



**HELENA RIVER
STEINER SCHOOL**

Grievance and Concern Policy

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Table of Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Scope and Application.....	3
3	Policy	4
4	Guiding Principals.....	4
5	Procedure.....	5
5.1	Steps Toward Resolution	5
6	References	8
7	Appendices.....	8
7.1	Appendix I: Grievance and Concern Flowchart.....	9
7.2	Appendix II: Grievance and Concern Report Form	10
7.3	Appendix III: Complaint Flowchart (for children).....	11

1 INTRODUCTION

Helena River Steiner School (HRSS) strives to promote a healthy environment of caring and respect for all human beings. Healthy complaints systems are a fundamental part of our school. Part 2 of this Policy is specifically to assist children who wish to make a complaint and is titled **“Helping Children to make a Complaint”**. Children may go directly to **“How Can Children Make a Complaint?”** at the bottom of this document.

We seek that the school:

- is open and accessible to all parents and students
- listens to parents and students
- encourages parents to contact the teacher, Principal or office staff directly
- provides support to staff to ensure they are comfortable in dealing with complaints

This policy explains what to do if you have a concern or grievance about anything to do with HRSS. A “concern” means any type of problem, grievance, worry or complaint about any aspect of HRSS. The concern may be about:

- 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

Reducing Anxiety

Anxiety can be reduced for all the parties of a complaint by taking the matter seriously and dispelling uncertainty about how the complaint will be handled. This will be achieved by:

- Making sure information about the complaint procedure is clear
- Acknowledging complaints immediately or at most within two working days
- Staff should inform parents what is happening to their concern or complaint and, if a more detailed response is needed, by what date it will be received.
- The issue should be dealt with as quickly as possible
- Confirming the nature of the complaint and what is concerning the complainant
- Assuring parents, students and staff that their views matter

2 SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This policy is applicable for staff, parents, guardians, students or members of the public and school community. The procedure may be used by a student’s parent or guardian on behalf of a

concern or grievance their child has. 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.

3 POLICY

HRSS welcomes and encourages all feedback. We recognise that concerns and grievances are important pieces of information for the School and we shall hear, record and address them appropriately. We will provide a practical mechanism for people to be able to provide feedback and seek resolution when dissatisfied or concerned with any aspect of the School. Procedural due fairness will be followed in reaching an outcome for all persons in a timely manner.

In all instances, confidentiality will be maintained and the matter handled with sensitivity. All staff are informed of how to respond to a complaint and are enabled to resolve or refer a complaint.

4 GUIDING PRINCIPALS

Confidential

Only the people directly involved in the grievance or helping resolve it can have access to information. See section headed "Record Keeping" for more information about where and how records will be kept.

The School appreciates that personal issues must be kept confidential. Confidentiality will be maintained by the relevant staff member/s at all levels of the process.

Impartial (fair)

All sides get a chance to tell their side of the story. No-one makes any assumptions or takes any action until all relevant information has been collected and considered. All sides have access to support if they want or need it. The investigator is free from bias or the perception of bias and, in particular, is not 'judge in his or her own cause'. Any complaint outcome is supported by the evidence, necessitating a finding on the balance of probabilities in the event of a dispute of fact. The complaint outcome is finalised by an adjudicator, who may also be the investigator, who is free from bias. The outcome is consistent with established school policies.

Fear of unfair repercussions of victimisation

The Principal and School Board takes all necessary steps to make sure people involved in a grievance are not victimised for coming forward with a grievance or helping sort it out.

Sort out at the immediate level, if possible

We will aim to sort out all grievances at the immediate level, if possible, with the minimum of fuss. In many cases, grievances can be sorted out by agreement between the people involved with no need for further action to be taken.



Sensitivity

The Principal and School Board will treat all concerns seriously and sensitively.

Timely

We aim to deal with all concerns as quickly as possible. The Principal will keep parties informed with the progress of the issue at various intervals.

