

Oakgrove Integrated College



Complaints Procedure

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1. FOREWORD

Oakgrove Integrated College seeks to promote the worth and self-esteem of pupils, parents, staff, governors and all who are affected by the presence of the college in the community.

The college aims to provide the best and widest possible education for every pupil and to do so in a way that takes full account of the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of all those in the process. Where a member of the school community develops a grievance in relation to the college, it is an indication that some part of the process requires attention and it is in the interests of all concerned that any such difficulty is resolved satisfactorily at the earliest opportunity.

Many issues can be addressed simply by talking to the relevant staff in college who will be happy to help. Open communication and regular engagement between the college staff and the wide range of users is vital to the effective management of the college.

We welcome open communication with our staff; If you have any issues please talk to the teacher / head of year as soon as possible. Concerns about matters other than in the classroom should be raised with the Principal. We take all concerns seriously and make every effort to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

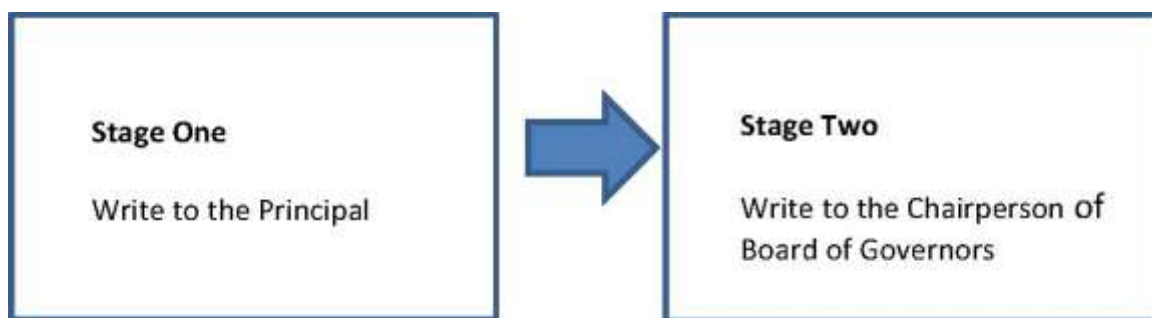
2. AIMS

When dealing with complaints the college will;

- encourage resolution of all concerns as quickly as possible
- provide timely responses to concerns and complaints
- keep you informed of progress
- ensure a full and fair investigation of your complaint where appropriate
- have due regard for the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved
- respect confidentiality
- fully address complaints and provide an effective response
- take appropriate action to rectify the issue and prevent it happening again
- where appropriate be responsive to learning from outcomes which will inform and improve practice within the college.

A copy of this Procedure is available on the college's website or is available from the college on request.

3. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE –AT A GLANCE



Time Limit

Please contact the college as soon as possible, unless there are exceptional circumstances, complaints will normally only be considered within 6 months of origin of the complaint to the college.

Stage One

When making a complaint, contact the college Principal who will arrange for the complaint to be investigated. *If the complaint is about the Principal, proceed to Stage Two.* The college requires complaints to be made in writing, where this may present difficulties, please contact the college which will make reasonable arrangements to support you with this process. *(see guidance notes for further information)*

Please provide as much information as possible including;

- name and contact details
- what the complaint is about
- what has already been done to try to resolve it and
- what you would like the college to do to resolve the complaint.

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within 5 college working days and a response normally made within 20 college working days of receipt of the complaint. This response will be issued in writing by the Principal and will indicate with reasons whether the complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.

These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during college holiday periods.

If you remain unhappy with the outcome at Stage 1, the complaint may be progressed to Stage 2 which is overseen by the Board of Governors.

Stage Two

If the complaint is unresolved after Stage One, write to the Chairperson of the Board of Governors *(care of the college and marked 'private and confidential')*. Where this may present difficulties, please contact the college which will make reasonable arrangements to support the complainant with this process. The Chairperson will convene a committee to review the complaint. Please provide as much detail as possible as indicated above.

