

Grievance and Concern Policy

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| To Be Revised | 03/2019 |
| This Version | 03/2018 |
| Previous Versions | 09/2017 |
| Related Documents | Grievance Tracking System |
| Links With | • |
| Related Legislation | • |
| Appendices | Appendix I: Grievance and Concern Flowchart Appendix II: Grievance and Concern Report Form Appendix III: Complaint Flowchart (for children) |

Introduction

Helena River Steiner School strives to promote a healthy environment of caring and respect for all human beings. Healthy complaints systems are a fundamental part of our school. Part 2 of this Policy is specifically to assist children who wish to make a complaint and is titled **“Helping Children to make a Complaint”**. Children may go directly to **“How Can Children Make a Complaint?”**

We seek that the school

- is open and accessible to all parents and students
- listens to parents and students
- encourages parents to contact the Principal, teacher or office staff directly
- provides support to staff to ensure they are comfortable in dealing with complaints

This policy explains what to do if you have a concern or grievance about anything to do with Helena River Steiner School. A “concern” means any type of problem, grievance, worry or complaint about any aspect of Helena River Steiner School including discrimination. The concern may be about:

- A bullying issue
- How an issue has been handled
- The actions of another member of the school community
- Safety in the school
- A child’s treatment by a member of staff
- Financial issues
- Discrimination

Reducing Anxiety

- Anxiety can be reduced for all the parties of a complaint by taking the matter seriously and dispelling uncertainty about how the complaint will be handled. This will be achieved by:
- Making sure information about the complaints procedure is clear.
- Acknowledging complaints immediately or at most within two working days.
- Staff should inform parents what is happening to their concern or complaint and, if a more detailed response is needed, by what date it will be received.

- The issue should be dealt with as quickly as possible.
- Confirming the nature of the complaint and what is concerning the complainant.
- Assuring parents, students and staff that their views matter.

Scope and Application

This policy is applicable for staff, parents, guardians, students or members of the public and school community. The procedure may be used by a student's parent or guardian on behalf of a concern or grievance their child has.

A copy of this policy will be available in the School office for parents and staff to view, and will also be available on the School's website. Furthermore, it shall be noted in both the Parent handbook and Staff Handbook where the Policy can be found.

Policy

Helena River Steiner School welcomes and encourages all feedback. We recognise that concerns and grievances are important pieces of information for the School and we shall hear, record and address them appropriately. We will provide a practical mechanism for people to be able to provide feedback and seek resolution when dissatisfied or concerned with any aspect of the School. Procedural due fairness will be followed in reaching an outcome for all persons in a timely manner.

In all instances, confidentiality will be maintained and the matter handled with sensitivity.

All staff are informed of how to respond to a complaint and are enabled to resolve or refer a complaint. Staff training is regularly provided to this purpose.

This policy will be regularly reviewed, particularly after using the process, to assess its effectiveness and investigate ways it may be improved.

Guiding Principals

Confidential

Only the people directly involved in the grievance or helping resolve it can have access to information. See section headed "Record Keeping" for more information about where and how records will be kept. The School appreciates that personal issues must be kept confidential. Confidentiality will be maintained by the relevant staff member/s at all levels of the process.

Impartial (fair)

All sides get a chance to tell their side of the story. No-one makes any assumptions or takes any action until all relevant information has been collected and considered. All sides have access to support if they want or need it. The investigator is free from bias or the perception of bias and, in particular, is not 'judge in his or her own cause'. Any complaint outcome is supported by the evidence, necessitating a finding on the balance of probabilities in the event of a dispute of fact. The complaint outcome is finalised by an adjudicator, who may also be the investigator, who is free from bias. The outcome is consistent with established school policies.

Fear of unfair repercussions of victimisation

The Principal and School Board takes all necessary steps to make sure people involved in a grievance are not victimised for coming forward with a grievance or helping sort it out.

Sort out at the immediate level, if possible

We will aim to sort out all grievances at the immediate level, if possible, with the minimum of fuss. In many cases, grievances can be sorted out by agreement between the people involved with no need for further action to be taken.

Sensitivity

The Principal and School Board will treat all concerns seriously and sensitively.

Timely

We aim to deal with all concerns as quickly as possible. The Principal will keep parties informed with the progress of the issue at various intervals.

Record Keeping

The Principal and Staff will keep written notes of:

- Their interviews/correspondance with all parties to the grievance, and
- What action they took to resolve the grievance.
- These notes will be kept in the Principal's office while the issue is being resolved. Once the matter has been finalised, the Principal will keep all records of concern in a secure location. Systemic problems will be identified and trends reported on by the Principal to the School Board using the Grievance Tracking Log

Support

When a meeting occurs between a member of staff and a parent, both parties are able to have a support person present.

