

# Parent Concern and Complaint 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 in relation to their child's experience at the College.
- 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

### Principal

- Ensure that the college has a Parent Concern and Complaint policy in consultation with Governing Council
- Ensure that the Parent Concern and Complaint Policy is published on the OAC website.
- Record and monitor parent complaints, the action taken to resolve the complaint and the outcome. (*centralised system*)

### Members of the Executive Leadership Team

- Manage parent complaints in their area of responsibility eg primary, middle, senior years.
- Document parent complaints, the action taken to resolve the complaint and the outcome. Forward to the Principal via the Executive Assistant.
- 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
- Consider the complaint impartially and in accordance with due process and principles of natural justice

### Parents

- 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.

## Processes

### Executive leadership members

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as reasonably possible (2 days)
- determine if support needs to be provided to complainant or teacher while the complaint is considered
- consider relevant legislation, DfE policy and guidelines, site procedures and/or seek advice
- investigate, consider & determine the most appropriate way to resolve the issue fairly and 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, DfE policy and 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 this policy
- 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 to discuss the concern.
- after speaking with the teacher, if not satisfied with the resolution, they may choose to discuss the complaint with a member of Executive Leaders
- may prefer to talk to the Principal or a member of Executive Leaders if the concern is about a teacher.

**Contact the local Regional Office of the Department for Education if the complaint involves the Principal.**

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