



## **Complaints Management Policy (Community)**

### **Overview**

North West Christian School (the School) is committed to ensuring a safe and healthy environment characterised by tolerance and support; and which also respects differing learning styles and celebrates student achievements.

Part of this commitment involves ensuring the School community has access to processes that allow for complaints to be managed appropriately, promptly and fairly. The School is a working community and inevitably concerns, grievances, disputes or allegations of inappropriate or illegal behaviour arise.

This policy provides clear and transparent information about how a parent, student or other member of the School community (other than a staff member) can raise complaints about the School, staff conduct, a student's education and/or student wellbeing, and about how such complaints will be managed and resolved.

The School takes all complaints and concerns received from staff, parents, students and other complaints from outside of the School, seriously. Our aim is to ensure that complaints are handled objectively and with sensitivity. In doing so, we will seek to identify both the specific and (where applicable) systemic issues raised by a complaint (thereby enabling future improvements to be identified and implemented).

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all School Board members, staff, contractors, volunteers, visitors, parents/guardians, students and other members of the School community.

This policy does not apply to:

- Staff complaints, which should be raised in accordance with the School's Complaints Policy (Staff).
- Concerns about child abuse, reportable conduct and student safety, which will be addressed in accordance with the School's Student Protection Policy and Mandatory Reporting Policy.
- Legal matters, including requests for compensation, payment and redress.

To the extent that there are any inconsistencies between this policy and the School's other complaints policies and appendices, other than the School's Student Protection Policy and Mandatory Reporting Policy, this policy shall prevail.

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### Guiding Principles

When raising a complaint with the School, a member of the School community can expect to:

- Be treated with respect and courtesy.
- Have their complaint taken seriously, considered impartially (with consideration of any power imbalances), and dealt with on the merits.
- Have their complaint dealt with in a confidential and timely manner.
- Have access to appropriate and easily understandable information regarding the complaint resolution process being followed by the School (including this policy).
- Be supported by the School during the complaints handling process, with a focus on maintaining the emotional wellbeing of any students involved.
- Be kept informed of the progress and outcome of the complaint.
- Not be victimised, or subjected to reprisal, for raising complaints in good faith.

In return, the School expects that a member of the School community who raises a complaint will:

- Treat others (including School staff, students and parents, both former and present) with respect and courtesy.
- Raise complaints in the appropriate forum, having regard to the below framework, and as soon as possible after the event giving rise to the complaint has occurred.
- Provide complete and factual information about the complaint.
- Ask for assistance or further information as needed.
- Act in good faith to achieve a reasonable outcome.

Be understanding and accepting of any outcome reached, being mindful that the School must sometimes manage the interests of a number of students and other individuals when making decisions and may be privy to confidential information not known to the person raising the complaint.

Our aim is for the prompt resolution of concerns, ideally without there being a need for a formal complaint to be made. As the Board appoints the Principal to manage the day-to-day operations of the School, a review by the Board Chair should be a last resort.

Timeframes listed in this policy are only a guide and can vary due to the nature of the complaint and surrounding circumstances. Where timeframes set out in this policy cannot be met, the School will strive to communicate with the affected parties about the status of the complaint, and the steps taken (or to be taken) to progress a resolution.

Please note the processes outlined in this policy are intended to be conciliatory, non-adversarial and non-legal.

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### **Framework**

The School's framework for dealing with complaints involves a three-step process, namely:

**Stage 1** - A concern is raised with the School.

**Stage 2** – A formal written complaint is made to the Principal.

**Stage 3** - A review by the Board Chair is requested.

Further details about these Stages are set out in **Schedule 1**.

Common considerations when the School is managing grievances are set out in **Schedule 2**.

### **Recommendations for initially raising concerns (Stage 1)**

At first instance, you should raise your concerns directly with the School. The School must be aware of a concern and of its substance in order to address it.

The School believes that a concern is often best resolved closest to its source, and when a concern relates to a student, encourages concerns to be raised with the relevant classroom teacher in the first instance.

