



GRIEVANCE - PARENT CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS

Purpose

This policy aims to provide an efficient, fair, and accessible framework for resolving concerns and complaints to ensure that the process is transparent, consistently applied and accountable.

The process for addressing concerns or complaints is based on a restorative approach.

Scope

This policy applies to parents and caregivers of the Good Shepherd Lutheran School community.

Definitions

Grievance: a wrong or hardship suffered, real or supposed, which forms legitimate grounds of complaint

Concern: a worrisome matter that may be raised via a conversation, email or phone call to a staff member that requires the attention of School Leadership.

Complaint: an expression of dissatisfaction related to services or operations, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Restorative Practice: a process by which the healing of relationship between members of the school community is at the centre of the process.

Resolution: where the concern or complaint is withdrawn, or a course of action is agreed upon so that the matter can be closed.

Policy Statement

“Lutheran schools seek to be places of physical, social and psychological safety for all where legal requirements are fulfilled, and where caring, cooperative and respectful relationships contribute to supportive communities that reflect the values of the gospel of Jesus Christ and where there is a focus on love, justice, compassion, forgiveness, service, humility, courage, hope, quality, appreciation and restoration” (LEA Valuing Safe Communities).

Good Shepherd is committed to working in open, active partnership with parents and caregivers to resolve any concerns or complaints regarding the wellbeing, relationships, sense of belonging or academic progress within the school life of the students. The following principles apply:

- The safety and wellbeing of all within the community is of prime importance.
- All those involved have the right to be treated with respect and dignity.
- All communications and conversations will be handled with due discretion and sensitivity.
- Concerns or complaints will be considered in a timely and impartial manner.

Good Shepherd is committed to handling complaints effectively and efficiently. To manage complaints effectively, we have established a Complaints Handling Program in line with:

- Principle 6 of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, using the Office of Child Safety’s “Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the Rights of Children and Young People”
- the international complaints handling standard (ISO 10002:2018 Quality management Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations) *
- the Australian/New Zealand complaints handling standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for complaint management in organisations*
- the Australian Privacy Principles (APP).



Procedures & Implementation Responsibilities

Informal Complaints Resolution

The vast majority of issues causing concern in schools can be handled quickly and in an informal manner. Even if the issue is resolved informally, all staff are required to log issues through our complaints management system so that School Leadership is able to identify any systemic issues arising and take appropriate rectification action. Refer to **Appendix 1 – Problem solving protocol for school parents and caregivers**.

Formal Complaints Resolution

If you have been unable to resolve a matter informally, or simply wish to make a formal complaint, refer to the procedures outlined in **Appendix 2 – Formal Complaints**.

Child Safety Complaints Handling

Complaints about harm to a child or young person, or other breaches of our Child Safe Codes of Conduct are managed differently from other complaints. Refer to the School's Policy: **Child Safe Complaints Management**

Where there are concerns that the child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

Where there is reasonable suspicion that a child has been, or is being, abused or neglected, a report is to be made by phoning the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality applies with respect to both information relating to the person making the complaint, and, if relevant to a person against whom a complaint is made. Good Shepherd is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of information throughout the complaints process.

Personally identifiable information about a complainant will only be made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint and (unless the complainant consents) will be actively protected from disclosure.

References/Related Policies

Child Safe Complaints Management
LEA Valuing Safe Communities
Grievance – Staff Concern
Student Management – Student concerns
Child Safe Program

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| Development/Review Team: | School Leadership in consultation with LESNW/CompliSpace |
| Policy Endorsed: | August 2023 Principal |
| Policy Approved: | August 2023 School Board Chairperson |
| Review Period: | 3 years |
| Version: | 1.5 |

Appendix 1

PROBLEM SOLVING PROTOCOL FOR SCHOOL PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

School values in practice

Some of the best opportunities we have to foster and promote our school values and grow our community, are during times of adversity, challenge or high emotion. In reality, when life gets tough or issues compound, we often find it most difficult to behave in ways that positively reflect what we value - that's human nature. This protocol provides parents and caregivers with a simple structure, that when implemented to tackle challenges and problems, will lead to appropriate outcomes and serve to maintain and strengthen relationships.

'Whenever we tolerate unresolved conflict in friendships, families, schools or churches, whenever gossip and slander go unchallenged, whenever ministry leaders attack other Christians in a spirit of arrogance or want to spread negativity about those who disagree with them - God is dishonoured.'
John Ortberg

John Ortberg in his book "Everybody's normal until you get to know them" also wrote,

All day, everyday in numerous ways, in our homes, our friendships, and communities, we are, in our words and actions, either moving the world a little closer to God's picture of peace, or we are moving it a little further away.

Put simply, we each have responsibility as members of the Good Shepherd community to:

- look for and acknowledge the love of God in all situations, and
- build others up.

This responsibility is more than a vague goal or ideal. Whilst we will fail from time to time it is expected that all members at all times will strive to adhere to these responsibilities.

Issues or concerns that you may have regarding the functions of or relationships within the school community are most effectively dealt with if they are raised in the following ways.

PROCEDURE

If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him—work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you've made a friend. If he won't listen, take one or two others along so that the presence of witnesses will keep things honest, and try again. If he still won't listen, tell the church. If he won't listen to the church, you'll have to start over from scratch, confront him with the need for repentance, and offer again God's forgiving love.