The support person does not say anything in grievance meetings. They are simply there to provide moral / emotional support for the person/s involved. The support person is also bound by confidentiality.

Procedure

It is expected that the grievance should initially be discussed with the person directly concerned. Every effort should be made to resolve the grievance at this level before moving on to the following steps.

All complaints may be lodged via face-to-face contact, telephone conversations or written notification and a record will be kept of the complaint until resolved, and then stored for a further 3 years.

If the aggrieved party is a child, the child's parent or guardian may act on their behalf or the

Helping Children to Make a Complaint section may be referred to.

Steps Toward Resolution

Note: If an outcome is reached during any of these steps that either party is not happy with, a system of review shall be applied.

Step 1. Discuss with the person concerned and attempt to resolve the grievance.

Step 2. If the grievance is not resolved satisfactorily by direct communication, either party can bring the matter in written form to the attention of the Principal. (If the matter concerns the Principal, go to Step 5b)

When a complaint is put in writing the complaint should be based on an identifiable instance or instances and record factual information. The Principal will contact the complainant as a matter of priority. It will be dealt with within two days (or sooner if the situation is urgent).

Step 3. A meeting will be arranged to listen, to respond to the concerns, and to discuss options for actions to be implemented.

If appropriate, the person who is the subject of the complaint is advised of the complaint and invited to submit their own account of the incident/s to the Principal.

Where the complaint involves two or more parties a meeting is held to explore the incident/s with all parties facilitated by the Principal.

The school shall keep the complainant informed of the process, how the school proposes to deal with the complaint, any outcomes at this stage, and the proposed timeframe.

Step 4 In the same meeting or in a further meeting, options for action are explored and agreement is reached upon those actions which need to be implemented.

This process may extend beyond one meeting and may be more or less formal depending on the situation and events under discussion.

A suitable time frame is outlined for actions. It is the responsibility of the Principal to track and see that implementation is carried out.

If any action requires sanctioning from the College of Teachers then ratification is sought from the appropriate body.

Where an aspect of a grievance includes an issue about a staff member's professional performance or conduct, the issue may also be discussed with the College of Teachers. If required, support will be offered to the staff member to explore these issues and to address any concerns through professional development, mentorship or by agreement.

Step 5 Action/s are implemented and followed up as agreed by parties involved in the mediated meeting.

The school shall keep the complainant informed of the process, how the school proposes to deal with the complaint, any outcomes at this stage, and the proposed timeframe.

Step 6. If the grievance is not resolved satisfactorily with the Principal, the Family Support Officer may be engaged to assist in the resolution of the matter, following a similar process or meetings.

Step 7. If the grievance is not resolved satisfactorily with the Family Support officer, the grievance can be brought in writing to the School Board Grievance Sub-Committee to assist in the resolution of the matter.

The school shall keep the complainant informed of the process, how the school proposes to deal with the complaint, any outcomes at this stage, and the proposed timeframe.

Step 7b. The grievance may be brought in writing to the School Board Grievance Sub-Committee to assist in the resolution of the matter.

The school shall keep the complainant informed of the process, how the school proposes to deal with the complaint, any outcomes at this stage, and the proposed timeframe.

Step 8. Any grievance which has been processed between the School Board Sub-Committee and the parties involved and is still unresolved, can be referred to an external mediation body.

Step 9. If still unresolved at this stage, we recommend the mediation services provided by the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA) or a similar independent body.

The School Board Grievance Sub-Committee receiving a written complaint will:

1. Determine and confirm the details of the complaint and record details.
2. Confirm the content and intent of the complaint and the possible outcome to be achieved.
3. Explain to the aggrieved the courses of action available.
4. Commit to seeking a resolution, if possible, in a positive manner and action immediately.
5. Determine whether the person making the complaint is satisfied with the proposed course of action and, if not, suggest an alternative course of action.
6. Follow up and monitor the outcome to confirm the person is satisfied and has received appropriate feedback.
7. Evaluate the nature of the complaint in informing policy and procedural reviews.

Once a complaint has been resolved

- All relevant documents are deleted from the computer
- All relevant information is sealed in an envelope which is kept in the Complaints Folder in a locked cabinet for 3 years.
- A brief unbiased reference is to be added to the personnel/student file to the effect that:
 - a) a complaint was made
 - b) a complaint was addressed/resolved
 - c) any further details are stored in a sealed envelope in Complaints Folder.

