



Oxford Falls Grammar Grievance Policy and Procedures

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Definition

Grievance: A grievance is a complaint made by parents or students to the school, against the school and/or its processes, its staff or other students about a matter with which the complainant is dissatisfied and that has caused or is causing concern, harm or distress.

Aim

In any community of people, it is foreseeable that from time to time there may be disputes, disagreements, disappointments and/or dissatisfaction.

Oxford Falls Grammar is committed to the resolution of grievances in a fair, equitable and prompt manner, following procedural fairness.

The aim of the grievance procedure is to make public the mechanisms in place to facilitate the process of dealing with grievances that arise for students and parents, with the ideal being a resolution which is fully or partially acceptable to the individuals or parties involved. While not all grievances will be capable of a resolution which satisfies all concerned, the grievance procedure will at least ensure that the issue is addressed following principles of procedural fairness and natural justice, and that a clear response is provided.

This policy is based upon Christian principles of fairness, justice, respect and accountability. Procedures to resolve conflict should reflect the Christian ethos of the School and be based on the intent of Matthew 18:15:

“If your brother or sister sins against you go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won your brother over.”

Similarly, it is an expectation that all members of the OFG community will conduct themselves according to the workings of the fruits of the spirit: *“the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things.”* (Galatians 5: 22-23)



Matters Exempt from the Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure

A number of matters are exempt from the Grievance Resolution Procedure:

- Matters covered by specific Acts and regulations, such as the Child Protection Act, the Workplace Health & Safety Act, mandatory reporting requirements, Public Health Orders, etc
- External issues which arise through disagreements and/or interpersonal conflict which do not have relevance and/or impact in the OFG community.
- Where School policies are followed correctly (ie; student disciplinary matters, the Staff Code of Conduct or the Parent Code of Conduct)

Principles

- Grievances arising within the School shall be dealt with efficiently, confidentially and in a manner which affords natural justice to all parties.
- All parents and students will be made aware of and know how to access and utilise the Grievance Procedure.
- A complainant shall not be disadvantaged for having lodged a grievance.
- At any stage, any party has the right to be assisted by a support person.
- Relevant information will be collected and considered in the resolution of the grievance. Parties investigating or bringing about the resolution will be impartial to the subject of the grievance.
- In accordance with privacy principles and confidentiality, only the people directly involved in making or investigating a complaint will have access to information about the complaint. Under general circumstances, the School will not discuss specific details with parents about children not their own.
- It is the obligation of all parties to co-operate and deal with a concern as promptly and amicably as possible. In some cases, where external personnel or factors are involved, the process might take a longer period.
- As complaints may result in disciplinary or other serious consequences, the school will have a system for documenting the process of dealing with the grievance.
- All parties will be informed of the outcome of an enquiry or investigation, and made aware of pathways of appeal.

Procedural Fairness

Procedural fairness includes making available to students and parents / caregivers the policies and procedures under which an investigation and/or disciplinary action is taken. It also entails the right to an unbiased decision and the right of the person against whom a grievance has been raised to:

- Know the allegation/s related to a specific matter and any other information which will be taken into account in considering the matter
- Know the process by which the matter will be considered
- Respond to the allegation/s
- Receive a determination of the grievance
- Know how to seek a review of the decision made.

In most cases of import, the grievance, its procedure and outcomes will be documented and filed (confidential to relevant persons) by the school.



Grievance Procedure Parents

Procedure

The following procedure acknowledges the structure of school operations and personnel through which parents may escalate a grievance. These steps must be followed sequentially to allow matters to be dealt with appropriately by the relevant staff. It is not appropriate to “jump” Steps prematurely.

Step 1

Should parents have an issue they would like to raise, it should in the first instance be directed to the relevant staff member most immediately concerned with the matter (classroom teacher, Year Advisor, staff member with particular specialist role, coach, etc). They should advise what the issue is and provide evidence to support the complaint as this will facilitate the process. Parents can expect the matter to be evaluated and investigated appropriately and to receive a timely response.

Step 2

Should parents feel that the process undertaken was unfair or that their complaint was not given due consideration and they wish to take it further, they should contact the next relevant senior staff member.

- For Junior School, contact the respective Head of Stage or Dean of Students K-6.
- For Senior School, contact the respective Head of Department or Dean of Academic for academic matters and/or the Dean of Students for welfare matters.

A process of enquiry/investigation followed by communication / discussion and response to the parent/s will then take place.

Step 3

Should the matter be of a serious nature, and the parents feel that the process undertaken was unfair or that their complaint was not given due consideration and they wish to take it further, they should communicate their concerns to the Head of School (Junior or Senior). In seeking to appeal a decision or outcome to the Head of School, the parent should:

- provide new information, and/or
- specifically identify the grounds on which a grievance matter should be re-considered.

A process of enquiry/investigation followed by communication / discussion and response to the parent/s will then take place.

Step 4

Should the matter be of an extremely serious nature, and the parents feel that the process undertaken was unfair or that their complaint was not given due consideration and they wish to take it further, they should communicate their concerns to the Office of the Principal.

In seeking to appeal a decision or outcome to the Principal, the parent should:

- provide new information, and/or
- specifically identify the grounds on which a grievance matter should be re-considered.

A process of enquiry/investigation followed by communication / discussion and response to the parent/s will then take place.

If the grievance pertains specifically to the School Principal, parents should communicate their concerns directly in writing to the Chair of the School Board.



Step 5

Should the above steps be not to the parent/s' satisfaction, they may record their concerns via a letter to the Chair of the School Board.

It assumed that the above steps (1-5) will have taken place first.

Conclusion of matters

It is the desire of the school and in the best interests of all concerned that all matters are dealt with properly and resolved.

In some rare instances, however, it is acknowledged that at the end of the process there may still be irreconcilable differences, disagreements or opinions between the school and parent/s.

If a full, fair and thorough process has taken place in dealing with the grievance, it is not appropriate for this to remain open indefinitely. A grievance procedure may, therefore, ultimately be concluded and closed, despite not reaching a desired resolution.

Grievance Procedure Students

Step 1

Should students have a grievance against a staff member, other student or school process, they may raise that with the staff member most relevant and immediate to their concern: coach, classroom teacher, Year Advisor, Head of Department, Dean of Students or Dean of Academic Studies, as relevant. (Generally, school counsellors are used in a support role, rather than as recipients of a formal grievance).

Step 2

The staff member concerned will process the grievance, possibly liaising with more senior members of staff as relevant. This process may involve further communications and investigation.

The staff member or more senior staff member will liaise with the student in relation to the outcome and communicate any decisions and responses arising as a consequence, which may involve mediation, action plan, disciplinary action, communication with parents, counsellor support, outward referral, follow-up meetings, etc

Step 3

Should students feel that the process undertaken was unfair or that their grievance was not given due consideration and they wish to take it further, they should contact the Head of Junior School or Head of Senior School who will review the matter. In doing so, the student should:

- provide new information, and/or
- specifically identify the grounds on which a grievance matter should be re-considered.

Step 4

Should students feel that the process undertaken by the Head of Junior School or Head of Senior School was unfair or that their grievance was not given due consideration and they wish to take it further, they may refer the issue to the Principal. In doing so, the student should:



- provide new information, and/or
- specifically identify the grounds on which a grievance matter should be re-considered.

Conclusion of matters

It is the desire of the school and in the best interests of all concerned that all matters are dealt with properly and resolved.

In some rare instances, however, it is acknowledged that at the end of the process there may still be irreconcilable differences, disagreements or opinions between the school and student/s.

If a full, fair and thorough process has taken place in dealing with the grievance, it is not appropriate for this to remain open indefinitely. A grievance procedure may, therefore, ultimately be concluded and closed, despite not reaching a desired resolution.

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