

OPDS Complaints Policy

Introduction

The Directors/Guardians and Staff of OPDS are dedicated to providing the best educational experience they can for all students attending schools and staying with host families. OPDS knows the value to all concerned of dealing justly and effectively with any complaint against our actions and decisions which a parent, student, host family, school staff or other aggrieved person may have. OPDS have adopted the underlying procedures and principles set out in this policy document.

1. Complaints Procedure

The procedure relates to all matters relating to actions of the OPDS Directors, staff, parents, students, host families, school staff or contractors with whom we work. Paper copies are available on request or can be viewed on our website.

The procedure is devised with the intention that it will:

- 1.1 Be possible to resolve problems by informal means and in a highly professional manner.
- 1.2 Be clear and simple to understand.
- 1.3 Be non-confrontational and ensure a fair and full investigation of any complaint raised.
- 1.4 Be completely confidential.
- 1.5 Enable all problems to be handled promptly.
- 1.6 Address all points raised.

2. General Principles

- 2.1 Investigation of any complaint will commence within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint or sooner in exceptional circumstances. This will be treated with the highest priority so information can be collected from as many parties as possible to effect the best outcome.
- 2.2 Every effort will be made to complete the investigation and take the appropriate action, as soon as possible.
- 2.3 In order for an appropriate investigation, complaints should be brought to the attention of OPDS as soon as possible.

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- 2.4 OPDS takes the view that the longer an issue is left before being reported, the harder it will be to gather the appropriate evidence and the less likely it will be that a satisfactory outcome will result. Every encouragement is therefore given to ensure that incidents are raised with OPDS at the earliest opportunity.
- 2.5 Complete confidentiality of all records and investigations will be the norm and only the parties concerned and affected will be informed. Both soft and hard copies of documents will be kept in the office of OPDS.
- 2.6 An anonymous complaint will not be investigated under this procedure unless there are exceptional circumstances.

3. Level 1 - Initial Stage

- 3.1 Parents, students, host families or Schools should in the first instance, communicate directly with the Directors/Guardians of OPDS.
- 3.2 This may be by email, telephone or in person by appointment. Most concerns can be resolved and rectified by simple clarification or provision of information and it is anticipated that most complaints will be resolved at this informal stage.
- 3.3 It is important that the complainant makes an attempt at an informal resolution with OPDS at this initial stage.
- 3.4 A written record will be kept, detailing the date, nature of the complaint, discussions that took place and action taken.
- 3.5 A note will also be made as to whether a resolution was achieved or not, together with the outcome for all parties.

4. Level 2 - Informal Stage

- 4.1 Parents, students, host families or Schools who may be unhappy with the result of discussions at Level 1, should ask for a further meeting at Level 2, in the hope that matter(s)/complaints raised can be rectified at this stage.
- 4.2 The meeting can take place at a convenient location (in the UK) agreed by all parties. The OPDS Director responsible for leading the investigation will be in attendance and chair the meeting.
- 4.3 OPDS will decide after considering the complaint, what the next appropriate course of action will be.
- 4.4 Written records of Level 2 will be kept, detailing the date of the meeting, the nature of the complaint, the persons present and the discussion that took place.

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- 4.5 A conclusion will state whether a satisfactory resolution was achieved or not and what actions, if any, have been decided upon as a result of the complaint.

5. Level 3 - Formal Stage

- 5.1 Should a complaint not be resolved at the informal stages, the complainant must now put the complaint in writing and pass it to the Directors of OPDS, who will be responsible for producing a schedule to manage the remainder of the investigation.
- 5.2 The complainant will need to include details which might support the investigation, such as time and date, names of potential witnesses and copies of relevant documents.
- 5.3 The Directors and staff of OPDS will collect evidence deemed necessary. Gathering of evidence will commence as soon as possible.
- 5.4 Once all the evidence appears to have been received, a date will be set for a formal meeting, details of which will be notified, in writing, to the persons expected to attend.
- 5.5 When it has been concluded, the complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome with reasons for the conclusion reached. This may be to the effect that:
- 5.5.1 The issue raised was not substantiated by the evidence.
 - 5.5.2 There is insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion and the complaint cannot, therefore, be supported, without further evidence being gathered.

6. Finalisation

- 6.1 At this stage, the matter has been fully investigated and, from the conclusion reached, it is clear that action needs to be taken. The parties concerned will be notified of the actions to be followed and emphasis will be placed on maintaining confidentiality at all times on the matter.
- 6.2 Written records of Level 3 will be kept, detailing the date of the meeting, the nature of the complaint, the persons present and the discussions that took place. A conclusion will state whether a satisfactory resolution was achieved or not and what actions, if any, have been decided upon as a result of the incident.

This complaints procedure will be reviewed regularly and will be made available to view on our website www.opds.co.uk

Students and their parents are entitled to contact the National Care Standards Commission at any time if they have concerns about welfare or the manner in which OPDS approaches this aspect of their work in relation to their child.

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