

Orange Tree School

Complaints Procedure and Policy

Independent School Standards: paragraphs 32(3), 33 and 34

Summary Of the number of complaints registered and resolved under our formal complaints' procedure during the preceding year (ISS 32(3)(f))

2025 - 2026		
Stage 1*	Stage 2**	Stage 3
2	1	0

- * Informal and does not need to be recorded
- ** Formal complaints raised.



DOCUMENT DETAILS

Applies to:	• All Staff • Other (e.g. Parents) • External suppliers or visitors • Regulatory / Legal bodies
Policy Author (Subject Matter Expert):	Zoe Ramshaw
Approval Body:	Advisory Board – Peter Curtis
Frequency of review:	Annually
Last Update:	31/07/2026
Next Review Date:	31/8/2027

Complaints Procedure and Policy Summary

Purpose

This policy explains how parents and carers can raise concerns or make a complaint about Orange Tree School. It sets out the stages of the complaints procedure and explains how concerns will be managed fairly, promptly and confidentially.

The school encourages concerns to be raised at the earliest opportunity so that they can usually be resolved informally and in the best interests of the pupil.

Who does this policy apply to?

This procedure is intended for:

- parents and carers of pupils attending Orange Tree School.

Complaints from other individuals or organisations will be managed through the school's relevant policies and procedures.

Our Principles

Orange Tree School is committed to ensuring that complaints are:

- handled fairly, consistently and impartially;
- investigated thoroughly and objectively;
- managed in a timely and professional manner;
- treated confidentially where appropriate;
- resolved at the earliest possible stage; and
- used as an opportunity to improve the quality of the school's provision.

The school is equally committed to maintaining respectful and constructive communication throughout the complaints process.

The Complaints Process

The complaints procedure has three stages:

Stage 1 – Informal Concern

Most concerns can be resolved quickly through discussion with the appropriate member of staff.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

Where concerns cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint may be submitted to the Headteacher for investigation.

Stage 3 – Complaints Panel

Where the complainant remains dissatisfied following the formal investigation, the matter may be considered by an independent Complaints Panel in accordance with the Independent School Standards.

Safeguarding

Where a complaint raises concerns relating to safeguarding or the welfare of a child, the school's safeguarding procedures will take precedence, and concerns will be managed in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Orange Tree School recognises that parents, carers or representatives may choose to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to assist with preparing correspondence or complaints.

The school will consider every complaint on its merits, regardless of how it has been prepared. Whilst AI may be used by the school to support administrative tasks such as proofreading or document formatting, complaints will always be investigated, considered and responded to by appropriately authorised members of staff exercising their own professional judgement. The school will not rely on AI to investigate complaints, determine findings or make decisions.

Review

This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner where there are significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance or the school's complaints procedures.

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1. Introduction

At Orange Tree School we aim to provide a high-quality therapeutic education and maintain positive and trusting relationships with our families. However, we recognise that from time-to-time parents or carers may have concerns about aspects of school life.

We welcome open communication and encourage concerns to be raised as soon as possible so that they can be resolved quickly and collaboratively in the best interests of the pupil.

The school aims to resolve concerns informally wherever possible before a formal complaint is made.

Where concerns cannot be resolved informally, this policy outlines the procedure for making a formal complaint.

This procedure has been developed with reference to Department for Education guidance and the Independent School Standards.

2. Key Principles of the Complaints Procedure

Orange Tree School is committed to:

- Treating all complaints seriously and fairly
- Responding to complaints in a timely and professional manner
- Working collaboratively with parents and carers to resolve concerns
- Keeping written records of complaints and the stage at which they were resolved
- Ensuring that a complaint will never adversely affect a pupil
- Maintaining confidentiality for all parties involved

We also expect communication from parents and carers to remain respectful and professional throughout the complaints process.

3. Safeguarding

If a complaint raises concerns relating to safeguarding or the welfare of a child, the school's safeguarding procedures will take priority.

Such concerns will be handled in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

4. Who Can Use This Procedure

This complaints procedure is intended for parents and carers of pupils currently attending Orange Tree School.

Complaints from other individuals or organisations will be managed through the appropriate internal procedures.

5. Complaints Procedure

If you are a parent or carer of a pupil currently attending Orange Tree School and have a concern or complaint, please follow the stages outlined below.

Stage 1 – Informal Concern

If you have a concern, you should first email or discuss the matter with the most appropriate member of staff.

This may include:

- your child's form tutor
- your child's subject teacher
- the pastoral team
- another relevant member of staff

Most concerns can be resolved quickly at this stage through discussion and clarification.

The member of staff will acknowledge your concern and aim to respond within three working days but we would usually reply earlier where we can.

If the matter needs to be referred to another member of staff or a senior leader, you will be informed.

