

Parents Concern and Complaints Policy

Background

Open access College (OAC) is committed to ensuring the delivery of high quality education and care to all its students. Working in partnership with parents to resolve any concerns and complaints that they may have about their child's schooling, is a key part of how OAC delivers on this commitment.

Policy Statement

OAC will ensure that parents have access to support and advice when attempting to resolve a concern or complaint. OAC staff will work with parents to resolve a concern or complaint following a process that is founded on fairness, impartiality, accessibility, respect and responsiveness.

Guiding principles

This policy is based on the following principles:

- The safety and educational wellbeing of children and young people is the first priority.
- Students, parents, staff and volunteers have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy.
- Parents have the right to raise concerns and complaints about their college life and be supported to do so.
- Wherever possible, complaints should be resolved at the college level.
- Complaints will be considered in a confidential, timely and impartial manner and in accordance with due process and principles of natural justice.
- The rights and responsibilities of all parties should be considered and balanced in finding a mutually acceptable outcome to complaints.
- Complaints are monitored and their management evaluated so as to inform and drive OAC system and performance improvement.

Complaints not covered by this policy

This policy does not apply to matters where there are legislated requirements or existing policies and processes of appeal, such as:

- appeals relating to student suspension and expulsion.
- complaints which fit within the scope of the Education and Early Childhood Services Registration and Standards Board.
- staff disputes and grievances.
- mandatory reporting responsibilities.
- some Health, Safety and Welfare related issues.

Some complaints may never be resolved to a parent's satisfaction. Vexatious or previously finalised complaints will not be pursued unless the parent is able to provide new information.

This policy is not applicable where a parent has employed a third party (i.e. legal representation) in relation to their complaint. In these circumstances, the complaint must be referred to the department's Legislation and Legal Services Unit for action. However, a parent is entitled to a support person such as a friend, colleague, or a person provided through an appropriate support agency, as long as they do not receive a fee for service.

Key Responsibilities (These are guidelines only)**Principal**

- Ensure that the college has a *Parent Concern and Complaint* policy in consultation with Governing Council
- Ensure the policy is reviewed after the first year of operation then biannually.
- Ensure that the Parent Concern and Complaint process is published on the OAC website.
- Establish a system to record and monitor parent complaints, the action taken to resolve the complaint and the outcome.

Student Leader Student Welfare

- Manage the Counsellors, Intervention Officers and Student Support Worker to support any student, staff or parent complaints
- Maintain a system to record and monitor parent complaints, the action taken to resolve the complaint and the outcome.
- Ensure staff are aware of the OAC Parent Complaint Policy, responsibility and processes.
- Support staff and/or parents in dealing with any parent complaints

Teachers

- Treat parents with respect, courtesy and consideration
- Deal with the complaint in a confidential and timely manner
- Have access to appropriate and easily understandable information regarding the complaint resolution process.
- Considered the complaint impartially and in accordance with due process and principles of natural justice
- Keep Student Leader Student Welfare and parents informed of the progress and outcome of the complaint.

Parents

- Have access to appropriate and easily understandable information regarding the complaint resolution process
- Treat other parties with respect, courtesy and maintain confidentiality
- Raise the concern or complaint as soon as possible after the issue has arisen
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- Ask for assistance or further information as needed
- Act in good faith to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- Have realistic and reasonable expectations about what course of action is required to resolve their concern or complaint.
- Have the right to refer the matter to:
 - Regional office or
 - DECD central office - the Parent Complaint Unit on 1800 677 435
 - the South Australian Ombudsman

Processes

Principal

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as reasonably possible (-5 days)
- determine if support needs to be provided to complainant or teacher while the complaint is considered
- consider relevant legislation, DECD policy and guidelines, site procedures and/or seek advice
- investigate, consider & determine the most appropriate way to resolve the issue fairly & promptly including negotiations between parties
- document the complaint process and outcome
- communicate the outcome to the parties involved ideally within 15 working days from receipt of the complaint.

Teachers

a) following a direct complaint made about their work:

- listen to the complainant
- consider relevant legislation, DECD policy & guidelines and school procedures and/or seek advice / support
- identify & discuss possible courses of action & timeline that could resolve the complaint as soon as reasonably possible (5 days)
- follow up on actions and ensure complainant is satisfied with the outcome.

b) following a complaint made about another staff member or issue outside their responsibility:

- direct or discuss with the complainant the site's complaint resolution procedure
- assist, if required, the complainant with making a complaint and refer the complainant in line with site procedures.

Parent(s)

- talk to the teacher or other relevant staff member (counsellor, Intervention Officer) to discuss the concern..
- after speaking with the teacher, if not satisfied with the resolution, they may choose to discuss the complaint with the Principal or a member of Senior Leaders
- may prefer to talk to the Principal or a member of Senior Leaders if the concern is about a teacher.
- contact the local Regional Office of the Department for Education and Child Development if the complaint involves the Principal.