



Complaints & Grievances Policy

Policy Classification		
Policy Number: 25/2016	Date of Origin: February 2010	By Whom: Principal
Policy Audience: Public Domain	Review dates: Feb 2016, Aug 2017, Mar 2019	Next Review Date: 2021
Policy Approval:		
This Policy was approved by the Board in 2019.		
This Policy supersedes all previous policies relating to matters herein		

1.0 Rationale

- 1.1 As a registered and accredited school in NSW it is essential to ensure compliance with the New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA Registered and Accredited Individual Non-government Schools NSW Manual – October 2014, Page 33) that the school have in place and implement policies and procedures in relation to concerns, complaints and grievances, with specific reference to processes for raising and responding to matters of concern, complaint and/or grievance identified by students and / or parents.
- 1.2 As a community which nurtures positive, harmonious relationships among all its members, Oakhill College is committed to resolving concerns, complaints and grievances in a manner which reflects Gospel values and respects the dignity of the individual.
- 1.3 The appropriate reception and processing of concerns, complaints or grievances are to be regarded as a normal part of continual improvement in the College. The information obtained from accurate analysis of and action on concerns, complaints and grievances must be available to both the operational and governance leaders of the College.

2.0 Guiding Principles

- 2.1 This policy applies to Oakhill College in handling complaints made in respect of services provided by the College or against staff members, which includes employees, contractors and volunteers. This policy does not apply to grievances between parents and/or guardians or complaints which are whistle-blowing complaints as these later complaints are covered by the College Protected Disclosures Policy.
- 2.2 A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the College about an educational and/or operational matter relating to services provided by the College or the behaviour or decisions of a staff member, contractor or volunteer, including misconduct.
- 2.3 Concerns, complaints and/or grievance may be made by a student or parent/caregiver
- 2.4 Concerns, complaints and/or grievance resolution processes will be implemented promptly, in a manner which ensures procedural fairness, and which is designed to bring about reconciliation.
- 2.5 That the policy acknowledges the precedence of the requirements of child protection and anti-discrimination legislation in relevant matters.
- 2.6 In the resolution of concerns, complaints and grievances appropriate confidentiality and discretion will be maintained. However, details of the concern, complaint or grievance, including those from anonymous sources will be shared with the investigating team while maintaining all appropriate levels of confidentiality.

3.0 Policy

- 3.1 This policy applies to concerns, complaints and grievances made by a student or parent/caregiver excluding complaints and/or grievances among employees which are addressed by the Managing Workplace Complaints Policy.
- 3.2 Complaints and grievances are to be resolved preferably informally at the most immediate, personal level possible, that is, directly between the individuals who are party to the grievance. Any complaint about the conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the Principal in the first instance.
- 3.3 When a grievance is labelled a formal complaint or communicated initially to the Principal, in ordinary circumstances it will be referred to an appropriate member of staff e.g. Deputy/Assistant

Principal, Head of School, Dean, Tutor, Counsellor, or Director of Human Resources to facilitate an investigation and resolution in the spirit of the above policy and procedures.

3.3.1 The College will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing as soon as practicable.

- 3.4 The Principal and/or delegate generally will assess the complaint and determine:
- whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this policy or is a staff grievance or reportable conduct matter which are dealt with by other relevant policies; and
 - the priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised; and
 - whether the school may be required to report the matter to the Ombudsman, Police, Family and Community Services or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.
- 3.5 The Principal and/or delegate generally will manage a formal complaint by:
- a) Advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the College in relation to the complaint;
 - b) If appropriate, advising the relevant parties of the complaint at the relevant time and providing them with an opportunity to respond;
 - c) Collecting any additional information the College considers necessary to assess the complaint;
 - d) Making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved; and
 - e) Advising the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision and if appropriate, any proposed action, and the appeals process.
- 3.6 Typically the Principal will delegate the initial investigation of any complaint/grievance.
- 3.7 A complainant and the relevant parties that the complaint is about are to be advised that they may have an appropriate support person at any meeting with any representative of the College about the complaint/grievance. However, the College maintains the right to determine whether the person's preferred support person is appropriate and may not approve the attendance of a support person where they are determined by the College to be inappropriate.
- 3.8 There may be some circumstances where some steps outlined in this policy and procedure are not appropriate and the College will determine, on a case by case basis, the most appropriate method of handling each complaint/grievance.
- 3.9 The following are the steps for raising a concern, complaint and/or grievances, ('grievances') and the investigation, resolution and appeals process. For more detail please refer to Appendices 1-4.
- 3.9.1 The aggrieved person should speak to the party who is the subject of the grievance, for example if a parent has a grievance with a teacher, the parent should first seek to speak to the teacher privately; likewise, if it is a student who has a grievance against a teacher, it would be appropriate for the student's parents to speak on the student's behalf.
- 3.9.2 If the grievance cannot be resolved privately or if the aggrieved person is uncomfortable acting on their own, another appropriate person (e.g. staff member, parent) should be invited to assist in presenting the grievance. The College Counsellor may be invited to act as a support person or mediator.
- 3.9.3 If the grievance cannot be resolved in this manner, a member of the Senior Leadership Team should be approached for their assistance and a meeting should be set up, with the member of the Senior Leadership Team acting as mediator.