Intractable Complaints

Most complaints can be resolved if approached positively. A complaint may become intractable, due to its nature or to the way in which it was handled, or possibly because the parent perceives the school to have 'closed ranks' against him or her. Intractable complaints are usually taken to the School Governing Body Chair, the Grievance Sub-Committee or an arbiter.

Referral to the Chair of the School Governing Body

The Principal will refer any matter to the Chair of the School Governing Body and inform the parents that this stage has been reached. However, a situation may arise where the complainant is unhappy with the Principal's response. In this case the parent should be able to write directly to the Chair. The Chair will discuss the matter fully with the Principal and be provided with relevant documentation. If a briefing is required from a member of staff, this should occur in the presence of the Principal. The Chair should respond to the parents, notifying them that he/she is reviewing the matter, asking them if they wish to add anything further and providing a date by which they may expect a response. The Chair's response should be clear and detailed, and should offer a meeting if the parents remain troubled.

Meeting with the Chair of the School Governing Body

If a meeting is requested, the Chair will offer to meet the parents at a time convenient to them. Those to be involved are:

- the Chair of the School Council
- the Principal and, at the most, one other member of staff
- the parents/ people involved

Parents should be permitted to bring with them a supportive friend who is not involved with the complaint. Legal representation would be discouraged at this stage.

The Chair, after questioning and listening to the parents and the Principal, may be able to find a solution. If this is not possible, and the parents wish to take the matter further, the Chair could consider the Grievance Sub-Committee or seek the advice of an independent arbitrator.

Referral to an Independent Arbiter/Mediator

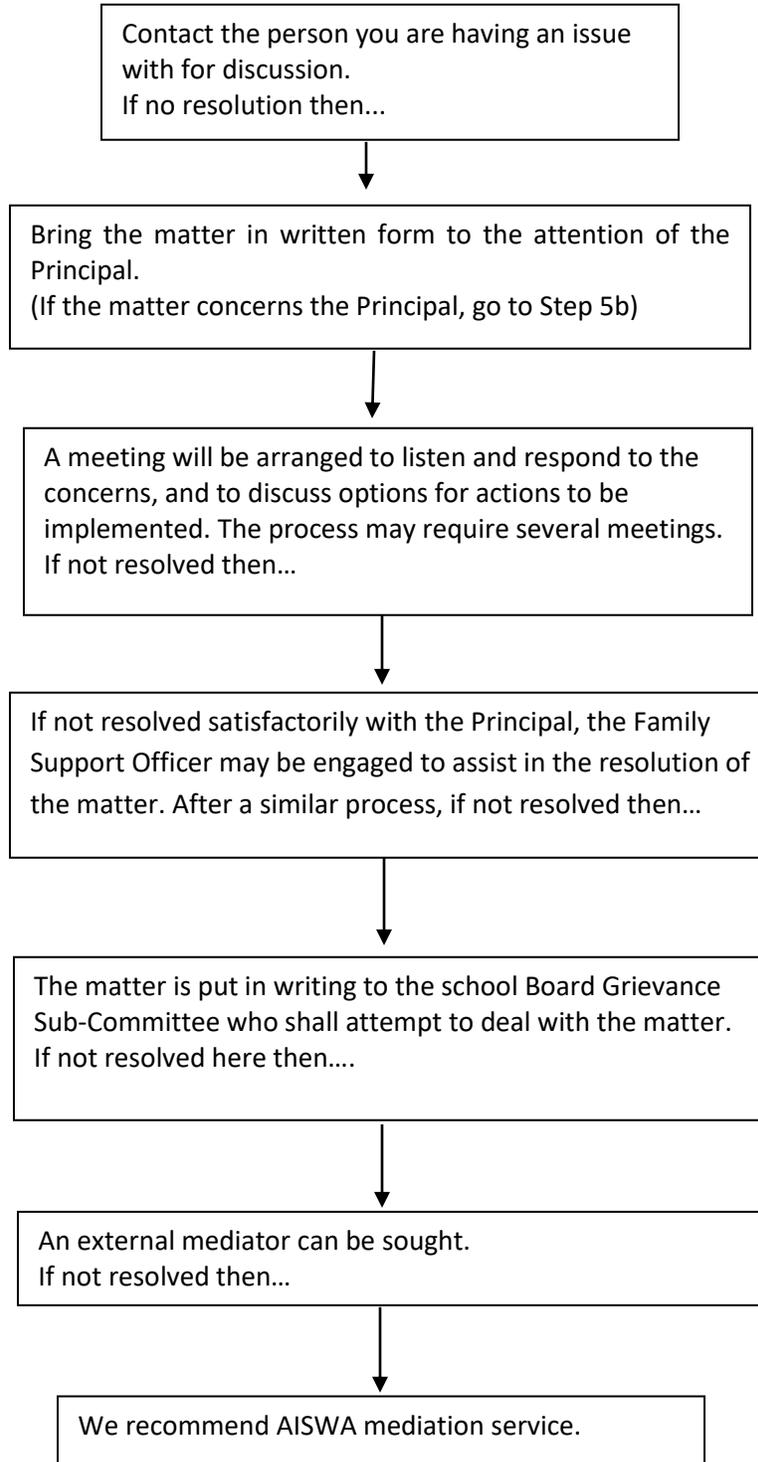
As a final step in the disputes and complaints procedure, if appropriate, schools could use an independent arbiter to resolve an issue. The arbiter would have to be:

