



## Grievance Policy

Version No.	Date Review Due	Approved and Date Published	Changes Made	Author of Changes
1		2010	Creation	VH
2		2014	Major revision	KK
3		2017	Modifications	KK
4		2021	Major revision	AS/JMD
5				
6	2023			

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## **1. Introduction**

At Yallingup Steiner School, everyone is valued. The teacher aims to promote within the children the positive attributes and qualities of compassion, patience and kindness and address the lower aspects such as greed, anger and jealousy. Within the curriculum itself children meet qualities of truth, beauty and goodness. These are the guiding principles for the school years and the basis of our curriculum.

Teachers engage with parents to bring about the development necessary for the children to become freethinking, compassionate and loving human beings, the central aim of Steiner Education. Parents are encouraged to discuss with teachers their child's achievements, well being and social development.

We acknowledge that differences in opinion, understanding and feelings inevitably arise in many relationships, including in schools. We strive to deal with these in a way which is helpful for all those who are involved. This applies equally to staff members, parents and students. Please understand that each situation is different and these are guidelines to assist with resolution.

## **2. Scope and application**

This policy is applicable for staff, parents, guardians, students or members of the public and school community. 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.

The Grievance and Concern support form is available at the school office as well as the digital version on school stream and our website.

## **3. Guiding Principles**

A complaint is defined as 'expression of dissatisfaction made to the school about its services, decisions, actions or those of its staff, or about the complaint management process itself.'

YSS strives to be a safe environment where all staff members, parents, students, and other contractors feel confident that their concerns will be heard and taken seriously.

In the spirit of the provision of a safe school environment, the expression of a concern or a complaint equates to an expression of dissatisfaction and both should be managed and recorded in the same manner.

The main focus when it comes to handling complaints are the students and their well being. While this policy may be used by a student's parent or guardian on behalf of a concern or grievance their child has, parts 8 and 9 of this policy are to specifically assist children at our school to express a concern. The flowchart outlines the process of how a child can make a complaint.

A **dispute** is a pursued unresolved complaint that has been escalated, either internally and/or externally to the school. Please see section 7 of this document for information on the handling of a dispute.

Complaints and concerns may include:

- 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

The expression of a concern/complaint may involve:

- The school as a whole
- A specific department in the school
- A particular school activity
- An individual member of staff
- Another person working in the school
- One or more students.

A healthy complaint handling system provides security amongst staff, parents and children and reduces anxiety to speak up and express a concern. YSS encourages each member of the community to resolve their concerns or complaints directly with the other partie(s) involved. YSS also encourages parents to contact teachers, principal, chaplain or staff directly. Each complaint will be:

- Acknowledged regardless in which form (verbally, written, via telephone) and to whom it was made
- Dealt with in an expeditious manner
- Kept confidential at all times
- Dealt with procedural fairness (provide a hearing appropriate to the circumstances, demonstrate lack of bias providing evidence to support a decision)

“The Director General of the Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that the school observes the registration standards, including the standard about its complaints handling system. Any student, parent or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how the school has dealt with a complaint. Information is available on the Department of Education website<sup>16</sup>. While the Director General may consider whether the school has breached the registration standards, she does not have power to intervene in a complaint or override the school's decision.”

## 4. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

All members of the school community are encouraged to follow these procedures

### **STEP 1: Try to resolve the complaint directly**

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

If the concern is not resolved or if the complainant has difficulty speaking directly to the person he/she may:



### **STEP 2 a: Appointment with the Chaplain and/or Principal**

Complainant to raise the concern with the Chaplain and/or Principal who will arrange to mediate a discussion between both parties.

**Optional: Complete a Grievance & Resolution Procedure form available from the office, website or schoolstream. This form can be completed at any time during the procedure**

If the complaint involves the principal: Please raise it with the Chaplain or the School Board directly

If concern is not resolved to a favourable outcome for both parties or the grievance relates to the principal:



### **STEP 3: Written Concern for Review by the School Board**

Complainant is asked to put in writing their concern and the School Board may confer with the College or relevant advisory or legal bodies. The complainant will receive a written reply from the Board

If concern is not resolved to a to a satisfactory outcome:



### **STEP 4: School Board and College / Mediation**

A resolution will be sought by Board and College with the complainant. The process for a dispute is outlined in the constitution. An outside facilitator may be necessary for the mediation and/or arbitration process. Persons involved may bring support person/s to this mediation.

In the case of a dispute the process is outlined in the constitution § 22.

## 5. 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.

In many instances the class teacher will be the first person to whom a concern is expressed. This does not necessarily mean the teacher themselves is the concerned person. With concerns that involve students, concerns on behalf of students, or concerns from a parent, the teacher plays a fundamental role in assisting to find a resolution that agrees with the values and philosophy of YSS. The teacher is encouraged to seek support at any stage from the Chaplain, Principal and College of teachers in order to resolve a complaint.