3.9.4 If the grievance cannot be resolved at this level, the Principal should be informed in writing and the Principal will establish an appropriate person(s) to work with the complainant and investigate the grievance seeking a satisfactory resolution for all parties.

3.9.5 If a grievance is against the Principal and if it cannot be resolved at the local level, the aggrieved person should contact the Chair of the College Board.

3.10 In relation to managing grievances regarding discrimination, harassment or bullying, the College in assessing the grievance will refer to the College Bullying and Harassment Policy, Staff Code of Conduct Policy and to the policy document 'Maintaining Right Relations' issued by the Catholic Education Office.

3.11 If a parent or student has a concern about the conduct of a staff member, they should raise the concern with the College in accordance with Section 3 of this policy. If a complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member constitutes reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed in accordance with the College Child Protection Policy. Any concern about a student wellbeing may be reported to the appropriate authorities under this policy as governed by State and Commonwealth Law.

3.12 This policy is not applicable to the handling of the following types of grievances:

- Complaints related to ongoing legal proceedings or under the jurisdiction of other organisations/government departments or governed by other statutory regulations such as complaints against corruption, fraud or theft;
- Anonymous complaints or complaints not made by the person concerned unless when there is sufficient evidence or when the case is serious or urgent or having obtained the persons written consent;
- Complaints involving incidents that happened more than one year ago or complaints with insufficient information.

3.13 The College is aware that complaints/grievances may be a cause of anxiety and will offer support to those involved such as the College Counselling Department services or the College employee assistance program and is committed to resolving concerns, complaints and grievances in a manner which reflects Gospel values and respects the dignity of the individual.

4.0 Procedures

Please refer to the appendices for various procedures and forms.

5.0 Policy Evaluation and Review

The Principal is to ensure that this Policy is regularly monitored and revised to ensure procedural fairness and that other requirements of the Education Act are maintained.

6.0 Explanatory Notes and Definitions

A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction made to eth College about an educational and/or operational matter relating to services provide by eth College or eth behaviour or decisions of a staff member, contractor or volunteer, including misconduct.

7.0 Supporting Documents, Procedures and Guidelines

- 7.1 Privacy Policy
- 7.2 Protected Disclosures Policy
- 7.3 Staff Code of Conduct Policy
- 7.4 Child Protection Policy
- 7.5 Bullying and Harassment Policy
- 7.6 Workplace Diversity and Gender Equality Policy

8.0 Appendix

Appendix I:

Concerns, Complaints and Grievances and Principles for Handling Concerns, Complaints and Grievances

1. Expressions of Concern

- a) A concern refers to the inquiry or opinion expressed by the stakeholders for the interests of themselves, their children or the school, with a view to changing or improving the existing situation.
- b) An expression of concern relates to relatively minor matters and may be expressed orally or in writing and may or may not be formally investigated and reported. If an investigation is made, a full and adequate file will be kept, and a record made of action taken.
- c) Expressions of concern may be made to any staff member, or the Assistant Principal, Deputy Principal, the Principal or (in cases involving the Principal) to a member of the Board, specifically the Board Chairman.
- d) The Principal will be informed of any expressions of concern.
- e) The Principal, having been informed of an expression of concern, shall decide if the matter warrants investigation as a complaint.
- f) When a person (“Receiver”) receives an expression of concern and the Principal determines the concern warrants an investigation, the people involved will be interviewed and the Receiver will report back to the complainant. There will be occasions when the person handling the expression of concern will be able to advise the complainant of the facts at the outset.
- g) If a concern is expressed to a Board member in the first instance, the person with the concern should be strongly encouraged to take the concern to the Principal or appropriate member of staff. When the concern is more serious, the Board member will record it in writing, date and sign it and hand it to the Principal.
- h) A full and adequate file shall be kept on action taken about an expression of concern, where that concern has resulted in an investigation. Such a file should be kept on the student, staff, or other relevant file and no records relating to the concern should be kept in any other place.

2. Complaints and Grievances

- a) A complaint is an expression of disappointment, dissatisfaction or grievance expressed by the complainant. They may demand the school to rectify its mistakes, take disciplinary action against the suspected offenders, or resolve the issue(s) raised in the complaint. Complaints can be further classified into informal complaints and formal complaints.
- b) A complaint relates to more serious matters and must be put in writing.
- c) Where the person raising the issue refers, in writing, to it as a complaint, then the matter shall be treated as a complaint.
- d) Complaints should be made in writing to the Principal or (in cases involving the Principal) to the Board Chairman.
- e) The Principal will establish a committee formed of the Deputy Principal and an Assistant Principal and/or any other appropriate staff or expert if necessary. The committee will investigate the complaint and report to the Principal who will report to the original complainant. The complaint, investigation and actions/resolutions are to be filed in a ‘Complaints’ file with the Principal.
- f) If the complainant is not satisfied with the handling of a complaint, the complainant(s) should put the matter in writing to the Chairman of the Board.
- g) The handling of complaints must be consistent with policies on staff discipline and sexual harassment.

