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## **PURPOSE**

This policy provides clear and transparent information to the School community about how concerns and complaints by parents and students can be made, will be managed, and will be resolved. Such concerns and complaints may relate to student behaviour, staff conduct, a student's education and/or wellbeing, or the School generally.

However, concerns about child safety and reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with the [Student Protection in Anglican Schools Policy](#), and [Student Protection in Anglican Schools Procedure](#) document (copies of which are available on the School's website), as adapted by the School to reflect its independent corporate structure.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

At Whitsunday Anglican School, we believe that resolving legitimate concerns and complaints is an important way in which the School can offer an education that proudly promotes Christian values, supports the intellectual, creative, physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of the School's students, and by which parents and students can otherwise provide the School with feedback to enable future improvements.

The School's aim is to ensure that concerns and complaints are handled in a timely, comprehensive and objective manner, with a degree of sensitivity. In doing so, the School will seek to identify both the specific and (where applicable) systemic issues raised by a concern or complaint.

When raising a concern or complaint with the School, parents and students can expect to:

- Be treated with respect and courtesy.
- Have their concerns and complaints taken seriously, considered impartially, dealt with on the merits and handled in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness.
- Have their concerns and complaints dealt with in a confidential manner, and actioned as soon as practicable.
- Have access to appropriate and easily understandable information regarding the resolution process being followed by the School.
- Be supported by the School during the resolution process.
- Be kept informed of the progress and outcome of their concern or complaint.
- Not be victimised, or subjected to reprisal, for raising concerns or complaints in good faith.



In return, the School expects that parents and students will:

- Treat others (including staff) with respect and courtesy.
- Raise concerns as soon as possible after the event giving rise to the concern has occurred, and ideally before escalating the matter to a complaint.
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint.
- Ask for assistance or further information as needed.
- Act in good faith to achieve a reasonable outcome.

Please note the processes outlined in this policy are intended to be conciliatory, non-adversarial and non-legal.

### **FRAMEWORK**

The School's framework for dealing with concerns and complaints involves a three-step process, namely:

**Stage 1 – A parent or student raises a concern**

**Stage 2 – A parent or student makes a complaint to the Principal**

**Stage 3 – A parent or student requests a review by the Board**

The School's aim is for the prompt resolution of concerns, ideally without there being a need for a formal complaint to be made.

Timeframes listed in this policy are only a guide, and can vary due to the nature of the concern or complaint and surrounding circumstances. Where timeframes set out in this policy cannot be met, the School will endeavour to communicate with the affected parties about the status of the complaint, and the steps taken (or to be taken) to progress a resolution.

#### **Stage 1 – Raise the concern**

At first instance, parents and students should raise their concerns directly with the School. The School must be aware of a concern about student behaviour, staff conduct, a student's education and/or wellbeing, or the School generally, in order to resolve that concern.

The School appreciates that creating and maintaining a child safe culture requires input from the entire School community. As such, the School is best able to provide an engaging and supportive learning experience that achieves the best individual outcome for students, when parents and staff

work directly and cohesively with one another, to resolve any issues or concerns and otherwise develop relationships in the community.



Parents should consider the following prior to, and when raising a concern:

- Clearly identify the issue or problem prior to contacting the School.
- If there is more than one issue or problem, write a list so that you are properly prepared.
- Decide whether the issue or problem is in the nature of a concern, enquiry or grievance. This will help in finding a solution.
- Identify the other party or parties involved.
- Consider the framework outlined in this policy, and the outcome you are trying to achieve (while being realistic and open to other outcomes and solutions).
- Make an appointment to meet with your child's teacher or other relevant staff member (counsellor, Head of Year) to discuss the concern - the best way to do this is to contact the relevant Head of Junior School or Senior School's secretaries. to arrange a mutually convenient time for a Zoom, telephone call or meeting. When contacting the relevant Head of Junior School or Senior School's secretaries, please identify yourself and your child, identify the person you would like to speak with, and provide a brief description of the issue you wish to speak about (for example 'homework' or 'wellbeing').
- Remain courteous and calm when conveying your concern. The School is within its rights to terminate a conversation with a parent until such time that a courteous and calm conversation can continue.

Once a concern is raised, the School will contemporaneously record (either by way of an electronic file note or written correspondence) the details of the concerns including the date and time, as well as the name and contact details of the person raising the concerns. The School's focus will be on understanding the nature of the problem (including how the concern aligns with the School's policies and procedures), the party or parties involved, and the nature of agreeable solutions.

Where a mutually agreed outcome is not possible, the staff member handling the concern will make a decision that aligns with the School's policies, procedures and legal obligations.

Any decision will be communicated in writing to the person who raised a concern, and the communication will be kept on the relevant student's (or if appropriate, staff member's) school file.

The School will also consider whether any policy or practice improvements arise from the concern.

### **Stage 2 – Make a complaint**

If you are not satisfied with the way your concern has been addressed, you may choose to make a complaint to the Principal. If the complaint concerns the Principal, the complaint should be made to the Board (and addressed to the Chair) at [chariman@was.qld.edu.au](mailto:chariman@was.qld.edu.au), in which case the Chair will manage the process outlined below on the Board's behalf.

You may write to the Principal, who will then acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as practicable (being usually within three (3) business days), or telephone the School to arrange a meeting with the Principal. Please note that if phoning to arrange a meeting, the Principal's PA will take your details and endeavour to confirm a meeting time as soon as it is practicable to do so.



