

The Spectator annual statement 2019

I.

1. Title: *The Spectator*.
2. Responsible person: Fraser Nelson.
3. In July 1828, R.S. Rintoul, the founding editor of *The Spectator*, announced a new weekly:–

‘Our Plan is entirely new, comprising – 1. The whole News of the Week: selected, sifted, condensed and arranged as to be readable throughout. 2. A full and impartial exhibition of all the leading Politics of the Day. 3. A separate Discussion of Interesting Topics of a general nature, with a view to instruction and entertainment at the same time. 4. A Department devoted to Literatures... 5. Dramatic and Musical Criticism. 6. Scientific and Miscellaneous information.’

Our magazine, website and podcasts continue to follow his formula.

2.

We do not have internal manuals; we use the Editors’ Code of Practice.

3.

1. We have not had to seek pre-publication guidance from Ipso, and do not envisage having to do so.
2. Stories are verified with their author by an editor and details by a fact-checker where appropriate.
3. The Editors’ Code is circulated to all editors and staff writers and articles in the print magazine are approved by a lawyer, sub-editor and editor before being sent to press. We correct any factual errors as soon as they are brought to our attention and correspond with complainants who contact us where they have made a reasonable complaint, assigning a staff member to handle the complaint if necessary. As a small team, we share the details of complaints and adjudications amongst ourselves and our authors to inform our work. And of course, as with every member of Britain’s free press, our standards are set and upheld by our readers, who expect us to maintain the highest possible standards of argument and accuracy.
4. Where we have not been able to resolve complaints through mediation and receive an adverse finding from the Complaints Committee, we have been happy to make the remedial action and will do so as long as it is reasonable.
5. We hold an annual legal training seminar for all editorial staff to attend, which includes discussion of previous complaints and our responsibilities under the Editors’ Code. The small size of our editorial team means that we are all aware of complaints and adjudications, and senior staff are always on hand to offer advice on issues as they arise.

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In 2019, *The Spectator* had two adverse decisions:

1. **Shardlow & Jones v *The Spectator***

This complaint – made about a humorous, hyperbolic comment piece on the spread of ragwort in the countryside – included 19 points, including five on ‘hate speech against other species’. After extensive consultation with Ipso we corrected one factual inaccuracy (about the date and name of a piece of legislation) online shortly after it was brought to our attention and clarified two other points. After the Committee’s decision, we agreed to apologise. Getting the date of legislation wrong is unacceptable, and we try to catch such slips: we sadly missed this one.

2. **Hill v *The Spectator***

A cover piece gave a hypothetical situation and then said how stated guidance would apply to that situation. (Specifically, what teachers should do if a trans girl plays with her penis in front of another girl in a school changing room.) The piece highlighted how a rule would be applied to such situations, but we did not explicitly say that it was conjecture to say that it would apply to this specific situation. We were found to have transgressed a rule saying articles ought to differentiate between fact and opinion. We argued that this was true for news stories, but not for opinion articles. However, after the Committee’s decision, we published a correction in print and online. Normally after getting something wrong, we review procedures. In this case, we were unable to understand the Committee’s decision or why we had to correct an article that contained no mistakes. It is only time that has happened in our relationship with Ipso.