- h) All complaints will be investigated as speedily as possible.
- i) A full and adequate file shall be kept on the investigation of a complaint. Such a file should be kept on the student or staff concerned and/or on the complaint itself. Complaint documents will be filed in the Complaints file and a copy in the staff and/or student file.
- j) All people referred to in the file shall know where such files are kept and that access to the file is in accord with the College Privacy Policy.
- k) Where appropriate, outside mediation may be sought.
- l) In dealing with any complaint involving an employee the College will act in accordance with the relevant conditions of the current employment contract(s), Managing Workplace Complaints Policy and relevant MEA (Employment Award).
- m) In all cases the College, in dealing with complaints, will act as a good employer.

3. Principles for Handling Concerns, Complaints and Grievances

Principle 1: Handling of complaints by the appropriate party/parties

The College will handle those grievances relating to their daily operations and internal affairs. Grievances involving other jurisdictions are to be lodged to and handled by the relevant agencies.

Principle 2: Timely and efficient handling

The College will handle and respond to all verbal or written grievances as soon as possible to prevent escalation. Upon receipt of a grievance the aggrieved person should speak to the party who is the subject of the grievance and then if unresolved, referred as appropriate to more senior staff.

Principle 3: Clear and transparent mechanism

The College is to follow a clear and effective mechanism as well as procedures for speedy and proper handling of grievances.

This Policy, guideline and procedures identifies the process and staff responsible for handling grievances.

Principle 4: Fair and impartial handling

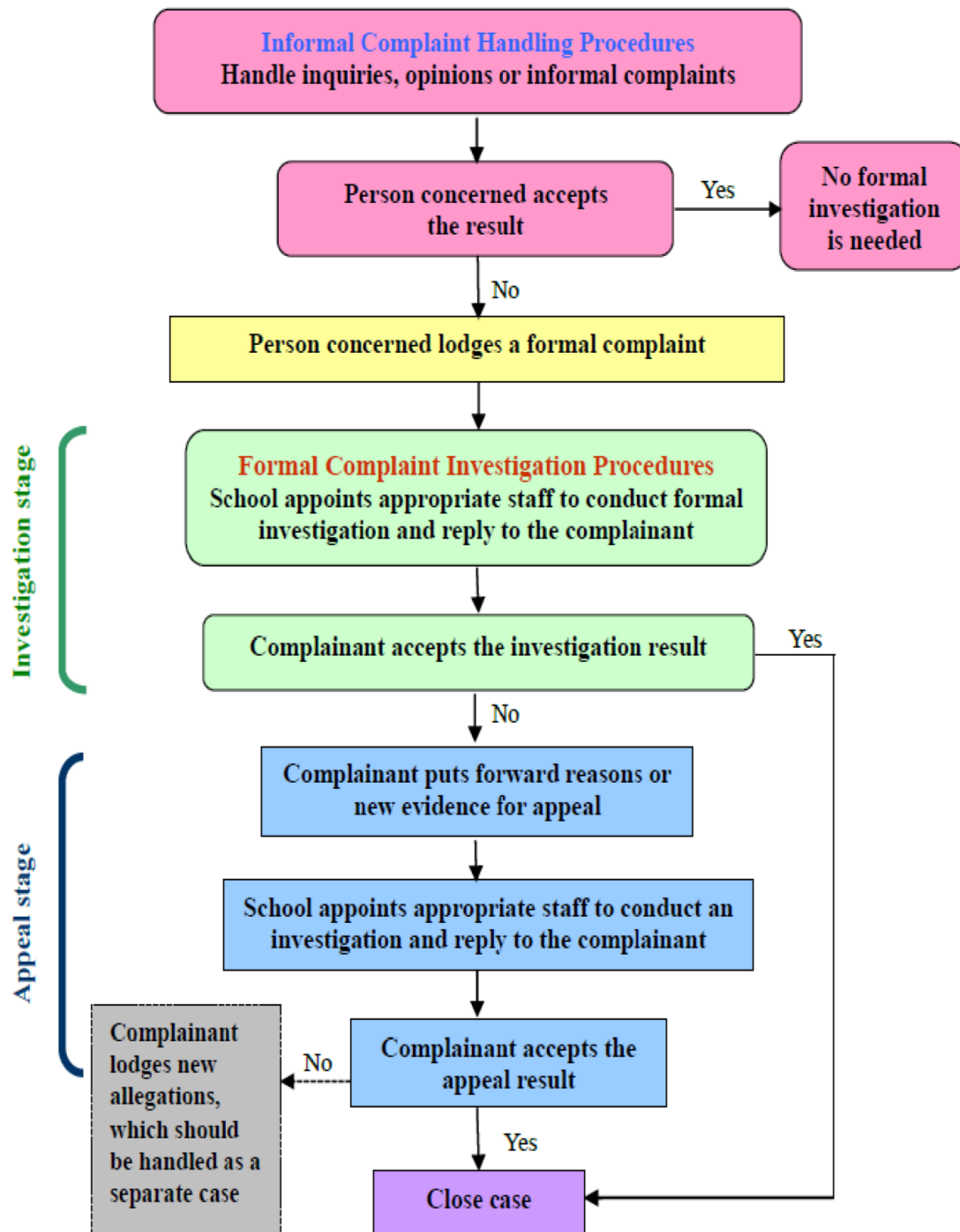
The College approaches grievances positively and treats the grievances and respondents of the grievance fairly. The College ensures that sufficient appeal channels are provided and may consider inviting independent persons to participate in the grievance/appeal handling process.

Before an investigation begins or where appropriate, the designated staff and related individuals should declare interests. If there is any conflict of interest, the persons concerned should not be involved in handling the case or have access to information relating to it.

To avoid conflict of interest, any staff member who is the respondent of the grievance should not be involved in handling the case, supervising the investigation, or signing and issuing letters to the complainant.

Oakhill College recognises the rights of the complainants or other persons involved in the grievance and assures that future communication and contact with the school would not be affected.

Diagram 1: Flowchart of School Complaint Handling Procedures



When it is determined that no formal investigation is required a letter is to be signed outlining that the process was followed, and all parties agree no formal investigation is required or there is no documented proof that no investigation is required due to acceptance

Appendix 2:

Informal Complaints/Grievances Procedures

In general, if the case does not require an investigation involving evidence collection, or the person concerned does not request a formal written reply, the staff receiving the grievance may handle the matter following the informal grievance handling procedures of the school.

On receiving an inquiry, opinion or informal complaint/grievance, the staff receiving the grievance is to listen to the concerns of the inquirer/complainant with care and understanding. If the incident is not serious, they should provide whatever assistance or information required or promptly respond to the concerns raised by the inquirer/complainant and help resolve the problems involved.

If necessary, the staff member in charge of the relevant issue should be informed and they should have direct contact with the person(s) concerned to explain the school's stance and remove any misunderstanding, misgivings or worries of them. The time limit for an initial response is set to be within two working days.

Oral replies will suffice, and written replies are normally not required. For opinions/complaints which are presented in written form, the responsible staff member may decide whether a simple written reply to the person(s) concerned/complainant is appropriate.

If necessary, the responsible staff member may brief the person(s) concerned on the follow-up actions that the school has adopted and the results that follow.

If the complainant still does not accept the school's response or the problem remains unresolved, the formal grievance investigation procedures (including an appeal mechanism) are to be initiated.

The grievance is to be recorded and the Principal notified.

Appendix 3:

Formal Complaints/Grievances Procedures

1.1 Identifying the Domain that the Complaint/Grievance Falls Into

Domain	Examples
Management and Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School accounts (e.g. accounting records)• Other charges (e.g. extra-curricular activities charges and registration fees)• School policies (e.g. system of reward and penalty, arrangements regarding students' suspension from school)• Standards of contractors' services (e.g. school bus services, supply of meal boxes)• Service contracts (e.g. tendering procedures)• School environment and hygiene (e.g. noise pollution, mosquitoes problems)
Teaching and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School-based curriculum (e.g. subject lesson time)• Selection of subjects and class allocation (e.g. arrangements for students' choice of subjects)• Homework (e.g. amount of homework, school-based assessment criteria)• Students assessment (e.g. assessment criteria)• Staff performance (e.g. behaviour/attitudes of teaching staff, job performance)
School Ethos and Student Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School ethos (e.g. uniform and other aspects of appearance)• Home-school cooperation (e.g. consultation mechanism, communication channels)• Student support (e.g. support for students with special educational needs)• Extra-curricular activities (e.g. arrangements for interest groups and other student activities)
Student Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students' overall performance (e.g. academic results, conduct)• Student discipline (e.g. foul and abusive language, smoking, fighting, bullying)

1.2 Designated Staff for Handling Formal Complaints/Grievances Including Appeals

Taking into account the nature of the complaint, its scope and the people involved, the Principal may assign a designated staff or set up a task force to handle the complaint with reference to the following arrangements:

- 1.2.1 Staff members who are responsible for the appeal stage should be different from those responsible for the investigation stage. In principle, the staff dealing with the appeal should be of a higher rank than those responsible for the investigation. If this is not practicable, the school would make other arrangements, such as appointing staff from another department, to ensure fair handling.
- 1.2.2 Where necessary, the school may establish a task force to handle special complaint cases. To enhance credibility, the school may invite independent persons such as social workers, lawyers, psychologists, and parents or teachers not involved in the case to join the task force to provide professional advice and support.
- 1.2.3 The appointed staff should be proactive in communicating with the inquirers/complainants, and prompt in providing responses as well as the information they need. The school will also ensure that frontline/ designated staff have proper authorisation and clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.

Target of the Complaint	Level	Investigation Stage	Appeal Stage
Subject Teachers Tutor Teachers	1	Academic Head	Assistant Principal (Curriculum)
	2	Assistant Principals	Deputy Principal
	3	Deputy Principal	Principal
	4	Principal	Board Chairperson
Student Support	1	Heads of School Members of Pastoral teams e.g. Guidance, Careers	Assistant Principal (Pastoral)
	2	Assistant Principal (Pastoral)	Deputy Principal
	3	Deputy Principal	Principal
	4	Principal	Board Chairperson
Middle Managers eg Directors Academic Heads House & Year Deans Heads of School Coordinators Head of Sport	1	Assistant Principals	Deputy Principal
	2	Deputy Principal	Principal
	3	Principal	Board Chairperson
Support Staff	1	Bursar and Operations Manager	Deputy Principal
	2	Deputy Principal	Principal
	3	Principal	Board
Sport Coaches & Managers	1	Head of Sport	Deputy Principal
	2	Deputy Principal	Principal
	3	Principal	Board
Principal	1	Board	

1.3 Investigation Stage

Any formal complaints should be handled according to the following procedures:

- 1.3.1 The Principal will be responsible for assigning appropriate staff to investigate the grievance and reply to the complainant in accordance with the situation and after declaration of interest.
- 1.3.2 Acknowledge receipt of the grievance, seek the complainant's consent to obtain his/her personal data and information relating to the grievance, and inform him/her of the name, post title and phone number of the staff responsible for handling the case for contact purposes. Samples of Acknowledgement Letters are provided in Appendices 6 and 8.
- 1.3.3 If necessary, contact the complainant and other persons involved or arrange meetings with them in order to have a better grasp of the situation or request them to provide relevant information
- 1.3.4 Handle the grievance as quickly as possible (It is suggested that the investigation should be completed within two working weeks after receiving the grievance.) and send a written reply to inform the complainant of the investigation result.
- 1.3.5 If the complainant accepts the investigation result, conclude the case officially in writing; and
- 1.3.6 If the complainant does not accept the investigation result or the way the school handled the grievance, and is able to provide new evidence or sufficient justification, he/she may lodge an appeal in writing against the school's decision within 14 working days from the date of its reply addressed to the Principal or the Chairman of the Board, depending on the designation.
- 1.3.7 All documentation is to be kept on the staff, student and College Concerns, Complaints Grievances File.

1.4 Appeal Stage

Procedures for appeals are as follows:

- 1.4.1 The Principal will be responsible for assigning appropriate staff of a higher rank than those responsible for the investigation stage, or staff from a different section, to handle the appeal and reply to the complainant in accordance with the situation and after declaration of interest.
- 1.4.2 Handle and resolve the appeal as quickly as possible (within two weeks after receiving the request for appeal) and send a written reply to inform the complainant of the appeal result.
- 1.4.3 If the complainant accepts the appeal result, conclude the case officially in writing.

- 1.4.4 If the complainant does not accept the appeal result or the way the school handled the appeal, the school should cautiously review the appeal process to ensure that proper procedures have been followed.
- 1.4.5 If the complainant raises other new allegations, the school will handle them separately in order to avoid mixing up the old complaints with the new ones.
- 1.4.6 All documentation is to be kept on the staff, student and College Concerns, Complaints Grievances File.

1.5 Responding to Complaints/Grievance and Appeals

If the complaint or appeal is in written form, the school will respond with a written reply. If the complaint is made verbally, the responsible staff will respond orally and follow up in writing. If the case is referred by other organisation(s), a copy of the written reply should be forwarded to them for reference.

Generally speaking, the time limit for replying to a complaint/appeal should start from the date on which it is received or when the complainant agrees to let the school have access to his/her personal data. If the information submitted is incomplete, the time limit should start from the date on which the school receives from the complainant the necessary information. If a reply cannot be given within the specified period, the school will explain to the complainant in writing why a longer handling time is needed.

1.6 Complaint/Grievance and Appeal Records

The school will keep a clear record of complaint/grievance investigation procedures. A sample complaint record is given in Appendix 9. The College will establish a complaint record management system to store relevant information (including correspondences, investigation reports and interview records), and keep statistics of concerns, complaints and grievances and appeals lodged through either the informal or formal handling procedures for future reference.

1.7 Appropriate Follow-up at the End of an Investigation/Appeal

At the end of the investigation/appeal stage, there should be a review concerning whether the complaint/grievance handling policies and procedures are appropriate and suggest proper measures to improve the method of handling and to prevent similar incidents from recurring. The staff in charge should inform the person(s) concerned of the school's follow-up actions and outcome of the review.