We encourage parents and carers to raise concerns early so that issues can be addressed before they escalate.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint may be made in writing.

The complaint should be addressed to the **Headteacher** via email at:

reception@orangetreeschool.org

If the complaint concerns the Headteacher, it should be directed to the Chair of the Advisory Board at the same email address.

Your complaint should include:

- a clear description of the concern
- relevant dates or events
- any actions already taken to resolve the issue
- the outcome you are seeking

There is a helpful complaints form at the end of this document which may be used to submit a complaint. If you choose not to use the form, you may still be asked to provide the information it contains so that the school has sufficient detail to investigate the complaint thoroughly.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Orange Tree School recognises that parents, carers or representatives may choose to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to help prepare correspondence or complaints.

The school will consider every complaint on its individual merits, regardless of how it has been prepared. Where a complaint contains factual inaccuracies, legal references or AI-generated content, the school will focus on the substance of the issues raised and the evidence available, rather than making assumptions about how the complaint was produced.

Similarly, whilst the school may use AI to assist with administrative tasks such as proofreading or formatting documents, complaints will always be investigated, considered and responded to by appropriately authorised members of staff exercising their own professional judgement. The school will not rely on AI to investigate complaints, determine findings or make decisions.

The school will:

- acknowledge the complaint within three working days
- investigate the complaint thoroughly
- provide a written response within ten working days where possible

If additional time is required to complete the investigation, you will be informed and given an updated timeframe.

Where it is necessary to speak to students as part of the investigation, their individual SEN and health and wellbeing needs will be taken into consideration and may prolong the investigation.

Stage 3 – Complaints Panel Hearing

A request for a complaints panel hearing will only be considered once Stages 1 and 2 of this procedure have been completed.

If the complaint remains unresolved following Stage 2, you may request that the matter be considered by the Complaints Panel.

The panel will consist of three individuals who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint including the chair of the advisory board.

At least one member of the panel will be independent of the management and running of the school.

The panel may include additional members of the Orange Tree School Advisory Board, alongside an independent member.

An independent member will:

- have no involvement in the management or running of the school site
- have had no prior involvement in the complaint
- be able to consider the matter fairly and impartially

An independent member may include, for example:

- an education professional from another school or Ellern Mede hospital
- an independent SEND or safeguarding professional
- another appropriate professional with no connection to Orange Tree School

You will be invited to attend the hearing and may be accompanied by a friend or family member who is not directly connected to the school.

The panel will consider all evidence presented and will provide their findings and recommendations in writing within five working days of the hearing.

The decision of the Complaints Panel is final.

A copy of the panel's findings and recommendations will be made available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the Headteacher.

6. Summary of Timescales

Stage	Description	Response
Stage 1	Informal concern raised with relevant member of staff	Response within 3 working days
Stage 2	Formal complaint to Headteacher	Acknowledgement within 3 working days , response within 10 working days
Stage 3	Complaints panel hearing	Hearing arranged within 20 working days , outcome within 5 working days

7. Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

Orange Tree School is committed to addressing all complaints fairly and impartially. However, we do not expect staff to tolerate unreasonable behaviour.

Unreasonable behaviour may include:

- aggressive or abusive communication
- excessive or repeated contact about the same issue
- refusal to follow the complaints procedure
- making unrealistic demands or outcomes

Where a complaint is deemed unreasonable, serial or vexatious, the school may limit communication methods or cease further investigation once the complaints procedure has been fully exhausted.

In cases of serious aggression or threats, the school may involve the police and restrict access to the school premises.

8. Anonymous Complaints

The school will normally not investigate anonymous complaints unless there is sufficient evidence or safeguarding concerns that warrant investigation.

9. Record Keeping

The school maintains a written record of all complaints, including:

- the details of the complaint
- the stage at which the complaint was resolved
- any actions taken as a result of the complaint

All correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection requests access.

Records will be retained for a minimum of seven years.

10. Summary of Complaints

(Independent School Standards Requirement)

Summary of the number of complaints registered and resolved under the formal complaints procedure during the preceding school year.

Academic Year	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
2025–2026	2	1	0

*** Stage 1 is informal and therefore not formally recorded in the formal complaint's summary. However, they are referenced here for information only.*

11.External Complaints

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 3 of this procedure, they may refer the complaint to the **Department for Education**.

Further information can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/private-schools>

Complainants may also contact Ofsted for advice.

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231
Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

COMPLAINTS FORM

Please email this completed form to reception@orangetreeschool.org

Pupils full Name and Date of Birth:	Date:
Your full name and relationship to the child:	
Which site does your child attend?	
Orange Tree/Ridgeway	
Your address:	
Your email address and contact number:	
Please give full details of your complaint. It is helpful if you can use any specific dates:	
What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint? (Who did you speak to and what was the response)?	
What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage? What outcome would you like to see?	
Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.	
Signature:	