Step 2. If the grievance is not resolved satisfactorily by direct communication, either party can bring the matter to the attention of the Chaplain and/or Principal.

When a complaint is put in writing, the complaint should be based on an identifiable instance or instances and record factual information. The Chaplain/Principal will contact the complainant as a matter of priority.

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 Chaplain/Principal. Where the complaint involves two or more parties a meeting is held to explore the matter or incident 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 time frame.

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.

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.

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 time frame.

Step 3. If the grievance is not resolved satisfactorily with the Principal, the grievance can be brought in writing to the School Board 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 time frame.

Step 4. Any grievance which has been processed between the School Board and the parties involved, and is still unresolved, can be referred to an external mediation body. The process for resolving a dispute with external mediation is outlined in detail in the Constitution, § 22.

To support resolution, we recommend the mediation services provided by the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA) or a similar independent body.

## 6. Resolution

Satisfaction for a complainant may come from any of the following:

- knowing that changes have been made and that matters will be different in future
- knowing that the school is now alert to a possible problem
- feeling that their concern has been considered seriously
- an outcome which may be different from the one they sought, but which they perceive to be well-considered
- a considered letter
- an apology
- If time is needed to investigate/consider the complaint then the complainant will be kept informed of its progress, in writing, giving the assurance that the issue has been understood and the matter is being dealt with.

## 7. Record keeping and Complaints Register

The Principal and Staff will keep written notes of their interviews/correspondence 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.

YSS holds a detailed complaints register which can only be accessed by the Chaplain or Principal.

The school reviews its complaints records regularly with a view to assessing both its services and its complaints management system.

Reporting of complaints is a standing agenda item at the Board meetings.

Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.

Teachers are encouraged to still raise their concern at any time with the principal or the Board if repetitive minor issues or patterns are noted that have not progressed yet to a formal complaint

The organisation reports on the findings of relevant reviews to staff and volunteers, community and families and children and young people.

## **8. Help a child to make a complaint**

YSS acknowledges 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.

At YSS the Chaplain plays a key role in liaising with students, parents or staff regarding any concern. They are also responsible for reviewing and implementing the child safe curriculum in collaboration with the teachers.

### ***Creating a safe culture***

- Providing a clear process for the children to follow which the teachers bring to their students.
- Having processes appropriate to different age levels. Teachers promote 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 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 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

### **8.a Procedure**

Every child has the right to express a concern to any member of staff or community that they feel comfortable with. Any complaint will be taken seriously and addressed rapidly. The process for alleged child abuse is outlined in the child protection policy.

If a child's complaint concerns bullying or abuse by other children, the process will also include the parents of the children involved. They will be notified by the Chaplain or Staff Member who mediates the situation. In such instances the Principal will be informed or involved.

The following is to be read to all students at the start of every term and students given an opportunity to ask questions about the process:

"YSS is a place where we all need to feel safe and happy so we can learn our best. Sometimes you may not feel safe or happy at school, there could be many reasons for this for example:



- You are being bullied
- You feel there is a problem with your education.
- You feel you are being treated unfairly.
- You feel someone else is being treated unfairly.
- You don't feel safe
- You don't feel staff (teachers) are listening to you

When something happens to make you feel unsafe or upset at school most of the time talking to the person upsetting you, your teacher, Chaplain or your parent/guardian will help. Sometimes this may not be enough and if you are still feeling unsafe or unhappy at school you can make a complaint.

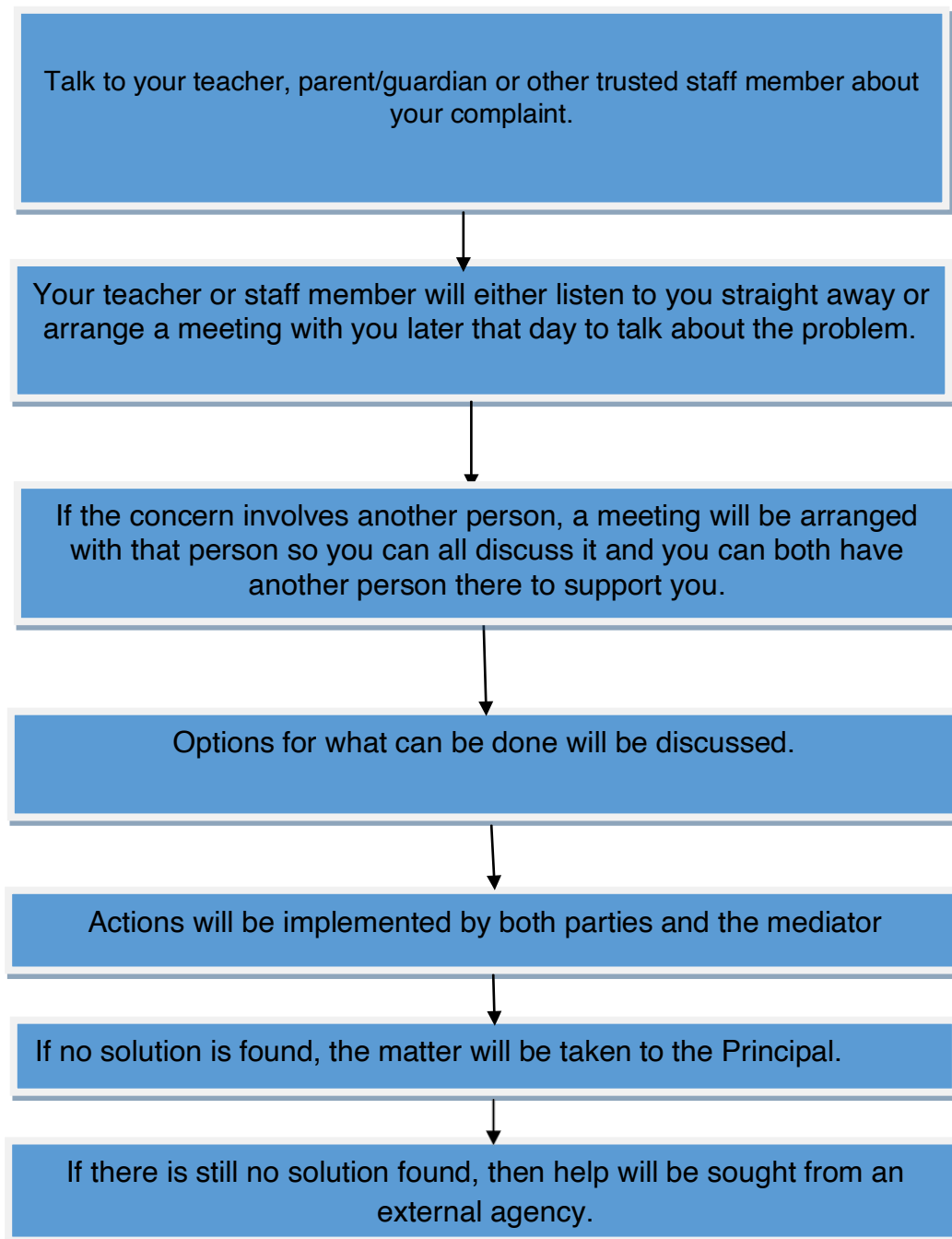
A complaint is a formal way of saying how you feel to adults who can help you. You can even make a complaint a long time after something has happened if it's still upsetting you. You can speak to your teacher, chaplain or parent/guardian and ask them to help you make a formal complaint.

The person who receives the complaint will

1. Take you seriously and listen to what you have to say. If they are busy right at that moment and are unable to hear the whole story, they will make a time with you later in the day when they are able to listen to you without interruptions.
2. Be responsible for dealing with the complaint or making sure it gets addressed.
3. Make sure that you understand what will happen next and when it will happen.
4. Not tell anyone else about it except the responsible adults who will help with resolving it, and the person/people it concerns."

## 9. Child friendly complaints process flowchart

### COMPLAINT FLOWCHART



## 10. Resources and related documents

### Guidelines/ Resources

1. Guide to the Registration Standards and Other Requirements for Non-Government Schools January 2020

2. National principles for Child safe organisations

[https://childsafesite.org.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/National\\_Principles\\_for\\_Child\\_Safe\\_Organisations2019.pdf](https://childsafesite.org.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/National_Principles_for_Child_Safe_Organisations2019.pdf)

3. Educator Guide– <https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/03204.pdf>

4. Complaints Handling and the very useful associated checklist

<http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/Publications/Documents/guidelines/Binder-Complaint-Handling.pdf>

"<http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/Publications/Documents/guidelines/Complaint-handling-systems-Checklist.pdf>" Complaints' Handling Checklist.

### Related Documents

- Child protection Policy
- Constitution esp § 22
- Staff Handbook
- Parent Handbook
- Critical Incidents policy

## Appendix I: Grievance and Concern Report Form

### YALLINGUP STEINER SCHOOL CONCERN 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 to the front counter at the school office (Place in an envelope marked "confidential" if necessary)
- It will be directed accordingly
- You may ask for a receipted copy if required

Concerns will be processed in accordance with the

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 administrator or school council if you feel you are not being heard.