1.8 Confidentiality

- 1.8.1 All content and information of complaints should be kept strictly confidential and restricted to internal reference or reference by relevant persons only.
- 1.8.2 When personal data are to be collected or requests for disclosure of data/records are received during the handling process in respect of the complainant's case, the regulations and recommendations laid down in the Privacy Policy are to be observed. This includes clearly stating the purpose and the form of collection of personal data, and that the data will only be used for handling the complaint/grievance or appeal.
- 1.8.3 Appropriate security measures are to be adopted to protect personal data and privacy in accordance with the College Privacy Policy and Information Security Policy, such as keeping the data in safe places (e.g. cabinets under lock and key) and computer data protected by passwords and access rights.
- 1.8.4 Only authorised persons are allowed access to information relating to the case. The responsible persons should not disclose or discuss in public any contents or information relating to the case without authorisation.
- 1.8.5 To avoid misunderstanding, the following measures are to be applied:
 - 1.8.5.1 State clearly whether the person(s) concerned can be accompanied by others (e.g. relatives, legal representatives) during the interview/meeting and reiterate this stance before the interview/meeting starts; and
 - 1.8.5.2 Indicate before the interview/meeting starts whether audio/video recording is prohibited or whether the consent of all attendees must be obtained if the session is to be audio/video recorded. This stance is to be reiterated before the end of the interview/meeting.

1.9 Complainants who may behave Unreasonably

Appropriate communication and mediation are conducive to removing misunderstanding and enhancing mutual trust. Under general circumstances, there should not be any restrictions to stop complainants from making contact with the school. However, sometimes certain unreasonable behaviour of complainants may have a negative impact on the school, e.g. draining a considerable amount of the school's human resources, interrupting the school's operations or services, as well as threatening the safety of staff and other stakeholders. Therefore, the College has in place a Code of Conduct for Parents to manage unreasonable behaviour.

1.9.1 Definition of Unreasonable Behaviour

Complainants' unreasonable behaviour can generally be classified into the following three types:

- 1.9.1.1 Unreasonable attitude or behaviour, such as:
 - Acts of violence or intimidation
 - Making complaints with abusive language or in an insulting and discriminatory tone
 - Providing false data or deliberately concealing facts
- 1.9.1.2 Unreasonable demands, such as:
 - Requesting a huge amount of information or demanding special treatment
 - Making telephone calls incessantly to ask for a dialogue or an interview, or to command a certain staff member to reply
 - Commanding a certain staff member to meet at a specific time and place
- 1.9.1.3 Unreasonable persistent complaints, such as:
 - Insisting on rejecting the explanations and findings of the school, and/or requiring the school to discipline certain person(s), even after appropriate investigation procedures have been taken
 - In respect of the same case, repeatedly making the same complaints or presenting similar justifications as before without providing any new evidence
 - In respect of the same case, persistently bringing in new allegations or new complaint targets, but failing to present concrete evidence
 - Interpreting things in an unreasonable or irrational manner, or wrangling over trivial details

1.9.2 Strategies for Handling Unreasonable Behaviour of Complainants

- 1.9.2.1 Unreasonable Attitude or Behaviour
 - Any unreasonable attitude or behaviour, including acts of violence, intimidation, and abusive/offensive conduct or language, whether performed face-to-face, by phone, or in writing are unacceptable. The staff member handling the complaint should convey this message clearly to the complainant and demand that he/she stop acting in such a way. If the complainant refuses to comply after the warning, the staff member may terminate the meeting or conversation with him/her.
 - The staff responsible for handling complaints should stay alert and take suitable action to protect their own safety. They are empowered to make decision, depending on the situation, on whether to terminate the interview or dialogue with the complainant and ask the complainant to leave, if his/her behaviour poses an immediate threat to the staff's personal safety or damages their personal interests. In an emergency or if it is deemed necessary, the school should take appropriate and decisive action, such as reporting to the police or taking legal action.
- 1.9.2.2 Unreasonable Demands
 - If a complainant makes unreasonable demands which have an adverse impact on the school, e.g. interrupting its operation/services or other stakeholders are affected

by the unreasonable behaviour of the complainant, the school may consider putting restrictions on the complainant's contacts with the school, including specifying the time, frequency, date, duration and modes of communication (for example, requiring the complainant to make an appointment before visiting the school, submit his/her views in writing, or contact only with the staff designated by the school). The school must notify the complainant in writing of such arrangements and handling procedures.

- If the complainant's behaviour improves, the school may consider whether the restrictions should be lifted. If the school decides to keep the restrictions, it should regularly review the conditions for imposing them.

1.9.2.3 Unreasonable Persistent Complaints

- Faced with these complaints, the school may decide whether to restrict or stop contacts with the complainant, and cease handling the case altogether.
- To avoid any unrealistic expectations on the part of the complainant, the school should communicate to him/her in a firm manner that a final decision has been made regarding the case and that the decision is irreversible.
- In response to these complaints, the school may send a "Case Closure Letter" to the complainant, referring him/her to the replies previously given, and reiterate that the school will neither respond to the same complaint nor contact him/her again. Please see Appendix 4 for a sample "Case Closure Letter".

