaint is likely to arise when there are issues of physical or emotional well-being and security at stake, or when the school's stated aims or values are being ignored. A breach of the law will always constitute a complaint. We handle each complaint fairly, confidentially, using the agreed time frame. Throughout the process we listen, learn, admit mistakes, address issues raised, apologise and change practices and procedures, if appropriate. At all stages in the complaints process a written record is to be kept of the date a resolution was reached and the agreed nature of this. The parents will then be informed in writing. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except in so far as is required of the School by paragraph 7(k) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2015 as subsequently amended, where disclosure is required in the course of the School's inspection or where any other legal obligation prevails. Any complaints should be raised and resolved in the manner outlined below.

2. "How should I complain?"

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution (References to the number of working days refer to term-time only)

- Most complaints should, in the first instance, be raised with the pupil's Form Tutor, regardless of whether the complaint is about an academic, co-curricular or pastoral matter, as this is normally the member of staff who knows him/her best, and it is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally. The Form Tutor will consult with the Head of Section in the Senior School and/or other staff as necessary and may, at his/her discretion, inform the Head or Deputy Head. In the Lower School, the Form Teacher may consult with the Lower School Coordinator. If a complaint is about their child's Form Tutor/Teacher, the parent should contact the Head of Section or the Deputy Head.
- Complaints raised directly with another member of staff will usually be referred to the relevant Form Tutor or Head of Section, unless the person involved in the initial contact deems it appropriate for them to deal with it personally.
- All complaints are logged in OLA's Complaints log.
- If the complaint is of a nature that parents/guardians prefer, for whatever reason, not to discuss with a teacher, Form Tutor or Head of Section, they can contact the Deputy Head.
- Should the complaint not reach a satisfactory resolution, then the parents/guardians may proceed to the next part of the process, the Formal Resolution stage.
- This informal stage should take no longer than 5 working days. However, owing to the availability of staff in holiday periods, the process may take longer.

What information should I supply?

Please provide the member of staff with as much detail as you can to help us investigate your complaint:

- explain what the problem is
- explain what you would like to happen and the outcome you would like
- provide information on any relevant communication with us on the subject, including dates of any correspondence

Stage 2 – Formal Resolution: (References to the number of working days refer to term-time only)

- If the complaint cannot be resolved to the parent's satisfaction on an informal basis, then, unless the complaint is about the Head, the parents/guardians should put the matter in writing to the Head, providing details of the complaint, the reason they are not satisfied with the response and the outcome they are seeking. The Head will contact the parents/guardians concerned within 5 working days of receiving the complaint to discuss the matter, to indicate how OLA proposes to deal with the formal complaint and, if possible, to reach a resolution (longer during holiday periods).

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Complaints Procedure for Parents: Reviewed September 2022

- In most cases, the Head will appoint a member of the leadership team to conduct this part of the procedure on his/her behalf. This will usually involve an investigation being undertaken as to the matters leading to the complaint. In appropriate circumstances, an alternative approach (for example, mediation) may be proposed.
- If no resolution is reached, the Head will carry out further investigations, keeping written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint.
- Once the Head, is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established and any investigation is complete, a decision will be made as to the outcome of the complaint and the parents will be informed of this decision and the reasons behind it in writing, within a further 5 working days (longer during holiday periods). Alternatively, he may choose to meet with or speak to the parents to discuss the matter and communicate his decision and the reasons behind it in which case he will follow this up in writing within a further 5 working days (longer during holiday periods). If the complaint is about the Head, parents may submit their complaint to the Chair of Governors by writing to the Chief Operating Officer (COO).
- If parents/guardians are still not satisfied with the decision, they may proceed to the third stage of this process – the Panel Hearing.

Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing:

- If parents/guardians are not satisfied with the outcome of the formal resolution, they may refer the matter in writing to the Chair of Governors who will then convene a Complaints Panel to consider the complaint within 15 working days (longer during holiday periods).
- The Panel will be appointed by the Governing Board and will consist of at least three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom shall be independent of the management and running of OLA.
- New matters of complaint will not be reviewed at this stage and any evidence unrelated to the initial complaint will not be considered. If new matters of complaint are raised at this stage, they will be acknowledged and the parents informed of the person to whom they have been referred under Stage 1.
- Before the hearing, the Panel may request any further details relevant to the complaint.
- The parents/guardians may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person if they wish. This person (i) may be a relative, teacher or friend, must be over the age of 18 and not a pupil at OLA (ii) must undertake to accept the confidentiality of the appeal and (iii) shall not have the right to address the Panel unless expressly invited to do so by the Panel. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate and legal representation requires the prior approval of and is subject to any conditions imposed by the Chair of the Panel.
- If the parents elect not to attend a hearing, OLA remains obliged to hold the hearing in line with the procedures outlined in this policy and the Panel will rely on written submissions to reach findings on the substance of the complaint. If the parents do wish to attend a hearing, the Panel will (i) determine whether the hearing will be held physically in person or virtually, and (ii) make all reasonable efforts to facilitate parents exercising their right to attend the Panel hearing. However, if the parents cannot attend the scheduled date or any of three alternative dates proposed, the hearing shall proceed in their absence on the basis of written submissions only. If the parents cannot attend the scheduled date or the first alternative date proposed, the remaining two alternative dates may be after the expiry of the original 20 working day period but should be within 25 working days of the date of the complaint.
- The primary aim of the Panel is to deal with matters fairly and, therefore, the chairman of the Panel has discretion to conduct the hearing (including deciding who may attend) in any way which will achieve this. Subject to the rules set out in this document, the Panel may regulate their proceedings and give such directions as they see fit.
- 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 within 10 working days of the Hearing (longer during holiday periods) and will write immediately to the parents/guardians informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The Panel's findings and recommendations, if any, will be sent in writing to the Head, the Chair of Governors and, where relevant, the person about whom the complaint was raised.
- The decision of the Appeal Panel will be final and represents the conclusion of this procedure

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3. Managing Serial and Persistent Complaints:

OLA will do its utmost to be helpful to people who make contact with a complaint, concern or request for information. However, there may be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints' procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant attempts to re-open the same issue, OLA will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed. If the complainant contacts OLA again on the same issue, the correspondence may then be viewed as 'serial' or 'persistent' and OLA may choose not to respond. However, this will not occur until the complainant has completed the three stages of the complaints' procedure. The application of a 'serial or persistent' designation for a complaint will be against the subject of the complaint rather than the complainant themselves.

4. Child Protection Issues: Complaints over child protection issues may be communicated to the Designated Staff Lead (DSL) as explained in the procedures in our *Safeguarding and Child protection Policy*.

5. Record keeping for the Whole School:

A copy of this procedure can be found on the School's website. Parents can be assured that all complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially, although the Panel's findings and recommendations will be available for inspection. 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 s109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 requests access to them or under other legal authority.

A written record of all complaints (See **Appendix 1**), and the stage at which they are resolved or a final outcome is reached, is kept by the Head for a minimum of three years. The record includes, at least: the person making the complaint, the date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, any action taken and the outcome of the complaint. A written record will also be kept of when a final outcome was reached. The Chair of Governors will examine this written record on an annual basis. The school will provide, on request to ISI, a written record of all complaints made during a specified period and the action that was taken as a result of each complaint.

6. Contacting the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI)

OLA is inspected by ISI. Parents have the right to contact the ISI if they have a complaint regarding the OLA's general education or pastoral provision. ISI will usually expect parents to have followed the OLA's formal complaints procedure before contacting them. However, you can report your concerns to ISI on 020 7600 0100 or at concerns@isi.net or you can write to the ISI at CAP House, 9 – 12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA.

Appendix 1: Record of Parental Complaint



RECORD OF PARENTAL COMPLAINT

Pupil's Name:	Year Group:	Date of first contact:
Complaint expressed by:		Verbal or written?
<u>Nature of Complaint:</u>		
<u>Action taken (including dates):</u>		
<u>Outcome of the Complaint (with date):</u>		
<u>Stage Reached by the Complaint:</u>		

Signed:

Date: