



# GRIEVANCE AND CONCERN POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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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.

## 2 SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This policy is applicable for staff, parents/guardians, students, volunteers, members of the public and the school community. A copy of this policy will be on the School's website and also available in the School office for viewing on request.

## 3 POLICY

HRSS welcomes and encourages all feedback and is committed to resolving concerns that may be raised about the school. We recognise that concerns and complaints provide important information for the school. Good procedures are needed to ensure concerns are heard, recorded, and addressed in a fair, efficient and prompt manner.

This policy seeks to provide for the resolution of complaints by members of the school community.

A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived situation, outcome or decision. The dissatisfaction may be based on a perception that the School has:

- Done something wrong
- Failed to do something it should have
- Acted unfairly or unreasonably

## 4 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Parents/carers or students are entitled to lodge a genuine complaint with the School. This means that complaints should be lodged in good faith and without frivolous, malicious or vexatious intent.
2. Every reasonable effort will be made by the School and its representatives to ensure that a parent/carer or student who lodges a complaint or anyone dealing with a complaint will not be unfairly treated, victimised, coerced or intimidated.
3. Communication and resolution processes should always be based on parties acting in good faith, exercising good judgement, being honest and open, and focusing on the issue and not the person(s)
4. Each complaint is to be dealt with on its particular circumstances and merits; determinations made through the resolution policy will not necessarily constitute any binding precedent for future or similar cases
5. In responding to a complaint, informally or formally, every reasonable effort shall be made to ensure that natural justice and procedural fairness are afforded to all parties. This means that:
  - All parties are entitled to be treated with respect and to be heard
  - All parties should participate fully in the resolution process to achieve an outcome that is realistic and reasonable

6. A person who is the subject of a complaint shall be informed of the substance thereof and given a full opportunity to present their perspective.
7. All parties have a right to seek advice and support.
8. Investigations and proceeding must be conducted fairly, thoroughly and without bias or undue delay.
9. Parties should provide all relevant material, complete and factual information, documents or other evidence relating to the complaint.

## 5 PROCEDURE

Many complaints may be minor in nature, and often arise from genuine misunderstandings and/or miscommunications. In the majority of cases, these can be resolved informally.

The School encourages and supports complainants to seek to resolve a complaint in an informal and amicable manner. This is best done through direct communication/discussion by and between the parties themselves (e.g. a parent/care and teacher).

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.

Formal procedures for the resolution of complaints should only be invoked when a matter is of a serious nature and/or cannot be resolved by the parties themselves through informal means. All formal grievances or complaints must be lodged in writing. A record of the complaint will be kept 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.

### 5.1 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). The Principal will contact the complainant as a matter of priority.

**Step 3.** A meeting will be arranged to hear 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 or appointed Officer. Where the complaint involves two or more parties, a meeting is held to explore the matter 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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

## **5.2 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.

### 5.3 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 the 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

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

## 7 REVIEW

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

## 8 REFERENCES

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

## 9 APPENDICES

### 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](mailto: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](mailto:NGSRegulation.Concerns@education.wa.edu.au)**

## Appendix II: Grievance and Concern Report Form

### Part 1

#### 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)

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What you would like to see happen: (Add additional pages if more space is needed)

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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 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.
- 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.
- 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.

#### 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 each year and students given an opportunity to ask questions about the process:

*“Our school 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 you are being treated unfairly.*
- *You feel someone else is being treated unfairly.*
- *You don’t feel safe*

*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.”*

**Appendix III: Student Complaint Flowchart**

**STUDENT COMPLAINT FLOWCHART**