1.9.1 Designated Staff to Deal with Complainants Involving Unreasonable Behaviour

When a complainant stages unreasonable behaviour as described above, the staff member responsible for handling the case should report it to a staff member of higher rank.

Generally speaking, the Principal is responsible for making decisions on how to deal with a grievance involving complainants' unreasonable behaviour. However, if the complaint is lodged against the Principal, such decisions should be made by the Chair of the Board.

Appendix 4:

Handling Anonymous Complaints/Grievances

The school will always treat an anonymous complaint/grievance with some scepticism. Under special circumstances, when the complaint seems real or the situation it presents is serious, then the complaint should be investigated.

Whether the complaint/grievance is made in written form or in person, the complainant should provide his/her name, correspondence/e-mail address and/or contact phone number. If in doubt, the school may request the complainant to show his/her identity documents. Should the complainant fail or refuse to provide these personal details, thus rendering it impossible for the school to investigate the grievance and reply in writing, the grievance will be deemed anonymous and the school may not handle it.

However, under special circumstances (e.g. when there is sufficient evidence or when the case is serious or urgent), the middle or senior management of the school may decide whether to follow up with an anonymous grievance, such as treating it as an internal reference, informing the respondent about the grievance or taking appropriate remedial and improvement measures. If follow-up actions are considered unnecessary, the school should briefly state the reasons and put on file for record.

Appendix 5:

Handling Incidents Referred or Reported by the Media

1.1 The General Practice of the Media

When stakeholders feel aggrieved, they may seek to make complaints to the media. When the media receive such a complaint, they will normally contact the school authority, give an account of the complaint to the school and listen to the school's feedback. Then they will counter-check the school's response with some authority, like the Department of Education, experts, parents, etc. They may even come to the school's vicinity to interview students for their opinions. When they consider they have got enough information, they will report the case to the public openly.

1.2 Preliminary Measures in Responding to the Media

The Principal, and his absence the Deputy Principal, is the appointed spokesman to handle inquiries from the media. All staff members are advised not to speak to the media so as to avoid giving confusing messages.

1.3 Answering an Inquiry from the Media

On receiving an inquiry from the media, the school office should take down the gist of the inquiry and information about the media, and then inform the Principal about the inquiry. The Principal is to keep the Board Chairperson informed and updated. Impromptu meetings may be called to gather information, make clarification, interview the alleged staff member, discuss for the appropriate response, etc., before answering the inquiry

1.4 Actions to be Taken when the Media Issue Unfavourable Reports

- 1.4.1 Provide appropriate responses or clarification to the public as soon as possible (within one or two days), including information about actions taken or preliminary investigation results, and ensure that the information provided is clear, accurate and in line with requirements under the Privacy Policy.
- 1.4.2 Inform all teaching staff, students and parents of the progress of the case as far as possible; observe whether students and staff have been emotionally affected by the incident; and provide them with appropriate counselling where necessary.

1.5 Enhancing Communication with the Media

It is vital for the school to maintain good communication with their stakeholders. In addition to providing effective communication channels, the school should also encourage parents, students and staff to make good use of them to express their views and feelings, so as to build up mutual trust and confidence and avoid any unnecessary misunderstanding.

<i>Measures</i>	<i>Person in charge</i>
1. To ensure that there is enough provision of education, training, notice and support of various forms for parents, staff, voluntary helpers, contract workers, service providers, agents, etc. to enhance their awareness of good communication with the school	Principal
2. To include the Complaint Handling Policy and relative procedures in the Teachers' Handbook	Principal
3. To include the Complaint Handling Policy statement in the Student Diary	Deputy Principal
4. To bring the school's policy and relative procedures to the awareness of new staff members, contract workers, service providers and agents	Principal
5. To pass the information to the appropriate level staff immediately when a complaint message is received on the telephone.	School Office Staff
6. To forward the information to the appropriate level staff immediately when a complaint email is addressed to the school.	School Office Staff

Appendix 6:

Learning from Complaints/Grievances for Continuous Improvement

1.1 Appropriate Follow-up at the End of the Investigation/Appeal

At the end of the investigation/appeal stage, a review should be conducted to evaluate whether the complaint handling policies and procedures are appropriate and suggest proper measures to improve the method of handling and to prevent similar incidents from recurring. The staff in charge should inform the person(s) concerned of the school's follow-up actions and outcome of the review.

1.2 Annual Policy Review

An annual comprehensive review on the strategies, process and steps the school has taken in handling complaints should be conducted in order to benefit from past experiences, improve the way of handling, avoid similar cases from recurring, and take appropriate follow-up measures to improve services or revise relevant policies for enhancement of professional standards of services.