- Agreed by both parties
- Remunerated by both parties (if appropriate)
- Assured both parties will accept the arbiter's decision.

Further Action

At all stages of a complaints resolution procedure the complainant can seek legal advice if they wish.

Flowchart, Grievance and Concern Policy



**Helena River Steiner School
Concern and Grievance Report Form**

This form is to be used when putting a concern or grievance in writing.
Please refer to the procedure outlined on the Concern and Grievance Flow Chart

Once completed:
Email, post or hand this form in to the front counter at the school office. It will be directed accordingly. You may ask for a receipted copy if required. (Place in an envelope marked "confidential" if necessary.)

Concerns will be processed in accordance with the Concern and Grievance Policy.

INDICATE LEVEL OF CONCERN TO YOU(circle): MINOR MIDDLE MAJOR

Date: / /

Name of person filling in this form: _____

Phone number: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

Person filling in this form is a (please circle, or note other):

Teacher Parent/ Guardian Teaching Assistant Other: _____

Description of concern and actions taken so far: (Add additional pages if more space is needed)

What you would like to see happen: (Add additional pages if more space is needed)

Thank you for filling out this form. You will be contacted to let you know how your concern is being addressed. Please feel free to follow up this report with the school Principal or school council if you feel you are not being heard.

Helping Children to Make a Complaint

Helena River Steiner School considers that listening to children and young people, dealing with concerns or complaints about behaviour towards a child, or between children, and disclosure or discovery of abuse is of critical importance.

Creating a safe culture

Helena River Steiner School seeks to make speaking up easier for students by:

- providing a clear process for the children to follow which the teachers bring to their students.
- Having processes appropriate to different age levels.
- teachers promoting regular feedback from the students.
- empowering students by providing opportunities for them to participate in discussions, such as Weekly Sharing Circle, .Class Meetings, and general discussion at meal times.
- teachers being proactive in creating opportunities to ask children about any issues that might be affecting them.
- teachers demonstrating their listening and care by taking complaints and concerns seriously
- teachers assuring children they will be listened to straight away.
- staff and volunteers being guided in the skills of discussing and listening to different types of complaints, such as concerns, suspicions, unsafe behaviour, environments or practices and/or allegations about staff or children and how to appropriately share information internally and externally.
- Teachers providing Protective Behaviours strategies such as “5 Fingers” to identify adults they can trust and can talk to.
- Teachers are encouraged to look at programmes to support a healthy culture, for example; Bringing Child Rights into Your Classroom: An Educator’s Guide – SNAICC www.snaicc.org.au

How Can Children make a Complaint?

You can complain about:

- Being bullied
- Something you don't believe is right about your education
- Something you don't believe is right about how you are being treated
- Something you don't believe is right about how somebody else is being treated
- Not feeling safe
- Not feeling listened to

What to do if you want to make a complaint:

1. Wherever possible you should explain your concern or make a complaint face-to-face with the person it concerns.
2. If you don't feel comfortable talking about it, write down your concern or complaint and put it in the "tell-it-all " box in your classroom.
3. Seek advice from your parents/ guardians/teachers or adults who you trust. They may be able to help you and lodge a complaint on your behalf.
4. Have a look at the flowchart below to see how it should be dealt with.

The person who receives the complaint will :

1. be responsible for dealing with the complaint or making sure it gets addressed.
2. make sure that you understand what will happen next and when it will happen.
3. Not tell anyone else about it except the responsible adults who will help with resolving it, and the person/people it concerns.

COMPLAINT FLOWCHART