Support

When a meeting occurs between a member of staff and a parent, both parties are able to have a support person present.

The support person does not say anything in grievance meetings. They are simply there to provide moral / emotional support for the person/s involved. The support person is also bound by confidentiality.

5 PROCEDURE

It is expected that the grievance should initially be discussed with the person directly concerned. Every effort should be made to resolve the grievance at this level before moving on to the following steps.

All complaints may be lodged via face-to-face contact, telephone conversations or written notification and a record will be kept of the complaint until resolved, and then stored securely.

If the aggrieved party is a child, the child's parent or guardian may act on their behalf or the **Helping Children to Make a Complaint** section may be referred to.

5.1 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.

Step 2. If the grievance is not resolved satisfactorily by direct communication, either party can bring the matter in written form to the attention of the Principal. (If the matter concerns the Principal, go to Step 6b). When a complaint is put in writing, the complaint should be based on an identifiable instance or instances and record factual information. The Principal will contact the complainant as a matter of priority. It will be dealt with within two days (or sooner if the situation is urgent).

Step 3. 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 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 timeframe.

Step 4. 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. This process may extend beyond one meeting and may be more or less formal depending on the situation and events under discussion. 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. Where an aspect of a grievance includes an issue about a staff member's professional performance or conduct, the issue may also be discussed with the College of Teachers. If required, support will be offered to the staff member to explore these issues and to address any concerns through professional development, mentorship or by agreement.

Step 5. 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 timeframe.

Step 6a. If the grievance is not resolved satisfactorily with the Principal, the grievance can be brought in writing to the School Board Grievance Sub-Committee 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 timeframe.

Step 6b. The grievance may be brought in writing to the School Board Grievance Sub-Committee 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 timeframe.

Step 7. Any grievance which has been processed between the School Board Sub-Committee and the parties involved, and is still unresolved, can be referred to an external mediation body.

Step 8. If still unresolved at this stage, we recommend the mediation services provided by the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA) or a similar independent body.

The School Board Grievance Sub-Committee receiving a written complaint will:

1. Determine and confirm the details of the complaint and record details.
2. Confirm the content and intent of the complaint and the possible outcome to be achieved.
3. Explain to the aggrieved the courses of action available.
4. Commit to seeking a resolution, if possible, in a positive manner and action promptly.

5. Determine whether the person making the complaint is satisfied with the proposed course of action and, if not, suggest an alternative course of action.
6. Follow up and monitor the outcome to confirm the person is satisfied and has received appropriate feedback / resolution.
7. Evaluate the nature of the complaint in informing policy and procedural reviews.

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.

Record Keeping

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. Systemic problems will be identified and trends reported on by the Principal to the School Board using the [Grievance and Concern Report Tracking Log](#).

A **Grievance Register** will be kept in order that:

- it provides information should there be legal action in the future
- patterns may be identified that indicate a need for action
- it provides information for reporting, by the Principal, to the School governing body as required

The register should contain the following information:

- date when the issue was raised and to whom it was raised
- name of complainant and relevant parties involved
- brief statement of issue
- member of staff handling the issue
- name of the person/member of staff responsible for reviewing any decision made
- brief statement of outcome including date of resolution/outcome

- location of detailed file (if applicable)

Confidential files on all complaints should be maintained and kept together and cross-referenced with other files as necessary. The files should contain simple but clear notes of all communication with the complainant.

Records concerning students need to be kept for at least seven (7) years after the student reaches 18 years of age.

Review

This policy shall be regularly reviewed by the Governing Body to ensure and improve its effectiveness.

Furthermore, the school shall review how complaints have been handled at regular intervals. It shall reflect on the scope, clarity and effectiveness of its communication, about the available process during an actual situation, at the point of resolution and any required follow up as well as the ease and usefulness of the process, from the user's perspective. It will further review the effectiveness of staff induction and training in this area and whether complainants felt respected (if not always satisfied) and whether the school was viewed as being fair and accountable.

