



THE FRIENDS' SCHOOL

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Premise or Rationale

These procedures are designed to put in place a set of steps for members of the community when they feel they have a grievance about their treatment by the School, including by a member of the staff of the School. (Where the complaint is of sexual abuse of former students or adults, the response of the School is detailed in the document 'Guiding Principles and Practices in Response to Sexual Abuse of Former Students or Adults'). The steps are detailed below for Staff, Parents and Students and Members of the Public. It is important to look carefully at the procedures to ensure that they are being implemented as described. No grievance should be referred to the Presiding Member of the Board unless the complainant has followed these procedures with no resolution. The School recognises the need to complete the process as promptly as practically possible. It would be the School's hope that most issues could be resolved at Step 1, although there may be situations where the aggrieved party may seek permission from the Principal's Office to bypass one or more steps in this grievance procedure. Mediation is available at any step in the grievance process, conducted by a mutually agreed person. A final section outlines the process where either the Principal or Members of the Board are directly involved. While Quakers always seek to achieve resolution outside the legal system we recognise the right of an aggrieved person to seek legal advice at any stage of the process.

Definitions

"Grievance" refers to any action or event associated with school operations which results in a member of the school community or general public feeling:

- inequitably or unfairly treated
- harassed
- victimised
- humiliated; or
- discriminated against.

"Staff Support Contact" refers to a staff member appointed to and trained in this role who can offer guidance and support to a colleague who is seeking the resolution of a grievance.

Staff

These procedures are for staff when they feel they have a grievance about their treatment by other members of staff. At any stage a staff member can contact a Staff



Support Contact for support or information. Mediation can also be sought at any step in the grievance procedures.

STEP 1 Talk to a supportive colleague and seek an informal resolution

STEP 2 Communicate a grievance

Any staff member who considers that they have a grievance, should in the first instance, discuss the matter with their immediate supervisor/work manager or a senior member of staff such as Head of Faculty, Deputy Principal or Head of School or Section Manager.

Planning a Course of Action

The staff member and the person chosen at Step 2 should discuss the issue and plan a course of action. This may include the following:

- a meeting between the complainant and the respondent.
- a mediation between the complainant and the respondent conducted by the immediate supervisor/manager, or other mutually agreed person.
- consulting the Deputy Principal

Any meeting should be documented by the supervisor or other senior member of staff, copies given to both parties and placed on the personnel files of both.

STEP 3 Conciliation

If resolution has not been achieved as in Step 2 then both parties would be required to attend (separately) a preparatory meeting with an outside mediator. This would be compulsory. This is a meeting to ensure that each party is able to express their concerns, goals, feelings and perspective on the case. After this pre-meeting, a decision will be made as to whether mediation or a formal restorative process is appropriate. Other matters that may arise which require further management/consultation will be referred to the Deputy Principal.

STEP 4 Outside Mediation

A structured mediation session or a formal restorative process would be conducted by a trained mediator. If the conflict is resolved, a mediation agreement should be recorded and signed by all parties and placed on personnel files. This would be followed by an informal review by the Principal after three months. If this is unsuccessful, not appropriate or the parties refuse to attend mediation, the complainant may request a formal review of the matter with the Principal. This should be done through the complainant's immediate supervisor. Steps 1 – 4 should be completed within no more than 20 working days after the initial contact.

STEP 5 Formal Review by the Principal

The Principal will review the actions taken during steps 1 – 4. The Principal will gather all relevant information and will make a determination and advise all parties concerned in writing. In the case of inappropriate conduct, the Principal may consider counselling, a reprimand or a warning. Other actions such as specific



training, professional development or supervision, or variation of the staff member's duties may be considered. Step 5 should be conducted within no more than 10 days.

STEP 6 Final Meeting and Monitoring

Following a formal review or outside mediation, a meeting should be conducted to re-establish viable working relationships between parties. After three months, the Principal should contact both parties to assess how things are going.

STEP 7 Referral to Presiding Member, Board of Governors

If either party is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal review, they may communicate their concern in writing to the Presiding Member of the Board of Governors. While Quakers always seek to achieve resolution outside the legal system we recognise the right of an aggrieved person to seek legal advice at any stage of the process.

Students or Parents

These procedures are for students or parents when they feel they have a grievance. It would be the School's hope that most complaints could be resolved at Step 1. Mediation can also be sought at any step in the grievance procedures.

STEP 1 Talk to a staff member and seek an informal resolution

STEP 2 Communicate a Grievance

In the first instance a student or parent should communicate a grievance to their usual first point of contact; Lead Educator (FEY), Class Teacher (Morris), Tutor (Years 7-12), Director of Residence (Walker House) or to the School Counsellor. On receiving a grievance the staff member will investigate the circumstances, and communicate with all those involved. The goal is to resolve the complaint using a problem-solving approach in order to arrive at a mutually satisfactory outcome. The staff member may consult with a senior colleague if deemed appropriate, and should inform the Head of School (K-12), Deputy Principal (Walker House) or Director FEY about the complaint and its outcome at the end of Step 2. A written record should be kept of the outcome by the senior staff member involved.

