



Complaint Handling Policy

INTRODUCTION

Glennaeon Rudolf Steiner School is committed to providing a safe work environment for all workers and students. We acknowledge that members of staff, students, parents and/or members of the wider community may sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at school which appears unsatisfactory, or unreasonable. The purpose of this policy and the **Complaint Handling Procedure** is to establish a framework for the handling of any complaints that may arise.

PURPOSE

A complaint may be made about any policy or procedure, decision, behaviour, act or omission (whether by the Head of School, members of the Executive, other staff, students or parents) that the complainant may consider to be unsatisfactory or unreasonable. Where possible we aim to resolve issues through direct discussion between parties. However, we acknowledge there may be times where it is not possible to take up the issue with the other party directly, or where doing so does not resolve the matter. In such cases this Policy and Procedure should be used.

POLICY

This policy aims to ensure, that as far as is practicable, complaints are addressed in a timely and confidential manner at the lowest appropriate management level, to prevent the unnecessary escalation.

Wherever minor or simple matters can be resolved quickly and without recourse to the formal complaint handling process this is encouraged. Through this policy we will:

- improve the level of parent satisfaction with Glenaeon Rudolf Steiner School, and the relationship of parents and families with the school and teachers;
- respect and recognise the innate dignity of each person in any way involved with the school
- recognise the rights of a person who is the subject of a complaint (the respondent);
- protect the confidentiality of both the complainant and the respondent;
- provide an efficient, fair and accessible mechanism for prompt investigation and resolution of complaints in accordance with the principles of natural justice;
- ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, information is available on the complaints handling process;
- enable the nature of complaints to be monitored to improve the quality of services by identifying and rectifying practices that may be impeding service delivery; and
- ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the complaint handling process is transparent and comprehensive.

The following Principles underlie this policy:

Commitment

The school is committed to investigating all complaints in accordance with this policy. This will be reflected in the:

- adoption and distribution of the Complaints Handling Policy and Complaints Handling Procedures
- appropriate training of staff in the implementation of this policy
- ongoing monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness of the Complaints Handling Policy and Complaints Handling Procedures

Responsiveness

Complaints will be dealt with promptly. The process and the time needed to resolve an issue will vary depending on the nature and complexity of the issue.

Visibility

The existence of this complaint handling policy and procedures, its purpose and the method of accessing it will be promoted internally for staff and externally to the community.

Subsidiarity

The process of responding to a formal complaint will reflect the principle of subsidiarity. This means that we expect that complaints to be resolved at the lowest level of management necessary for their proper resolution. The Head of School, therefore, will not be directly involved in the resolution of those complaints which are more appropriately handled by others in the school community.

The principles of procedural fairness will be followed in all aspects of complaint handling.
Procedural fairness includes:

- giving the complainant the opportunity to put their case;

- offering reasonable assistance to the complainant to enable the complaint to be made and to be aware of the complaint handling procedures;
- informing the respondent of the substance of the complaint and providing an opportunity to respond;
- providing the respondent with information about the complaint investigation process including outcomes;
- handling the complaint process confidentially
- determining complaints as expeditiously as possible and advising all parties of the outcome of the investigation;
- assessing the facts and circumstances of the situation objectively and determining the complaint fairly and equitably;
- providing the complainant with details of the determination and reasons for the decision; and
- informing both parties of any avenue for review.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an obligation to the provider of information, while privacy is an obligation to the subject of the information. Complainants can feel secure that their complaint will remain confidential. Confidentiality will be respected at all times within the constraints of the need to fully investigate the complaint. The obligation to maintain confidentiality extends also to both the complainant and the respondent.

Access & Equity

The complaints handling process must be accessible and additional assistance may be available to complainants and respondents who are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, have a disability or are a young person.

No Victimisation

Those making a complaint in good faith will be protected from detrimental action including victimisation or unfair treatment.

Vexatious Complaints

There is an underlying assumption that complaints are made in good faith (and with good will) and with an intention for resolution as opposed to retribution. From time to time complaints received will be found to be invalid and/or vexatious. Complainants (and/or anyone acting on their behalf) may be considered as vexatious complainants where previous or current contact with them shows that they meet TWO OR MORE of the **Vexatious Complaint Criteria**. If the complaint is found to be invalid or vexatious it will not be further investigated. Affected parties will be informed of this decision in writing.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints do not reflect the principles outlined above. If you make an anonymous verbal complaint to the school, you will be encouraged to identify yourself in order for the procedures outlined in this policy to be implemented fully. If you choose to remain anonymous, then in the case of verbal complaints you will be informed that the complaint may not be acted upon.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of significant dissatisfaction with the policies, procedures or service provided by the school. Complaints may be oral or written. Written complaints include those sent by letter, fax or email. For example, complaints may be about:

- student disciplinary procedures;
- homework;
- damage/loss of personal property;
- student bullying;
- school management and/or school fees;

- quality of teaching;
- breach of privacy;
- school resources;
- work health and safety issues.

Matters Excluded from this Policy

There are specific complaint procedures in place for the following matters:

child protection issues (i.e. if the complaint is about alleged inappropriate physical contact, sexual misconduct, neglect, or psychologically harmful conduct by an adult towards any child or young person. All such complaints should be made directly to the Head of School;

- workplace bullying;
- harassment;
- enrolment;
- employment relations.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The School Executive is responsible for ensuring this policy is adhered to throughout the school.

IMPLEMENTATION

Glenaeon Rudolf Steiner School has set up a series of compliance tasks in **CompliSpace Assurance**, to ensure that key obligations under the NSW Registration Manual are managed effectively.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Complaint Handling Procedure
- Vexatious Complaint Criteria
- Procedures for handling allegations of staff misconduct and reportable conduct