Matthew 18:15-17

Reflecting this guide in scripture, all personal matters such as concerns regarding student, parent or staff relationships should be raised directly with the school through the class teacher or Principal in a confidential manner.

The following guidelines will assist you to problem solve effectively.

Step 1: Stop and prayerfully reflect on the situation.

Step 2: Make an appointment by phone or email to talk to the person with whom you have a concern or with whom is closely related to your concern. This may be the classroom teacher, Principal or other school staff (eg. OSHC or Canteen). Give forward notice of the subject you wish to discuss as this will facilitate preparation and ensure the issue is directed to the appropriate person. A scheduled appointment ensures the individual is free to give you his/her full attention. Approaching a teacher in the busyness of morning or afternoon routines is often not confidential and rarely is it possible for the teacher to focus without distraction on the issue.

Step 3: Meet with the staff member, demonstrate respect and use appropriate problem solving and/or conflict resolution strategies to formulate positive action for future.

It is recommended you take time to:

- Identify the facts: Take turns to speak the facts known about the problem. When each is speaking the other must listen without interjection.
- Explore why the facts present a problem:
- Share feelings: How has the problem affected you personally?
- Make a plan: Jointly commit to some future action and goals within the guidelines of school policy, acknowledging school values.
- Follow up: Schedule an evaluation meeting to measure progress and to ensure both parties remain accountable to the action plan.

If you consider that the issue you have raised is not being resolved appropriately, it is important that you state this to the person at the conclusion of the meeting.

Step 4: If the issues are not resolved, make an appointment with the Principal or a Director. Let him/her know what subject you wish to discuss as this will facilitate the process.

Step 5: Meet with the Principal or Director. Results of this meeting may include the following:

- Data is collected and the situation is monitored
- Further discussions and problem solving with those involved
- External/professional support for the child or family may be sought/recommended

If you consider that the issue you have raised is not being resolved appropriately:

Step 6: The grievance becomes a formal complaint and is managed via the complaints register. Refer to Appendix 2: Formal Complaints

Completing the process

The problem solving protocol will likely be completed at any point between steps 3 and 6 above. In ceasing to progress through the outlined steps, it is reasonable for the school to assume that the issue has been satisfactorily resolved. For serious matters steps may be skipped.

Codes of conduct

It is vital that problem solving be handled with sensitivity, and although at times you may wish to seek support from friends or an advocate, it is critical to do this with discretion. The use of social media as the forum to air any form of grievance relating to school, is viewed by the school as a serious breach of 'contract' and failure to support the school's vision and values.

Whilst constructive criticism, appropriately shared and in line with this policy is welcomed, denigration or defamation of the school, staff or leadership, serves only to undermine trust and confidence.

In the event that a parent/caregiver persists in airing grievances in an inappropriate manner, the parent(s) will be required to attend a meeting with the Principal and/or chair of the School Board. Due to the importance that Good Shepherd Lutheran School places on the building and maintenance of positive community relationships, repeated deviation from this protocol may result in the termination of a formal relationship with the school, which may be a student's enrolment, a business engagement, a contract, or volunteer status.

Appendix 2

Formal Complaints

If you have been unable to resolve a matter informally, or simply wish to make a formal complaint you can do so by any of the following means:

1. Sending an email to principal@gspv.sa.edu.au
2. Writing a letter to the school addressed to the Principal or School Leadership.
3. Telephoning the school and asking to speak to School Leadership.

All formal complaints will be logged into our online complaints management system and managed in accordance with the following procedure.

Our Internal Complaints Handling Process

Step 1 – All formal complaints are logged through our online complaints management system where they are screened by a member of School Leadership, or in the case of complaints against the Principal or a member of the School Board, by the Chair of the School Board. A complaint about the Chair of the School Board is directed to the Executive Director, Lutheran Education SA, NT, WA. (LESNW) Complaints about the Principal or a member or the Chair of the School Board will be properly investigated but they will not be dealt with by School Leadership.

Step 2 – All valid complaints, except those made anonymously, will be acknowledged in writing, as soon as practicable, and allocated a status, priority and target resolution date. It is our policy, where possible, to resolve all disputes within 14 days.

Step 3 – The School Leadership (or, if the complaint is about the Principal, a member of the School Board or the Chair of the School Board, the person who has undertaken the investigation of the complaint) will conduct an investigation into the issues raised, following principles of procedural fairness, and make a determination.

Step 4 – Following the determination, if appropriate, School Leadership (or, if the complaint is about the Principal, a member of the School Board or the Chair of the School Board, the person who has undertaken the investigation of the complaint) will formulate a resolution and, except where the complaint was anonymous, provide a written response to the complainant. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.

Step 5 – If the response is not accepted, the matter will be reviewed internally by the Principal or the Principal's delegate, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. The Principal or their delegate seeks to resolve all disputes within 14 days from the date that the review process is initiated. The matter will be closed if the response of the Principal, or their delegate, is accepted. If the complaint was about the Principal or a member of the School Board, the LESNW will review the matter.

Step 6 – All complaints received will be entered into our Complaints Register and, where appropriate, a corrective action request will be made to address any underlying processes which the complaints investigation revealed may require improvement.

Step 7 – If the matter remains unresolved, and/or the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome or the way that the complaint has been managed, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives via LENSW, whose complaints procedure can be accessed.

Note that neither the Minister for Education nor the Department for Education has any power to directly intervene in any complaints relating to the operations of a non-government school.