



STUDENT, PARENT OR CAREGIVER GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

PURPOSE

This grievance Policy and Procedure document is intended to provide to students, parents or caregivers a mechanism for resolving disputes and/or grievances in a simple, well defined manner in a supportive and co-operative environment with the utmost confidentiality and sensitivity.

The document specifies a process to be applied to such grievances when raised with the School and also makes clear that the School will decide the most appropriate method of dealing with the matter on a case by case basis.

Notes:

Parents or Caregivers with a grievance about School Policy should:

- Arrange a meeting time with the Principal to discuss your concern
- Allow a reasonable time frame for the issue to be addressed.

POLICY

1. GENERAL

- a) The School is open to receiving grievances and approaches them in a positive manner
- b) The School has a commitment to the fair resolution of complaints at all levels
- c) The School has a commitment to transparency of process and impartiality in handling complaints.

2. WHO DOES THIS GRIEVANCE POLICY APPLY TO?

- a) This policy extends to grievances brought by students, parents or caregivers
- b) Some grievances are better handled under other policies of the School. The School has specific policies in place for issues such as child protection, workplace discrimination and sexual harassment amongst others.

3. WHAT IS A GRIEVANCE?

A grievance is any concern or complaint about any act, behaviour, omission, situation or decision that someone thinks is unfair or unjustified.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY

- a) The School is committed to the confidentiality of all complaints, at all steps in the process of their resolution.
- b) Only the School and persons directly involved in a grievance will have access to the subject of the grievance. It is expected that parties involved will discuss the matter only with their support persons or the other parties involved.
- c) Any documents created or dealt with during the course of the procedure will be marked “confidential” and put in a safe place. These documents may only be accessed by the parties involved in the grievance.
- d) Although the School is committed to the confidentiality of all complaints, there may be situations where it is not possible to uphold a person’s right to confidentiality. For example, a person’s health and safety may be at risk, or the grievance may involve criminal activity. In these circumstances, the School will always prioritise the safety of the students, staff and wider community.

5. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMPLAINANT

The complainant has the right to:

- A written copy of the final determination
- Be heard and listened to
- Have the complaint addressed with procedural fairness
- Have the complaint dealt with quickly
- Seek legal advice and support
- Have a support person present at all meetings
- Confidentiality and sensitivity in the resolution of the process.

Victimisation and repercussions of ill treatment as a result of bringing the complaint will not be tolerated.

The complainant has the responsibility to:

- A written copy of the final determination
- Approach the process in good faith
- Uphold strict confidentiality
- Be courteous in dealing with the respondent
- Ensure that any support person understands their role in the process.

6. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RESPONDENT

The respondent has the right to:

- Present their version of events and reasoning
- Be informed of a complaint against them within a reasonable time frame
- Seek legal advice and support
- Have a support person present during all meetings
- Confidentiality and sensitivity in the resolution of the process.

Victimisation and repercussions of ill treatment as a result of bringing the complaint will not be tolerated.

The respondent has the responsibility to:

- Approach the process in good faith
- Uphold strict confidentiality
- Be courteous in dealing with the complainant, contact officer and investigator
- Ensure that any support person understands their role in the process.

7. THE ROLE OF THE SUPPORT PERSON

Support persons are entitled to accompany a complainant/ respondent to any meetings that take place during the grievance process but must not have an active role in the resolution process. It is not the role of the support person to be a spokesperson for the complainant.

8. TIME LIMIT

The School will try to resolve all grievances as quickly as possible. However, the timeframe for resolution of a grievance will depend on the complexity, nature and scope of the grievance.

PROCEDURE

9. GENERAL

The School will decide the most appropriate method of dealing with the matter on a case by case basis. The School recognises that often grievances are simple misunderstandings that are easily resolved via effective communication.

In the first instance, every grievance must be addressed via informal discussion with the contact person shown below in italics.

a) Primary Students

(i) Primary students should:

- Tell their teacher and *parents* or *caregivers* about the problem.

(ii) Parents or caregivers should:

- In the first instance, raise the matter with the teacher
- If the matter is not resolved, then it should be discussed with either the *Head of Lower Primary* or *Head of Upper Primary*
- If the matter remains unresolved, then it should be discussed with the *Head of School*
- If the matter remains unresolved, parents or caregivers should put the complaint in writing to the *Principal*.

b) Secondary Students

(i) Secondary students should:

- In the first instance, students should raise the matter with their *teacher* or *Tutor*
- If the matter is not resolved, it should be discussed with their *Year Coordinator*
- If the matter remains unresolved, students should ask a parent or caregiver to contact their *Year Coordinator*.

(ii) Parents or caregivers should:

- In the first instance raise the matter with the appropriate *Year Coordinator*
- If the matter remains unresolved, then it should be discussed with the appropriate *Head of School*
- If the matter remains unresolved, parents and caregivers should put the complaint in writing to the *Principal*.

10. INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED IN WRITTEN COMPLAINTS TO THE PRINCIPAL

- Dates, times and places of the grievance
- Perceived problem from the perspective of the complainant
- A written account of the progress of the informal discussions that were held between the parties
- Suggestions as to possible solutions.

11. RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS - THE ROLE OF THE CONTACT PERSON

- Let parties communicate their concerns openly
- Maintain impartiality
- Encourage solutions
- Maintain confidentiality at all times
- Conduct interviews with either party
- Speak to witnesses
- Peruse any further information that may be provided by complainant and respondent. This may include written materials, witness accounts or any other evidence directly relevant to the issues that the party wishes to be considered in the process.

- Maintain accurate written records of all communication between the parties concerned. This will be recorded on the Grievance Record Form and will include:
 - The nature of the grievance
 - Dates of receipt of the grievance and provision of the written determination
 - The date of the communication
 - The format of the communication (letter, email, phone call, conversation etc.)
 - A brief summary of the content of the communication (including notes of any solutions that were suggested by either party).
- Ensure that all documentation is filed in the student's file.

12. RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS- DETERMINATIONS

- a) The contact person may:
- Uphold the grievance
 - Dismiss the grievance if it is considered that it is without merit or is frivolous
 - Make any recommendations they consider appropriate in the circumstances. This may include but is not limited to:
 - An apology
 - An explanation
 - An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
 - Counselling.
- b) The contact person must fully document the actions they have decided and the reasons for it (the determination) and provide to both the complainant and respondent a written copy of this information.

13. APPEALS

If parents or caregivers are dissatisfied with a final determination, they may make a written request to the *Principal* for a review of the determination. If parents or caregivers remain dissatisfied, they may refer their complaint to the *Ombudsman*.