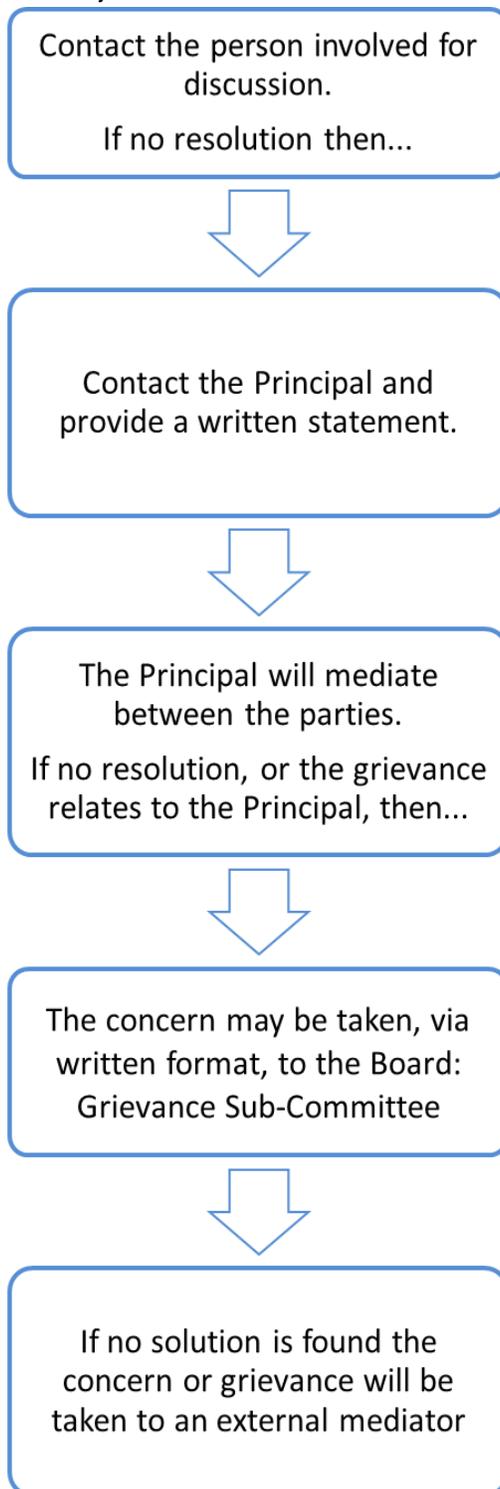
6 REFERENCES

Related Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grievance (Concern) Report Tracking Log • Grievance Register
Links With	
Related Legislation	
Appendices	<p>Appendix I: Grievance and Concern Flowchart</p> <p>Appendix II: Grievance and Concern Report Form</p> <p>Appendix III: Complaint Flowchart (for children)</p>

7 APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix I: Grievance and Concern Flowchart

Flowchart, Grievance and Concern Policy





7.2 Appendix II: Grievance and Concern Report Form



HELENA RIVER 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 Concern and 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.

7.3 Appendix III: Complaint Flowchart (for children)

Helping Children to Make a Complaint

Helena River Steiner School (HRSS) considers 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.

Creating a safe culture

HRSS seeks to make speaking up easier for students by:

- Providing a clear process for the children to follow which the teachers bring to their students.
- Having processes appropriate to different age levels.
- Teachers promoting 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 of 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 such as “5 Fingers” 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: An Educator’s Guide – <https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/03204.pdf>

Procedure

Each class is to have a clearly identified “tell it all” box and students are to be made aware of its location.

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:

“HRSS 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 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. At our school there are two ways you can make a complaint:

- 1. You can speak to your teacher or parent/guardian and ask them to help you make a formal complaint; OR*
- 2. If you don't feel comfortable talking about it, you can write down your concern or complaint and put it in the "tell-it-all" box in your classroom. This box is checked by administration staff every week.*

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."*

COMPLAINT FLOWCHART

