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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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**Implementation:** It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to ensure that staff members are aware of and understand this policy and any subsequent revisions.

**Compliance:** This policy complies with all relevant regulations and other legislation as detailed in the *Compliance with Regulations & Legislation Statement*.

## **2.0 THE YOUNG PERSON WITH AUTISM, COMPLEX NEEDS & COMPLAINTS**

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Options Trent Acres school offers places to pupils who have complex needs. It is likely that they have experienced disruption to their education and many have missed significant amounts of learning prior to joining the school. The majority of pupils experience difficulties with social interaction and communication. This impacts on their abilities to form and maintain relationships.

It is recognised that children with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder may find it very difficult to complain, and in some circumstances don't realise that to make a complaint is a reasonable course of action for a given situation. The support system within school encourages key staff members to advocate for children and make complaints on their behalf. All complaints are dealt with seriously.

## **3.0 THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

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### **Stage 1:**

#### **Informal Resolution**

- It is hoped that most complaints and concerns will be resolved quickly and informally.
- If a young person or parent/ carer has a complaint they should normally contact the Teacher in the first instance. In many cases, the matter will be resolved straight away by this means, to the parent/ carer's satisfaction. If the Teacher cannot resolve the problem alone, it may be necessary for him/ her to consult the Head Teacher – Melanie Callaghan-Lewis.
- Complaints made directly to the Head Teacher will usually be referred to the relevant Teacher or staff member concerned unless it is deemed inappropriate for them to deal with the matter personally.
- The relevant Teacher / member of staff will make a written record of all concerns and complaints and the date on which they were received. The complainant will receive acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint within one working day, with an explanation of the procedure to be followed, including time scales. Should the matter not be fully resolved within 3 working days, or in the event that the Teacher / and the parent/ carer is unable to reach a satisfactory resolution then parents/ carers will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with Stage 2 of this procedure.

## Formal Resolution

### Stage 2:

- If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then the pupil/ child/ parents/ carers should put their complaint in writing to the Head Teacher. After considering the complaint, the Head Teacher will decide on the course of action to take.
- In most cases, the Head Teacher will meet or speak to the pupil/child/parents/ carers concerned within 2 working days of receiving the complaint, to discuss the matter. If possible, a resolution will be reached at this stage.
- It may be necessary for the Head Teacher to carry out further investigations.
- The Head Teacher will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. These will be stored centrally in the Head Teachers office and will be made available for inspection if needed.
- Once the Head Teacher is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made. Parents/ carers will be informed in writing of the decision, together with reasons for the decision, within 10 working days.
- If parents/ carers are not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure by putting their complaint in writing to the Regional Director Lauren Wright.

### Stage 3: Panel Hearing

- If parents/ carers seek to invoke Stage 3 (following a failure to reach an earlier resolution), they will be referred to the Regional Director, who will refer the matter to a hearing of the Complaints Panel.
- The matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration. The Panel 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 the school. The panel will allow for a parent to attend (if this is appropriate and complaint with any care order which may be in place) and for the parent to be accompanied if they wish. The complaint will be acknowledged and a hearing scheduled to take place as soon as practicable and normally within 14 days. The complainant will be given at least 5 working days' notice of the date of the hearing, with an invitation to attend. They will be informed that they may bring with them a relative, teacher or friend if they wish.
- 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 3 days' prior the hearing.
- If possible, the Panel will resolve the parent/ carer's 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 reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 7 days of the hearing. The Panel will write to the parents/ carers (sent by electronic mail or otherwise) informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final. The Panel's findings and, if any, recommendations will be sent in writing (by electronic mail or otherwise) to the parents/ carers, the Head Teacher, the Regional Director, The Group Board and, where relevant, the person of whom the complaint was raised.

Young People should also be given information about where to seek help if needed:

NSPCC Helpline:  
CHILDLINE:

0800 800 500  
0800 1111

### **Records of Complaints**

- Following any complaint and course of action to reach a resolve, the school will keep confidential records detailing whether the complaint was dealt with informally or following a more formal route. Records will be made available if requested as part of school inspection or if requested by the Secretary of State. The school will also keep records of any actions taken as a result of the complaint. The outcome of the complaint will be detailed along with any statements or correspondence.

### **4.0 BACKGROUND**

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During the writing of this policy, consideration and guidance has been taken from;

The Independent School Standards – Part 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled.