



**Communication and Complaint Policy and Procedure
For Parents**

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By whom:	Principal

Introduction

This policy is addressed to parents. A copy can be downloaded from the College website (www.oxcoll.com). The policy has been approved by the Senior Leadership Team of Oxford International College and provides guidelines for handling concerns and complaints. The procedures set out below may be adapted as appropriate to meet the policy aims and circumstances of each case. Certain procedures can only be carried out during term time.

Separate procedures apply in the event of a child protection and safeguarding issue or if the Principal excludes a student or asks a student to leave and that student's parents seek a review of that decision. A concern about the safety of a student should be notified immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Concerns and complaints directly from students are dealt with under a separate procedure 'Student Complaint Procedure'

The term 'parents' refers to the parents of a current student, the legal or educational guardian of a current student, and at the College's discretion may also include the parent or legal or educational guardian of a student who has recently left the College.

Open and constructive communication with parents form part of the vision and ethos of the college. We welcome and invite comments and suggestions from parents, and we take equally seriously any concerns or complaints that a parent may wish to raise. Any complaint needs careful consideration followed by a prompt and reasoned outcome.

The DfE defines a complaint as any matter about which a parent of a student at the school is unhappy and seeks action by the school. This Complaints Procedure takes into account the regulatory requirements currently in force and is underpinned by a desire to maintain within the school a flexible and responsive culture that recognises the need for a fair, objective and open minded approach when dealing with complaints and concerns.

1. Policy Aim and Statement

POLICY AIM:

The aim of this policy is to ensure that a concern or complaint is managed sympathetically, efficiently and at the appropriate level; and that the concern or complaint is resolved as soon as possible. Doing so is good practice; is fair to those concerned; and it helps to promote tutors, staff, parents and student's confidence in our ability to safeguard and promote welfare. We will try to resolve every concern or complaint in a positive way with the aim of putting right a matter which may have gone wrong and, where necessary, reviewing our systems and procedures considering the circumstances.

POLICY STATEMENT:

We need to know as soon as possible if there is any cause for dissatisfaction or concern. We recognise that a difficulty which is not resolved quickly and fairly can soon become a cause of resentment, which could be damaging to relationships and to our school culture. Parents, and students should never feel—or be made to feel—that a complaint will be taken amiss or adversely affect a student or their opportunities at this College. This policy however distinguishes between a concern or difficulty which can be resolved informally (Stage 1) and a formal complaint which will require investigation (Stages 2 and 3).

2. Complaints Procedure**Timescales**

We aim to resolve any complaints in a timely manner. Timescales for each stage are set out below in the relevant paragraphs. When we refer to ‘working days’ we mean Monday to Friday, when the College is open during term time.

The dates of terms are published on the College’s web site. These procedures need to be applied with common sense and judgement. If a complaint is raised out of term time, the complainant cannot expect the timescales below to be strictly adhered to, although every reasonable effort will be made to address the complaint in a timely manner.

Confidentiality

A written record will be kept of all complaints and of whether they are resolved at Stage 1, Stage 2, or Stage 3. Correspondence, statements, and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Anyone who has a concern or complaint is encouraged to discuss this informally with the Principal, Chief Education Officer or the Director of Studies in the first instance. Most complaints can be successfully resolved at this stage. We will do our best to listen, to try to understand your concern, and to arrive at a resolution that meets the satisfaction of all concerned.

We expect most concerns, where a parent seeks intervention, reconsideration or some other action to be taken, can be resolved informally. Examples might include dissatisfaction about some aspect of teaching or pastoral care; dissatisfaction about allocation of privileges or responsibilities; timetable clashes; an invoicing concern; or concerns about the performance of some other aspect of the College’s systems or equipment.

Should the concern or complaint not been resolved by informal means within 15 working days then you may wish to proceed to in accordance of Stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution

If an informal complaint fails to resolve the matter, it can be raised as a formal complaint to the College in writing addressed to the Principal.

Kim Terrar.

kim@oxcoll.com

An unresolved concern under Stage 1 or a complaint which needs investigation, or a specific dissatisfaction with some aspect of the College's policies, procedures, management, or administration should be set out in writing with full details and sent with all relevant documents and the full contact details of the complaint in an envelope addressed to the Principal.

If the complaint is about the Principal, please contact

Mark Logan

Managing Director of Schools and Colleges

mlogan@OxfordInternational.com

Upon receipt of a written complaint the Principal will contact you within 7 working school days to acknowledge receipt of your complaint, to gather more detailed information where necessary and to set out how she proposes to proceed including letting you know when she expects to be able to come back to you. This is usually 10 working days after contact about the complaint.

The Principal will conduct a full investigation of the complaint and may interview members of staff and students should they be involved. The Principal may ask to meet you for a discussion about the issue and will if necessary, consult other colleagues to give the matter full and detailed consideration.

Once a conclusion has been reached, the Principal will communicate the outcome to you in writing setting out the reasons for it, as well as any action taken or proposed.

The Principal will keep written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint. The aim will always be to deal with complaints as promptly as possible and as a fall-back deadline, a complaint received outside of will always be dealt with, at the latest, within the time scales set out within the policy.

If following the completion of the procedures set out in stage 2 you are still unhappy with the outcome and wish to take the complaint further you may invoke Stage 3 which means the matter will be referred to an Appeal Panel for consideration.

Stage3: Appeal Panel

If, following the completion of the procedures set out in Stage 2 you are still unhappy with the outcome and wish to take your complaint further you may invoke Stage 3 which means the matter will be referred to the Appeal Panel.

To initiate this process, you will need to contact the Chairman of the Board of Governors c/o the MD of Schools and College within 14 days of receipt of the Principals decision under Stage 2.

Please write to
Chairman c/o Mark Logan
MD of Schools and College
1-5 London Road
Oxford
OX4 1BD
mlogan@OxfordInternational.com

The Chairman of the Governors will acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible, usually within 7 working days of receipt and schedule a panel review to take place as soon as practicable, normally within 15 working days.

The Panel will consist of three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. As stipulated by the Education Regulations 2014 (Independent Schools Standards) the Panel members will be appointed by the college. One of the Panel members will be independent of the management and running of the college and will by dint of their professional career have had experience of analysing situations and putting forward balanced arguments.

You may be accompanied to the panel hearing by one other person, this may be a relative, colleague or friend. Legal representation will not normally be appropriate.

If the Panel deems it necessary, it may require that further particulars of the complaint or any related matters be supplied in advance of the hearing. Copies of such will need to be supplied to all parties not later than 4 days prior to the hearing. If possible, the Panel will resolve the complaint without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required the Panel will decide how it will be carried out and keep the complainant informed of the progress of the investigation.

After due consideration of all facts it considers relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 15 working days (in term-time) of the date of the Hearing. The Panel will write to you informing you of its decision and the reasons for it. The Panel's findings and any recommendations are sent in writing by email and in hard copy to you, the Principal and members of the Governing Body.

The decision of the Panel is final.

Record Keeping

Written records will be made of all complaints made under Stages 2 and 3 above. The records will indicate whether the complaint was resolved following a formal procedure or whether it proceeded to a panel hearing. They will also contain an account of the action taken by the school as a result of these complaints regardless of whether or not they were upheld.

Confidentiality

You may be assured that your complaint or concern will be treated seriously and confidentially. Correspondence, statements and records will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them, where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection, or where any other legal obligation prevails.

Review

The Policy and any complaints will be reviewed annually.

A request will only be considered after the procedures of Stage 1 and Stage 2 have been completed. Please ensure that any letter to the Complaints Committee also includes a copy of all relevant documents, a list of all documents that pertain to the complaint that may be in the possession of the College, and full contact details of the complainant. The letter of complaint should clearly state the grounds for the complaint and the desired outcome. A representative of the complaints committee will acknowledge the complaint within two working days.

The complaints committee will convene as soon as is reasonably practicable but will not normally convene in half term or school holidays. Every effort will be made to ensure that the complaints committee hearing takes place within ten working days of receipt of a request. The complainant will be informed who has been appointed to the Complaints Committee, as soon as is reasonably practical or at least seven working days before the hearing the complainant will receive written notification of the date, time and place of the hearing and brief details of the complaints committee members who will be present. The committee will be chaired by one of its members, who will be selected amongst themselves.

After notification of the date of the hearing, any additional documents (potentially records pertaining to the outcomes of stages 1 and 2) must be supplied to the committee within three working days. It is expected that most of, if not all, relevant documentation will have already been submitted in the initial request to convene a complaints committee.

A Complaints Committee Hearing

Although a complainant does not need to attend the hearing, they will be invited to do so. They may be accompanied by one other person, such as a relative, friend, or teacher. It is not necessary that the chosen person be legally qualified or acting in a professional capacity. However, if the chosen person will be acting in their professional capacity, we request that the College be notified five working days before the hearing. In a circumstance where the complainant is a parent or guardian, the student for whom they care may also attend the hearing at the discretion of the chair.

The hearing will be conducted by the chair in an informal manner. All statements made at the hearing will be unsworn. Everyone present will be entitled to write their own notes for reference purposes, although formal minutes of the proceedings will also be taken. The chair will conduct the hearing in such a way as to ensure that all those present can ask questions and make comments in an appropriate manner. The hearing is not a legal proceeding, and the committee shall be under no obligation to hear evidence from witnesses. However, if the committee so chooses it may take testimony in person or written statements, into account. All those present are expected to show courtesy, restraint and good manners.

The committee may be adjourned for several reasons, at the discretion of the chair. In these instances, the hearing will reconvene at a later time or date agreed by those present.

- If after due warning those present do not conduct themselves in an appropriate and productive manner, the chair may adjourn the hearing.
- If it is deemed necessary that further investigation takes place, the chair may adjourn the hearing.
- If it is deemed that legal advice must be taken, the chair may adjourn the hearing.

The hearing may also be terminated, at the discretion of the chair, for example in the case that the conduct of those present is so obstreperous as to prevent reasoned and dispassionate considerations of the complaint. If the hearing is terminated, then the original decision taken by the Principal will stand.

Any person who is dissatisfied with the way in which the hearing is being conducted must say so before the proceedings conclude so that these remarks can be minuted.

The committee will duly consider all of the matters discussed in the hearing and reach a decision as to the most appropriate resolution of the complaint. The committee's findings and recommendations will be shared with those present orally at the end of the hearing. The reasoning behind the committee's decision will also be explained. Should the committee wish to deliberate at such length that it is not possible to notify those present after the hearing, they will instead notify those present of the outcome by electronic mail within seven working days of the hearing. If you would not like to be notified by electronic mail, please ensure that you say so at the end of the hearing. The decision, findings and recommendations of the committee will be made available for inspection on the College premises by the Managing Director of Schools and Colleges.

Further information

If you have any questions about Communication and Complaints at Oxford International College, please contact:

Kim@oxcoll.com
Principal
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1 London Place
Oxford
OX4 1BD