The complaint will normally be acknowledged within 5 college working days and a final response normally made within 20 college working days from date of receipt of the complaint. The response will be issued in writing by the Chairperson of the committee.

These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during college holiday periods.

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO)

If following Stage Two you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you can refer the matter to the Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO).

The Ombudsman provides a free, independent and impartial service for handling complaints about colleges in Northern Ireland. You have the right to complain to the Ombudsman if you feel that you have been treated unfairly or have received a poor service from a college and your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction.

A complaint should normally be referred to NIPSO within six months of the final response from the School. The college must advise in its concluding letter that the complaint may be referred to the NIPSO if you remain dissatisfied.

Contact details for NIPSO are:

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

Office of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman Progressive House 33 Wellington Place Belfast BT1 6HN

Freepost: FREEPOST NIPSO

Telephone: 0289023821

Freephone: 0800343424

email: nipso@nips

Web: www.nipso.org.uk

4. SCOPE OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

4.1 The Complaints Procedure sets out how any expression of dissatisfaction relating to the college will be managed. By taking concerns raised seriously at the earliest possible stage, it is hoped that issues can be resolved quickly and effectively.

Some examples of complaints dealt with;

- not following college policy
- communication delays / lack of communication
- difficulties in staff / pupil relationships.

4.2 Complaints with separate established procedures

Some examples of statutory procedures and appeal mechanisms are listed below. The list is not exhaustive. The Principal/ Chair of Governors will advise on the appropriate procedure to use when the complaint is raised.

Matters may still be referred to NIPSO, if it is felt that maladministration has occurred.

Exceptions	Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Admissions / Expulsions / exclusion of children from school	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Operations and Estates Sara Long
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Statutory assessments of Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Children and Young People's Services Dr Clare Mangan
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School Development Proposals	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of Education John Collings
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child Protection / Safeguarding	Contact www.eani.org.uk Director of /Children and Young People's Services Dr Clare Mangan

4.3 The college will not normally investigate anonymous complaints, unless deemed by the Chairperson of the Board of Governors to be of a serious nature. The decision of whether to deal with such complaints will be at the discretion of the Board of Governors. *(see guidance notes for further information)*

5. WHAT TO EXPECT UNDER THIS PROCEDURE

5.1 Your rights as a person making a complaint

In dealing with complaint we will ensure:

- fair treatment;
- courtesy;
- a timely response & accurate advice;
- respect for privacy – complaints will be treated as confidentially as possible allowing for the possibility of consultation with other appropriate parties about the complaint;
- clear reasons for decisions.

5.2 Your responsibilities as a person making a complaint

In making a complaint it is important to:

- raise issues in a timely manner;
- treat our staff with respect and courtesy;
- provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issues raised;
- use these procedures fully and engage with them at the appropriate levels.

5.3 Rights of parties involved during the investigation

Where a meeting is arranged the complainant may be accompanied but not represented by another person.

This Procedure does not take away from the statutory rights of any of the participants.

5.4 Timeframes

Where concerns are raised with the relevant Teacher or Principal, a response will normally be provided during the meeting or within an agreed timeframe.

Stage 1 – Normally acknowledge within 5 college working days, response normally within 20 college working days

Stage 2 – Normally acknowledge within 5 college working days, response normally within 20 college working days

If, for any reason, the review of a complaint takes longer to complete, you will be informed of revised time limits and kept updated on progress.

These timeframes may need to be reviewed if complaints are ongoing during college holiday periods.

6. MAKING A COMPLAINT

6.1 Equality

The college requires complaints to be made in writing. Where this may present difficulties, please contact the college which will make reasonable arrangements to support the complainant with this process.

6.2 Unreasonable Complaints

The college is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who complain. There will be occasions when, despite all stages of the complaints procedure having been completed and the complaint having been reviewed by the Ombudsman, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If they try to re-open the same issue, the Chair of Governors will inform them that the procedure has been completed and that the matter is now closed. If the complainant repeatedly continues to contact the college with the same issue it may choose not to respond.

A full set of guidance materials to support this procedure is currently being developed. It will be helpful to consult this to understand the scope of the complaints procedure.