

School Community Grievance Guidelines & Checklist

These guidelines and checklist relate to an external grievance policy for the school community to use in relation to concerns and complaints.

1 Key definitions

Grievance	A grievance exists when one person or party has a complaint about another person's decision, action, or failure to act
Complainant	The person who has a complaint against a person who is employed by or acts on behalf of the School

2 Key Principles

2.1 Grievances raised will be dealt with in accordance with the following principles:

- (a) Only the people directly involved in investigating or adjudicating a grievance will have access to information about the grievance.
- (b) All parties will have a chance to put their point of view.
- (c) All grievances will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

2.2 In working through the resolution process, it is understood that:

- (a) Confidentiality will be respected and maintained, as far as is possible, by all parties concerned. While all parties have a right to seek advice in confidence, no party will canvass - within the school community or beyond - to support or defend an allegation;
- (b) The school, through its teachers, its Executive and the Board will be open to the concerns of parents and pupils;
- (c) Complaints will be received in a positive manner;
- (d) Information that will assist in the resolution of a complaint will be clear and readily available;
- (e) Concerns will be dealt with speedily and those who have raised them will be kept informed about progress;
- (f) Students will not receive adverse treatment because they or their parents have raised a complaint;
- (g) Clear confidential files and logs will be kept;
- (h) Resolution of the matter will be sought;
- (i) Staff training will cover the handling of complaints.

3 Process

3.1 Step One – Initial direct informal discussion about grievance

- (a) A Complainant should try to sort out the grievance directly with the person involved first. This may be done by requesting a telephone call or meeting with the relevant employee of the School, and then discussing the concern.
- (b) Following the meeting the relevant School employee will send you an email to acknowledge the discussion, and if a resolution was reached the agreed outcome.
- (c) If the Complainant is not comfortable raising the issue directly with the relevant person involved in the issue, then they can commence the process at Step 2.

3.2 Step Two - Escalation of informal discussion

- (a) If resolution of an issue is not achieved at Step 1, the issue can be raised with the appropriate senior staff member to have a discussion about the concern as follows:

For example:

Nature of concern	Staff member
Preschool student or staffing matter	Head of Preschool
Primary school student or staffing matter	Head of Primary
Senior school student or staffing matter	Head of Senior School
Administration matters	Business Manager
School management	The Principal
The Principal	The Board

- (b) The Complainant should contact the relevant senior staff member to make an appointment to have a telephone or in person meeting to discuss the complaint further.
- (c) The concerns raised will be dealt with by the senior staff member as appropriate. If required, the complaint will be investigated and handled with the relevant due diligence and addressed in an equitable and unbiased manner.

3.3 Step Three – Lodgement of a formal Grievance

- (a) This step is used when the Complainant:
 - (i) is not satisfied with the outcome in step 2; and
 - (ii) wishes to lodge a detailed, written and formal complaint.
- (b) To commence this process, the Complainant can lodge a grievance to the School in writing, by letter or email.

- (c) So that the School can appropriately respond, the written grievance should include details of the concern including relevant times and dates and the people involved. The complaint should also be signed by the Complainant
- (d) All formal grievances are to be lodged to a nominated Grievance Officer. All formal complaints will be treated seriously. The School will determine the most appropriate method of dealing with the grievance, to ensure confidentiality of the process and that the appropriate people within the School are involved. If the grievance involves the Principal, the grievance can be submitted to the Board.
- (e) Once a grievance has been received an acknowledgement of receipt will be issued.

3.4 Step Four – Investigation

- (a) The complaint will be investigated confidentially and in an equitable and unbiased manner, as deemed appropriate by the School.
- (b) The School will inform the Complainant in writing about the outcome of the investigation, to the extent appropriate noting procedural fairness and confidentiality obligations.

3.5 Step Five – Appeal

- (a) If you are not satisfied by the decision made following the investigation, you can appeal in writing.
- (b) The School does not offer unlimited opportunities for appeal if a complainant is unhappy with the resolution of a complaint. Any appeal against the resolution of a complaint should be made in writing to the Principal. An appeal is only likely to be considered if there is evidence there was a procedural problem with the investigation. The Principal, at his/her discretion, will consider the application for an appeal and will either direct the complaint be re-examined or direct the matter be closed.

3.6 Step Six – External resolution

- (a) If you are not satisfied by outcome of the review or the complaint remains unresolved, you may pursue external resolution alternatives.

School Community Grievance Checklist

The manner of dealing with a grievance

- Have only the people directly involved in investigating or adjudicating a grievance had access to information about the grievance?
- Have all parties had a chance to put their point of view?
- Has the grievance been dealt with as quickly as possible?

Initial direct informal discussion about grievance

- Has the Complainant tried to sort out the grievance directly with the person involved first by requesting a telephone call or meeting?
- Has the grievance been discussed between the Complainant and person involved?
- Has the relevant School employee sent an email to acknowledge the discussion and the agreed outcome?

Escalation of information discussion

- Was a resolution not achieved via informal discussion?
- Is the Complainant not comfortable raising the issue directly with the relevant person involved in the issue?
- Has the Complainant raised the grievance with the appropriate senior staff member?
- Has the grievance been discussed between the Complainant and senior staff member?
- Does the complaint need to be investigated?
- Has the complaint been investigated and handled with the relevant due diligence and addressed in an equitable and unbiased manner?

Lodgement of a formal Grievance

- Is the Complainant not satisfied with the outcome of the discussion with the senior staff member?
- Has the School received a formal Grievance in writing, by letter or email from the Complainant?
- Does the formal Grievance included details of the concern including relevant times, dates and people involved?

- Has the formal Grievance been lodged to the Grievance Officer, if it does not involve the Principal?
- Has the formal Grievance been lodged to the Board, if it involved the Principal?
- Has the Complainant received an acknowledgement of receipt of the formal Grievance?
- Has the School determined the most appropriate method of dealing with the Grievance, to ensure confidentiality of the process and that the appropriate people within the School are involved?

Investigation of Grievance

- Has the Grievance been investigated confidentially and in an equitable and unbiased manner as deemed appropriate by the school?
- Has the School informed the Complainant in writing about the outcome of the investigation, to the extent appropriate noting procedural fairness and confidentiality obligations?

Appeal

- Is the Complainant not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation?
- Has the Principal received a formal appeal against the resolution of a complaint in writing, by letter or email?
- Has the Principal considered the application for an appeal?
- Has the Principal at his/her discretion directed the complaint to be re-examined?
- Has the Principal at his/her discretion directed the matter to be closed?

External Resolution

- Has the Complainant pursued external resolution alternatives as they are not satisfied by the outcome of the review?
- Has the School pursued external resolution alternatives as the complaint remains unresolved?