STEP 3 Conciliation

If a resolution is not achieved at Step 2 the matter will be referred to the Head of School (K-12) or Deputy Principal (Walker House) or Director FEY. The Head of School, Deputy Principal or Director FEY will investigate the grievance, review the process to date and determine a way forward which may involve some or all of the options below:

- interviews with those involved
- seeking information from witnesses or others who have information pertinent to the complaint or mediation or restorative conference between the complainant and the respondent(s)



- counselling of one or more parties'
- disciplinary action.

The Head of School, Deputy Principal or Director FEY will communicate with the complainant as appropriate during the process and at its conclusion, either in writing or by interview. The principal will be informed of the grievance and the outcome of the process at Step 3.

If satisfactory resolution is not achieved at Step 3, the matter will be referred to a mediation or restorative process (Step 4) or to the Principal for formal review (Step5)

STEP 4 Mediation or Restorative Procedure

A structured mediation session or a formal restorative process will be conducted by a trained facilitator agreed upon by all parties. If the conflict is resolved, a mediation agreement should be recorded and signed by all parties and placed on file. This would be followed by an informal review by the Principal after three months. International students should be referred to an independent grievance counsellor (through the Principal's Office). An independent counsellor will be provided from a TAFE college, university or other independent school. This procedure will have regard to the duration of the overseas student's visa to stay in Australia. The outcome of the grievance process, including any decisions, will be provided to the student and their parent/guardian in writing. If mediation procedures do not resolve the matter, students, including international students, and parents can request a formal review by the Principal.

STEP 5 Formal Review by the Principal

The Principal will gather all relevant information and review the actions taken to date. The Principal may choose to re-interview those involved. He or she will make a final determination and advise all parties concerned in writing.

STEP 6 Referral to Presiding Member, Board of Governors

If a student or parent is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal review, they may communicate their concerns in writing to the Presiding Member of the Board of Governors who responds in writing. While Quakers always seek to achieve resolution outside the legal system we recognise the right of an aggrieved person to seek legal advice at any stage of the process.

Members of the Public

These procedures are for members of the public. It would be the School's hope that most issues could be resolved at Step 1. Mediation can also be sought at any step in the grievance procedures.



STEP 1 **Talk to the School and seek an informal resolution**
Members of the public are encouraged to contact the School's Main Reception on (03) 6210 2200 and ask to speak to the relevant Head of School (Morris, High School or Clemes) or the Principal's Office.

STEP 2 **Communicate a Grievance**
If a resolution at Step 1 has not been achieved members of the public may request the School to designate a senior manager (Head of School, Director FEY or Director of Business Affairs) to investigate the circumstances and communicate with all those involved. The goal is to resolve the grievance using a problem-solving approach in order to arrive at a mutually satisfactory outcome. The staff member may consult with other colleagues if deemed appropriate, and should inform the Deputy Principal about the grievance and its outcome at the end of Step 2. A written record should be kept of the grievance and its outcome.

STEP 3 **Conciliation**
If a resolution is not achieved at Step 2 the matter will be referred to the Deputy Principal. The Deputy Principal will investigate the grievance, review the process to date and determine a way forward which may involve some or all of the options below:

- interviews with those involved
- seeking information from witnesses or others who have information pertinent to the complaint
- mediation between the complainant and the respondent(s)
- counselling of one or more parties
- disciplinary action.

The Deputy Principal will communicate with the complainant during the process as appropriate and at its conclusion either in writing or by interview. The Principal will be informed of the grievance and the outcome of the process at Step 3.

STEP 4 **Formal Review by the Principal**
If satisfactory resolution is not achieved at Step 3, the matter will be referred to the Principal. The Principal will gather all relevant information and review the actions taken to date. The Principal may choose to re-interview those involved. He or she will make a final determination and advise all parties concerned in writing.

STEP 5 **Referral to Presiding Member, Board of Governors**
If a member of the public is dissatisfied with the outcome of the formal review, they may communicate their concerns in writing to the Presiding Member of the Board of Governors who responds in writing. While Quakers always seek to achieve resolution outside the



legal system we recognise the right of an aggrieved person to seek legal advice at any stage of the process.

The Principal and Members of the School Board

As outlined above, the Principal holds particular responsibilities with handling complaints and grievances arising within the School and wider community. Where a complaint or grievance may arise as a direct result of actions and decisions undertaken by the Principal (including the determinations made in Formal Reviews), then, only after appropriate consultation with the Principal and reflecting on the degree of seriousness of the complaint, is the person advised to communicate their concern in writing to the Presiding Member of the Board of Governors. This advice would also apply to concerns regarding individual Board members and their activities in light of their responsibility and role on the School Board. Receipt of the communication and a course of action, if any, will be advised within 14 days of receipt of the complaint. While Quakers always seek to achieve resolution outside the legal system we recognise the right of an aggrieved person to seek legal advice at any stage of the process.

