



**HELENA RIVER
STEINER SCHOOL**

Grievance and Concern Policy

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1 INTRODUCTION

Helena River Steiner School (HRSS) strives to promote a healthy environment of caring and respect for all. Healthy communication and 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, accessible, culturally safe and provides a supportive environment for all parents/caregivers, students, staff and volunteers to give feedback and complaints
- assures all parents/caregivers, students, staff and volunteers that their views matter
- reduces anxiety and frustration for all the parties of a complaint by taking the matter seriously and dispelling uncertainty about how the complaint will be handled.
- encourages parents/caregivers, students, staff and volunteers to communicate directly with the person/s involved first (unless it concerns a breach of the Staff Code of Conduct).
- provides training and support to staff to ensure they are comfortable and equipped to deal 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
- Conflicts of Interest.

2 SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This policy is applicable for staff, parents/guardians, students, volunteers, members of the public and the 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 on the School’s website and also available in the School office for parents and staff to view. It will also 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 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. All staff are informed about how to respond to a complaint and are enabled to resolve or refer a complaint.

Procedural due fairness will be followed in reaching an outcome for all persons in a timely manner. Procedural fairness includes: a hearing appropriate to the circumstances; a lack of bias; evidence to support a decision; and inquiry into matters in dispute.

In all instances the matter will be handled with sensitivity and confidentiality will be maintained -unless the matter breaches any laws, in which case external authorities may need to be notified.

Where appropriate the School employs a Restorative Practice approach in conflict resolution between students and other parties.

4 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Confidential

Only the people directly involved in the grievance or helping resolve it can have access to information. In cases where the grievance has been taken to the Board, Board members, in their oversight role, will need to have access to all information related to the grievance. 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. Any Conflicts of Interest will be managed using the School's Conflict of Interest Policy.

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

The School will aim to sort out all concerns and 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. Open, honest, respectful and collaborative communication is encouraged in all situations.

Sensitivity

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

Timely

The School aims to deal with all concerns as quickly as possible. The Principal or appointed Officer will keep parties informed on the progress of the issue at regular 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 contribute to 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 or concern 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. For parents and caregivers, any matters relating to their child's education or wellbeing should be discussed directly with their child's teacher.

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 in Part 2 may be referred to.

Steps Toward Resolution (Flowchart below)

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 the issue with the person concerned and attempt to resolve the grievance. If the matter involves a concern about a staff member breaching the Staff Code of Conduct -in particular concerning potential grooming or child abuse, go to Step 2.

Step 2. If the grievance is not resolved satisfactorily by direct communication, either party can bring the matter to the attention of the Principal. (If the matter concerns the Principal, go to Step 5). 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 replied to within three days (or sooner if the situation is urgent).

Step 3. A meeting will be arranged to listen and to respond to the concerns, and to discuss options for actions to be implemented. Any additional support required to allow for cultural accessibility and inclusivity will be employed where possible. 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 or appointed Officer, which may be the appropriate Education Coordinator. 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 or appointed Officer. 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.

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 or appointed Officer to track and monitor that implementation is carried out. 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 Board of Governors. If required, support will be offered to the staff member to explore these issues and to address any concerns through professional development, mentorship or other avenue. If the matter concerns potential grooming or child abuse, the Child Protection Policy will be enacted.

Step 4. Actions 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 5. If the grievance is not resolved satisfactorily with the Principal or appointed Officer, or if the matter involves the Principal, the grievance can be brought in writing (email: boardchair@hrss.wa.edu.au) to the School Board to assist in the resolution of the matter. The Board 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 6. Any grievance brought to the School Board which is not satisfactorily resolved at Board level, can be referred to an external mediation service.

Step 7. If still unresolved at this stage or there is dissatisfaction at any stage of the above process, the complaint can be directed to the Director General of the Department of Education. 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 Non-Government School Regulation directorate with concerns about how the school has dealt with a complaint at ngsregulation.concerns@education.wa.edu.au. While the Non-Government School Regulation directorate may consider whether the school has breached the registration

standards, the Non-Government School Regulation directorate does not have power to intervene in a complaint or override the school's decision.

The School Board on receiving a written complaint will:

Refer the complaint to the Grievance Officer who will then:

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. Identify any Conflicts of Interest
4. Explain to the aggrieved the courses of action available.
5. Commit to seeking a resolution, if possible, in a positive manner and action promptly.
6. Determine whether the person making the complaint is satisfied with the proposed course of action and, if not, suggest an alternative course of action.
7. Follow up and monitor the outcome to confirm the person is satisfied and has received appropriate feedback / resolution.
8. 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 and has put steps in place to deal with the issue
- 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.

6 RECORD KEEPING

The Principal, appointed Officer and relevant 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 on the secure electronic File Server 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's 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
- name of person 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 School staff and 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, including its cultural accessibility and safety. 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.

7 REFERENCES

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

8 APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix I: Grievance and Concern Flowchart

Flowchart, Grievance and Concern Policy

Step 1. Contact the person involved for discussion.
If no resolution then...

Step 2. Contact the Principal, ideally with a
written statement.
If the matter involves the Principal. go to Step 5.

Step 3. The Principal or delegate will meet with
and mediate between the parties.

Step 4. Actions are decided upon and
implemented.
If no satisfactory resolution after this then...

Step 5. The concern may be taken, via written
form, to the School Board at:
boardchair@hrss.wa.edu.au
If no satisfactory resolution after this then...

Step 6. An external mediator may be engaged.

Step 7. If still no resolution, or any dissatisfaction
during any of the above steps, the matter may be
taken to the Non-Government School Regulation
directorate at:
NGSRegulation.Concerns@education.wa.edu.au



8.2 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.

Part 2

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 or any adult at the school that you trust 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 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."*

STUDENT COMPLAINT FLOWCHART

