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## Complaints and Grievances Policy

Staff and the School Board are willing to assist students and parents with a range of issues that may arise.

The aim of this policy is to develop and implement a process by which parents can confidently raise concerns in the knowledge that they will be listened to, and their concerns will be professionally managed in a timely, confidential manner.

A student or parent can raise a concern or a complaint about any aspect of the school's operations or the welfare or safety of a student.

The following information provides a guide to the correct process to use.

### Definition

For the purpose of this policy, the term 'parent' includes guardians, carers and every person who has parental responsibility for the child, including parental responsibility under the Family Law Act 1975, and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

*It is asked that all parties involved in parent concerns/complaints can*

- recognise that everyone has rights and responsibilities that must be balanced
- respect and try to understand each other's point of view
- realise we need to achieve an outcome acceptable to everyone involved

*It is expected that all parties involved in parent concerns/complaints will*

- act respectfully, honestly and in good faith
- act in a calm, courteous, and sincere manner
- maintain and respect everyone's privacy and confidentiality
- recognise that everyone has rights and responsibilities that must be balanced
- adhere to Fernbrook School's values at all times

### *Complainants are asked to:*

- raise their concern as soon as possible after the issue occurs
- provide complete and factual information together with evidence where relevant, about the concern or complaint, which may be requested in writing
- acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- exercise patience and respect for the subsequent process of investigation
- make complaints in good faith (and with good will) and with an intention for resolution as opposed to retribution.

## **Raising a Concern or Complaint**

Complainants may seek the services of an advocate if they feel they are unable to express their concerns clearly. An advocate can be a friend or colleague, or someone who is available through an appropriate support organisation that does not receive a fee for service.

Anonymous complaints will generally not be accepted.

If you wish to raise a concern or complaint, please contact the appropriate person (either in person or via email) to make an appointment as follows:

- **Your child's teacher** – if the issue is regarding:
  - something that occurred in your child's class
  - a classroom activity
  - class curriculum
  - friendship issues
  - excursions
  - camps

Another teacher may become involved if students from more than one class are involved.

- **The principal** – if the issue relates to:
  - a staff member
  - another parent's conduct
  - complex student issues
  - student welfare
  - school curriculum
  - assessment and reporting
  - fees
  - enrolment
  - school policy
  - school management
  - general matters

● **The board of Directors** – if the issue relates to:

- the principal
- a board member
- school policy
- school management

Where a concern or complaint involves the principal, the matter will be addressed directly by the Board. If the principal is present at the board meeting, he/she will be asked to remove themselves from discussion of the matter. Where a concern or complaint involves a board member, that person shall be required to be absent from board deliberations of the matter.

**Following a complaint being made, the school will:**

- Listen to concerns as soon as possible
- Act on all complaints promptly
- Investigate detailed information and seek resolution in a timely manner
- Conduct investigations in a fair and impartial manner
- Ensure the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness are adopted at every stage of the complaints and appeals process
- Deal with matters discretely and ensure privacy and confidentiality of all information relating to a complaint, appeal, or investigation
- Be calm, courteous, honest, and sincere

**Timeframes**

In all cases, Fernbrook School will try to resolve a concern or complaint as quickly as possible. Simple issues may be resolved in a single conversation while others with more complexity will take longer.

In all cases, Fernbrook School will try to resolve a concern or complaint within 28 working days. However, if the complaint is quite complex or requires advice from an external party, we may require more time to investigate and resolve it. In these circumstances the school will inform the complainant of the timeframe estimated for the investigation.

**Outcomes and Remedies**

Complaint Substantiated

If a concern or complaint is substantiated in whole or in part, Fernbrook School will offer an appropriate remedy. The remedy will be implemented as soon as practicable.

Appropriate remedies could be:

- an explanation or further information
- mediation, counselling, or other support
- an apology, expression of regret, or admission of fault
- review of a decision
- review of a policy, procedure, or practice

## Complaint Dismissed

A complaint can only be dismissed:

- after it has been investigated
- if an investigation has determined that the complaint cannot be substantiated or
- if the complaint is withdrawn

An explanation will be given to the complainant as to why the complaint has been dismissed.

## **If a Concern or Complaint is not Resolved**

If a concern or complaint raised with a teacher is not satisfactorily resolved, it will be referred to the principal.

Any matter that remains unresolved after being dealt with by the principal, will be referred to the board of directors.

The board of directors will then investigate the matter and determine an appropriate outcome.

If the matter remains unresolved and relates to the minimum standards for schools, the board of directors will provide information to the complainant to lodge an appeal with the relevant authority ie. Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority.

All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty in coming to an agreement.

## **Documentation of Complaints**

When the concern or complaint made is quickly and easily resolved, a brief note will be made in the teacher's or principal's diary, recording details of the issue and its resolution.

For more complex issues, the principal will ensure that a comprehensive record is maintained. The record will include the nature of the complaint, all correspondence regarding the complaint, details of meetings/conversations with the complainant and others involved, details of the investigation, the findings of the investigation and the remedy/outcome. The record will be stored in a secure location within the school.

## **Related Policies**

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Parent Code of Conduct

Staff Code of Conduct

Student Code of Conduct

Fees Policy

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Implemented by: The Principal

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