If you arrange to meet with the Principal, you may choose to have someone else present for pastoral support. The support person can be a relative or a friend, but please note that the role of a support person is to provide you with pastoral support and not to act as an advocate.

Complaints to the Principal, should ordinarily be made within one calendar month of the initial concern first being raised with the School.

When the Principal is dealing with a complaint, the School's objective is to achieve a resolution by:

- Clarifying the substance of the complaint, and the steps taken by the School to address the underlying concern, enquiry or grievance.
- Make further enquiries where appropriate, and communicate the support available to the parties involved.
- Identifying whether the complaint raises an issue regarding a breach of the School's policies or procedures.
- Identifying whether the complaint raises an issue that would be more appropriately addressed under the School's **Student Protection in Anglican Schools Policy, and Student Protection in Anglican Schools Procedure** document (copies of which are available on the School's website).
- Appropriately documenting the steps taken by the Principal (or his or her delegate) to resolve the complaint.
- Communicating with the relevant parent(s), student(s) and staff in an attempt to resolve the issue by agreement (where practicable).
- Failing agreement, investigating the complaint and deciding appropriate outcomes in accordance with procedural fairness principles.

The Principal may seek the assistance of a third party, including an independent mediator or external investigator, to assist with this stage. The Principal may also delegate the management of the complaint to another senior staff member where the Principal considers it appropriate to do so. Following the investigation, the staff member handling the complaint will communicate with the parent and relevant parties, to discuss the outcome and an appropriate course of action (if any).

The School will aim to resolve complaints within fifteen (15) business days where practicable.

### **Stage 3 – Requesting a review**

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been adequately resolved by the Principal, you may request a review. Requests for review should be made to the Board and addressed to the Chair.

Requests must be made in writing within ten (10) business days of the date the Principal (or his or her delegate) communicated the outcome to you. The grounds for the review, and in particular any concerns with the way the relevant complaint was dealt with, must be clearly identified.

The Board may delegate all or parts of the review, including to the Chair, a sub-committee or independent investigator, however any ultimate decision will still be made by the Board.



For the avoidance of doubt, the Board will not delegate to the Principal a review of a decision he or she has already made. However, if the Board is satisfied that a complaint has not been properly raised with the Principal (and the Principal does not otherwise have a conflict of interest), it may refer the matter to the Principal to make an initial decision (noting that decision would then create a right to request a review).

The Board will aim to resolve requests for review within forty-five (45) business days where practicable, and will communicate the outcome to you in writing.

If the Board considers that the action taken by the Principal was appropriate in the circumstances, the reasons for this decision will be communicated to you. If appropriate action was not taken, the Board may ask the Principal to revisit the direction, and/or consider areas for policy or practice improvement.

### **SUPPORT**

Where appropriate, support should be offered to all parties involved in a resolution processes arising under this policy.

For staff, this may include referrals to the School's Employee Assistance Program, Access EAP. For students, this may include a referral to the School's Chaplain or internal counselling services. Parents and families may also be referred to local counselling and support services, at the School's discretion.

### **PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS**

Please note that where allegations are made against staff or students and may give rise to disciplinary consequences, the School will apply procedural fairness principles. This includes giving the subject of allegations a reasonable opportunity to be heard.

### **WITHDRAWAL OF A COMPLAINT**

A complaint can be withdrawn by a parent or student at any stage during the processes outlined in this policy. A complaint can only be withdrawn by the person who made the complaint to the School (or, in the case of a student, the student's parents).

Ideally, all complaints should be retracted in writing, however a signed and dated notation on the original record of the complaint, stating it has been withdrawn verbally, can be made by the person at the School responsible for managing the complaint.

The School will notify affected parties if a complaint is withdrawn, where considered appropriate.



## **RECORD KEEPING**

The School will keep contemporaneous records of concerns and complaints raised in accordance with this policy.

Records are to be stored on the School's ERM system.

## **ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS**

The School is committed to dealing with concerns and complaints in accordance with the processes outlined in this policy. The School respects that in some cases, complainants would prefer to remain anonymous and not put a name to the concerns.

The School treats concerns about a student's education and/or wellbeing with the utmost importance, and will investigate concerns raised to the fullest extent practicable. However, anonymity can make it difficult for the School to effectively resolve concerns and complaints (particularly where the School is being asked to accept an anonymous source's version of events) and it is therefore not encouraged.

## **VEXATIOUS, PREVIOUSLY ADDRESSED OR STALE COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS**

The School does not tolerate vexatious concerns and complaints.

Concerns and complaints that have been previously addressed by the School, or which were not raised with the School within a reasonable period of time, will not be considered in the absence of highly relevant new information and/or evidence coming to light.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained by the School at all times when dealing with a concern or complaint from a parent or student, with information only being provided to those who have a right or need to know.

## **COMMUNICATION**

This policy is available to parents, students and the School community via the School's website. This policy is available to staff via the School's ERM. This policy forms part of the School's induction program for incoming staff, and aspects of (and updates to) this policy will be addressed in the School's professional development updates, bulletins and newsletters

## **RELEVANT DOCUMENTS**

[Student Protection in Anglican Schools Policy](#)  
[Student Protection in Anglican Schools Procedure](#)