

## Complaint Handling Policy

<b>Our policy</b>	<p>Glenaeon Rudolf Steiner School is committed to providing a safe work environment for all workers and students.</p> <p>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 <a href="#">Complaint Handling Procedure</a> is to establish a framework for the handling of any complaints that may arise.</p> <p>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.</p>
<b>Intention</b>	<p>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.</p> <p>In such cases this Policy and Procedures should be used.</p>
<b>Policy Framework</b>	<p>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.</p> <p>Wherever minor or simple matters can be resolved quickly and without recourse to the formal complaint handling process this is encouraged.</p> <p>Through this policy we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• improve the level of parent satisfaction with Glenaeon Rudolf Steiner School, and the relationship of parents and families with the school and teachers;</li><li>• respect and recognise the innate dignity of each person in any way involved with the school;</li><li>• recognise the rights of a person who is the subject of a complaint (the respondent);</li><li>• protect the confidentiality of both the complainant and the respondent;</li><li>• provide an efficient, fair and accessible mechanism for prompt investigation and resolution of complaints in accordance with the principles of natural justice;</li><li>• ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, information is available on the complaints handling process;</li></ul>

- 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.

**Principles**

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 Procedures
- appropriate training of workers in the implementation of this policy
- ongoing monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness of the Complaints Handling Policy and 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.

**Procedural Fairness**

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 (ie. 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.

**Implementation**

Glenaeon Rudolf Steiner School has set up a series of compliance tasks on our [Assurance System](#), to ensure that key obligations under the NSW Registration Manual are managed effectively.

**Related Policies**

[Student Code of Conduct](#)  
[Parent Code of Conduct](#)  
[Complaint Handling Procedure](#)  
[Vexatious Complaint Criteria](#)

## Complaint Handling Procedure

### Purpose

This information will assist students and parents who are raising concerns or making a complaint that is related to the school or the student's education.

### General Points

Consider the following:

- Your Class Teacher or Guardian should always be your first point of contact;
- Concerns are best resolved at classroom level if possible;
- You can withdraw your complaint at any time;
- It may not always be possible to resolve an issue to your complete satisfaction.

## How to raise an issue or make a complaint

### Clarify the issue (what is the problem?)

Before you approach any representatives of the school including your class teacher/ guardian:

- Be clear about the topic or issue you want to discuss;
- Focus on the things that genuinely affect you or your child;
- Always remain calm and remember you may not have all the facts relating to the circumstances of the topic or issue you wish to discuss;
- Think about what an acceptable outcome would be for you and your child;
- Be informed; check the school's policies or guidelines, where relevant;
- ask for a copy of the school's complaints policy.

### Contact the school

There are a number of ways you can raise any concerns you have about your child. You can:

- Write a note or email to your Class Teacher/Guardian outlining your concerns
- Make an appointment to speak on the phone or in person with the Class Teacher/Guardian or coordinator; ensuring that you inform the school about the issue you wish to discuss

- Arrange any meeting times or phone calls through the school office (this is more convenient for both you and your child's teacher and does not interrupt teachers during the time they need to be with their students).
- Remember that the Class Teacher/ Guardian, together with others who may be involved, should be given a reasonable amount of time to take the steps required to resolve or address your concerns.

#### **Contact the Co-ordinator or Head of School**

Many concerns are resolved by following the first two steps above. However, if the issue remains unresolved after you have approached your child's teacher or other school staff you can then ask to see the relevant Co-ordinator or the Head of School. To do this, you will need to request an appointment through the school office. Be aware that:

- The Head of School may ask another senior staff member to speak with you on their behalf.
- If a teacher is going to be present at the meeting it is more likely to occur outside of classroom hours

If your concern is related to issues of school policy, these should be raised more formally (in writing) with the Head of School or the School Council.

#### **Contact the School Council**

If you still feel that your complaint has not been addressed satisfactorily after speaking to the teacher and the Head of School, you can then contact the School Council. Letters to the School Council should be addressed to the Chair of the School Council c/ the school office at Middle Cove.

#### **How to lodge a complaint in writing**

You can send your complaint by mail or email. Written complains should be addressed to:

Head of School  
 Glenaeon Rudolf Steiner School,  
 5A Glenroy Avenue  
 Middle Cove NSW 2068  
 Email: [andrewh@glenaeon.nsw.edu.au](mailto:andrewh@glenaeon.nsw.edu.au)

#### **Formal Complaints**

If a formal complaint is made or a conflict arises that cannot be resolved through the processes described above the school representative, most usually the Head of School will maintain a formal record of your complaint and endeavor to:

- Determine the appropriate form of complaints resolution procedure
- Seek agreement from interested parties as to the procedure being engaged

#### **Possible options for resolution**

Various courses of action may be considered depending on the nature of the complaint:

- Investigation and reporting back to the complainant
- Three-way meeting with the complainant, teacher and support person/s
- Internal mediation
- External mediation

#### **Investigation & reporting options**

- Interview those involved to ascertain the circumstances of the 'incident'; determine what if any action needs to be taken to resolve the 'issue'; report to the complainant as to the proposed action

- As relevant conduct evaluation of teacher(s) and/or student(s), determine if action is needed and report appropriately the outcome of any action
- Hold a three-way meeting with the complainant, teacher and support person(s)
- Seek a meeting with any other interested parties and appropriate support person(s)
- Build a picture of the 'incident' from the involved parties
- Determine the 'issues' at the heart of the complaint
- Seek agreement as to how the issues might be resolved

#### **Internal Mediation**

Use appropriate persons and mediation processes to bring about resolution.

#### **External Mediation**

- Seek the agreement of the school and the complainant as to the cost-sharing arrangements.
- Ensure that each complainant or appellant has an opportunity to present his or her case at minimal or no cost to him or herself.
- Use appropriate external expertise and mediation processes to bring about resolution

#### **Notes on Procedure**

- Confidentiality is to be maintained to protect all parties.
- All meetings must be documented and a written record of the complaint or appeal must be kept.
- Records of Complaint and meeting records are to be kept with the Head of School.
- The complainant or appellant is to be given a written statement of the outcome of their complaint and/or appeal including details of the reasons for the outcome.
- The process should commence within 10 working days of the formal lodgement of the complaint or appeal and supporting information and all reasonable measures should be taken to finalise the process as soon as is practicable.

#### **Child Protection Allegations**

**All allegations must be passed on to the nominated Child Protection Officer - Head of School - Andrew Hill**

#### **Related Policies**

[Complaint Handling Policy](#)  
[Vexatious Complaint Criteria](#)

## Vexatious Complaint Criteria

### Purpose

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.

This document defines the criteria for determining vexatious or malicious complaints.

### Vexatious Complaint Criteria

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 following criteria. Complainants who:

- Persist in pursuing a complaint where the School's complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and exhausted;
- Change the substance of a complaint or continually raise new issues or seek to prolong contact by continually raising further concerns or questions upon receipt of a response whilst the complaint is being addressed. (Care must be taken not to discard new issues which are significantly different from the original complaint. These might need to be addressed as separate complaints);
- Are unwilling to accept documented evidence of treatment given as being factual, or deny receipt of an adequate response, in spite of correspondence specifically answering their questions or do not accept that facts can sometimes be difficult to verify when a long period of time has elapsed;
- Do not clearly identify the precise issues which they wish to be investigated, despite reasonable efforts of school staff to help them specify their concerns, and/or where the concerns identified are not within the remit of the school to investigate;
- Focus on a trivial matter to an extent which is out of proportion to its significance and continue to focus on this point. (It is recognised that determining what is a 'trivial' matter can be subjective and careful judgement must be used in applying this criteria)
- Have threatened or used actual physical violence towards staff at any time - this will cause personal contact with the complainant and/or their representatives to be discontinued and the complaint will, thereafter, only be pursued through written communication. All such incidences should be documented);
- Have, while addressing a registered complaint, had an excessive number of contacts with the School placing unreasonable demands on staff. (A contact may be in person or by telephone, letter, fax, or email. Discretion must be used in determining the precise number of "excessive contacts" applicable under this section, using judgement based on the specific circumstances of each individual case)

- Have harassed or been personally abusive or verbally aggressive on more than one occasion towards staff dealing with their complaint. (Staff must recognise that complainants may sometimes act out of character at times of stress, anxiety, or distress and should make reasonable allowances for this. They should document all incidents of harassment):
- Are known to have recorded meetings or face-to-face/telephone conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of other parties involved;
- Display unreasonable demands or complainant expectations and fail to accept that these may be unreasonable (eg insist on responses to complaints or enquiries being provided more urgently than is reasonable or normal recognised practice).

**If a complaint is judged to be vexatious**

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.

**Related Policies**

[Complaint Handling Policy](#)  
[Complaint Handling Procedure](#)