1.3 Reporting to the Board

The school should regularly review its complaint/grievance handling policies and report to the Board by providing relevant data concerning complaint/appeal cases, and suggest, if necessary, improvement measures to enhance their school-based complaint handling mechanism and procedures.

1.4 Complaint/Grievance Support and Training

Appropriate training should be provided to assist staff to effectively handle inquiries/complaints, e.g. providing training programmes on communication, negotiation and mediation skills, arranging experience sharing sessions for frontline/designated staff to enhance their capability in handling complaints and resolving conflicts, committing to training schemes provided by various bodies, etc.

Appendix 7:

Acknowledgement Letter from a Complainant

[Where complainants have provided their personal particulars and no referral is needed.]

Acknowledgement Letter

(date)

(Name of the complainant)

(Address of the complainant)

Dear Mr./Ms. _____,

The College received your written/verbal* complaint on ____ (date) _____. The case is being investigated and a reply will be sent to you within _____ days/as soon as possible.

Any information provided including personal information will only be used for investigating the complaint by relevant parties as per the College complaint handling policy and procedures.

If you have any inquiries, please contact ____ (_____) (*) ____ at ____ (telephone number).

(Signature)

Name and post of the designated staff*

APPENDIX 8:

Acknowledgement Letter from an Anonymous Complainant

[Where compliments are anonymous and are contactable]

Acknowledgement Letter

(date)

(Name of the complainant)

Dear Mr./Ms. _____,

The College received your written/verbal* complaint on ____ (date) _____. To facilitate our investigation and follow-up, please fill in the reply form attached and send it to us before ____ (date) _____.

It is College policy that a complainant should provide his/her name, correspondence/e-mail address and/or contact phone number to the school for an investigation to be processed. Should the complainant fail or refuse to provide these personal details, thus rendering it impossible for the school to investigate the complaint and reply in writing, the complaint will be deemed anonymous and the school may not proceed.

You can trust that we will keep all the information provided by the complainants confidential as appropriate within the investigation team and there will be no harmful effect to you and the students involved. If you have any inquiries, please contact ____ (_____) * at ____ (telephone number).

(Signature) _____

Name and post of the designated staff*

Acknowledgement Letter of Reply from an Anonymous Complainant

To: Oakhill College

Name of the complainant: Mr./Ms. _____

Email/Correspondence Address: _____

Contact No: _____

I understand that the personal information provided above will only be used for investigating the complaint as per the College complaint handling policy and procedures. To assist the school in handling this complaint, I agree that:

1. The school may forward copies of the complaint and other information to relevant persons/ organisations; and
2. The school may ask relevant persons/ organisations for information related to this complaint.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 9:

Case Closure Letter to Complainant

(date)

(Name of the complainant)

(Address of the complainant)

Dear Mr./Ms. _____,

The College received your letter dated _____ (date).

The outcome on the relevant issue has been detailed in our reply/replies dated _____ (dates) _____
(and dates of other replies [if applicable]) and wish to inform you that the College now formally brings to a close
the issue raised.

We trust in your on-going support and wish you well.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Name and post of the

APPENDIX 10:

Concern/Complaint Reporting Form

Oakhill College Concern/Complaint Reporting Form

Date: (Date Received)
Type of Issue: ☐ Concern
☐ Complaint
Source: ☐ Directly lodged to the school
☐ Referred by staff member
☐ Referred by other organizations: _____
Mode: ☐ Phone ☐ Letter ☐ Email ☐ Fax ☐ In person ☐ Others: _____

Personal information of the Complainant:

Name: Mr./Ms./Mrs. _____
Identity: ☐ Parent ☐ Counsellor ☐ Public ☐ Organization: _____
☐ Other: _____
☐ Authorised representative of the complainant

(Please state the name, address and contact telephone number of the representative and his/her relationship with the complainant):

Tel.: _____ **Fax:** _____ **Email:** _____

Address: _____

Subject(s) of Complaint:

☐ Principal ☐ Teacher ☐ Staff ☐ Others: _____

Areas of Complaint:

☐ Management and Organisation ☐ Learning and Teaching
☐ School Ethos and Student Support ☐ Student Performance
☐ Other: _____

Summary of the Complaint:

Investigation Stage: Action Taken

Person-in-charge:

Concern: ☐ Handled by informal procedure ☐ Complainant contacted
☐ Complainant accepted reply ☐ No further action required

Complaint:

Issue of Notice of Acknowledgement (date): _____

Telephone contact with complainant (date): _____

Interview with the complainant (date): _____

Issue of written reply (date): _____

Summary of Findings:

Appeal Stage (if applicable)

Date of appeal: _____

Person-in-charge: _____

Issue of Notice of Acknowledgement (date): _____

Telephone contact with complainant (date): _____

Interview with the complainant (date): _____

Issue of written reply (date): _____

Summary of Appeal Result:

Follow-up actions or recommendations (if applicable)

Signature of person-in-charge: _____

Date: _____