

D'OVERBROECK'S COLLEGE

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS

Introduction

Frequent, open and constructive communication with parents has long been an important hallmark of life at d'Overbroeck's, and it is fully our intention to do all we can to ensure that this continues to be the case at every level. We welcome, and indeed regularly invite, comments and suggestions from parents; and we take equally seriously any complaints or concerns that a parent may wish to raise at any point. We treat a complaint as an expression of genuine concern or unhappiness which needs careful consideration followed by a prompt and reasoned response.

The College's Complaints Procedure has been formulated taking into account the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2003 and the National Minimum Standard for boarding schools. It is underpinned by a desire to maintain within the College a flexible and responsive culture that recognises the need for a fair, objective and open-minded approach to dealing with complaints.

“What should I do if I have a complaint?”

If you have a complaint or a concern, then please let us know. We will do our best to ensure that our response is appropriate, considered and open-minded, and that it is guided by a desire to resolve issues quickly and effectively.

The aim of this document is to make sure that parents know exactly what procedure to follow if they have a complaint and, also, what to expect by way of a response from the College. The procedure is staged. Obviously our hope is that most issues can be resolved quickly and informally; but the policy sets out a clear procedure to follow in situations where a parent may feel that this has not been possible.

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

If there is anything, in any aspect of your son or daughter's life at d'Overbroeck's, that is troubling you, then we would urge you to let us know immediately, no matter how minor you may feel the issue to be.

We will do our best to listen, to try to understand exactly what lies at the heart of the issue, and to arrive at a resolution that meets with the satisfaction of all concerned.

It is best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue. The following guidelines should, in most cases, help you to identify the appropriate person to contact – but if in doubt please ask. Please feel free to contact staff by telephone, by e-mail, by letter or by calling in person.

If your complaint concerns boarding arrangements, then your first point of contact should be the colleagues in the Boarding Office.

For any other issue, please contact:

- In Years 7–11 (at Leckford Place): your son or daughter's Form Teacher
- in the Sixth Form: your son or daughter's Director of Studies
- at the International Study Centre: your son or daughter's Form Teacher

In the great majority of cases, it is likely that the appropriate member of staff will be able to address your concern effectively and straightforwardly. If they cannot resolve the matter alone, then it may be necessary for them to consult a more senior colleague.

Equally, you may yourself wish to address your concern to a more senior member of staff (in particular the Head of Leckford Place, the Academic Head of Sixth Form, the Director of the ISC or the Principal of the College) either in the first place or if you feel that the person to whom you first addressed your complaint has not dealt with it to your satisfaction.

In all cases, members of staff who receive a complaint will make a written record of the issue(s) involved and of the date on which the complaint was received.

Should the matter not be resolved within 10 working days (in term-time), then you may wish to proceed with your complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this Procedure.

Stage 2: Formal Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then we would ask you to put your complaint in writing to the Principal. Upon receipt of a written complaint, the Principal will normally contact you within 3 working days (in term-time) to acknowledge receipt of your letter, to gather more detailed information where necessary, and to set out how the College proposes to proceed – including giving you a date by which he expects to be able to come back to you with a response.

In most cases, and following this initial conversation, it is likely that the Principal will need to discuss the matter with the relevant staff and / or students, to carry out any necessary investigations and, in the light of these and with the help of senior colleagues, to give the matter full and detailed consideration.

The Principal will then communicate to you the outcome 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.

If parents are still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this Procedure.

Stage 3: Panel Hearing

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, then you may seek to invoke Stage 3, which means that the matter will then be referred to the Complaints Panel for consideration.

To initiate this process, you will need to contact James Noel, the Chairman of the Governing Body. Please address the correspondence to James Noel, c/o the Bursar, Peter Talbot at the main College address: The Swan Building, 111 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6JX.

The Panel will consist of three people not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. As stipulated by the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2003, each of the Panel members shall be appointed by the College; and one will be independent of the management and running of the College.

The Chairman of the Governing Body will then acknowledge the complaint and schedule a hearing to take place as soon as practicable, normally within 10 working days during term-time.

Parents may be accompanied to the hearing by one other person. This may be a relative, teacher 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 particulars shall be supplied to all parties not later than 4 days prior to the hearing.

If possible, the Panel will resolve the parents' complaint immediately without the need for further investigation. Where further investigation is required, the Panel will decide how it should be carried out.

After due consideration of all facts it considers relevant, the Panel will reach a decision and may make recommendations, which it shall complete within 5 working days (in term-time) of the Hearing. The panel will write to the parents informing them of its decision and the reasons for it. The decision of the Panel will be final.

The Panel's findings and any recommendations will be sent in writing to the parents, the Principal and, where relevant, the person(s) complained about.

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 in so far as is required of the school by paragraph 6(2)(j) of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2003; where disclosure is required in the course of the school's inspection; or where any other legal obligation prevails.

It is important to stress that it is College policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children.

Child protection issues

In common with all independent schools that are affiliated to the Independent Schools Council, we are subject to regular 'welfare inspections' which take place once every three years and which

focus on the welfare of boarders and all other issues relating to the safeguarding of children in school.

The following members of staff have designated responsibility for issues relating to child protection at d'Overbroeck's:

Sami Cohen (Principal)

Jane Cockerill (Deputy Head at Leckford Place)

Felisa Deas (Boarding Office)

Alasdair MacPherson (Academic Head of Sixth Form)

Mark Olejnik (Head of Leckford Place)

Helen Wood (Director of the International Study Centre)

Concerns over child protection issues may be communicated to any of the above members of staff who will deal with them according to our policy on Safeguarding Children. If you felt the need to address a complaint relating to a child protection issue to someone outside the school, then you may get in touch directly with Oxfordshire County Council Children, Young People and Families Safeguarding team (tel: 01865 815956 / 815186) or, if they are unavailable, the Oxford City Assessment Team (tel: 01865 323048). Out of office hours, you may contact the Emergency Duty Team on 0800 833408.

Please note that the College's policy on Safeguarding & Promoting the Welfare of Children is posted on the College's website. Copies are also available on request from the Principal's PA, Ms Colette Digby (telephone: 01865 888922 or email: colette.digby@doverbroecks.com).

We hope this policy document will make clear that, whenever parents have a complaint or a concern, we are anxious to be told about it and to be able to work with the parents to address such concerns in the best interests of the student(s) concerned.

Last reviewed November 2011