However, depending on the nature and severity of an issue, and whether the classroom teacher has a conflict of interest, concerns may instead be raised directly with a senior staff member (eg Primary or Secondary Coordinator or another member of the School Leadership Team).

For guidance on who to contact at first instance, refer below:

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Designated staff member		Nature of grievance
Prep to Year 5	Years 6 to 12	
Primary Coordinator Mrs Keryn Kofeloa	Secondary Coordinator Mr Morgan Smith	Student-related matters
	TASC Coordinator Daniel Watson	Year 11/12 and TASC Related Matters
Primary Coordinator Mrs Keryn Kofeloa	Secondary Coordinator Mr Morgan Smith	Student wellbeing matters
Secondary Coordinator Mr Morgan Smith	Secondary Coordinator Mr Morgan Smith	Curriculum matters and teaching matters Enrolment related matters
Principal Mr Brayden Morton and/or Director of Education <a href="#">Mrs Sandra Ferry</a>		Staff related matters
Seventh-Day Adventist Conference (TAS) CFO Mr Kelvin Wood		Business operations or finance matters
Adventist Schools TAS Board of Directors Chair. Pr Rick Hergenhan		Principal or a member of the Board matters

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A student can directly raise concerns with their classroom teacher or the relevant Coordinator, the Chaplain or the Principal.

The following considerations are relevant prior to, and when, raising a concern:

- Clearly identify the issue or problem prior to contacting the School.
- Decide whether the issue or problem is in the nature of a complaint, concern, enquiry or suggestion. This will help in finding a solution.
- Identify the party or parties involved.
- Consider the practical outcome you are trying to achieve (while being realistic and open to other outcomes and solutions).
- If there is more than one issue or problem, write a list so that you are adequately prepared and then decide which issue or problem matters most to you.
- Consider whether there are any interim measures you would like the School to consider whilst it makes enquiries about the issue or problem.
- Make an appointment to meet with the relevant staff member to discuss the concern - the best way to do this is to contact Reception to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone call or meeting. When contacting Reception, please identify yourself and the student concerned, the subject of your concern, identify the person you would like to speak with, and provide a brief description of the issue you wish to speak about (for example 'homework', 'enrolment decision (including appeals)', 'wellbeing' or 'grounds maintenance').
- Remain courteous and calm when conveying your concerns. The School is within its rights to terminate a conversation with the person raising the concern until such time that a courteous and calm conversation can continue.

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### SCHEDULE 1

#### Further details about the School’s Grievances Resolution Procedure

	Details	Comment
<b>Stage 1: Raise the concern</b>		
Step 1	Identify the concern	Clarify your concern: “ <i>who, what, when, where, why, and how</i> ”. Identify the outcome you are trying to achieve by raising your concern.
Step 2	Raise the concern	The School believes that a concern is often best resolved closest to its source and encourages concerns to be raised with the relevant classroom teacher in the first instance.  Depending on the nature and severity of an issue, and whether the classroom teacher has a conflict of interest, concerns may instead be raised directly with a senior staff member (eg. Primary or Secondary Coordinator or another member of the School Leadership Team). However, that senior staff member may decide to delegate responsibility for dealing with the concern to another appropriate staff member (eg Home Room Teacher).
Step 3	Acknowledgement	Once a concern is raised, the School will record (either by way of an electronic file note or written correspondence) the details of the concern including your name and contact details.  The School’s focus will be on understanding the nature of the problem, the party or parties involved, and the nature of any agreeable solutions.
Step 4	Outcome	Where an agreeable solution is available, this will usually be communicated in writing to you (being usually within three (3) business days of the outcome being reached).  Where a mutually agreed outcome between the School and the person raising the concern is not appropriate, or possible, the staff member handling the concern will make a decision that best aligns with the School’s procedures and legal obligations. This decision will be communicated in writing to you (being usually within three (3) business days of the outcome being reached), and the communication will be kept on the relevant student’s (and if appropriate, staff member’s) file.

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	Details	Comment
<b>Stage 2: Make a complaint</b>		
Step 1	Make a complaint	<p>If you are not satisfied with the way your concern has been handled, you may choose to make a formal written complaint. Complaints should ordinarily be made within one (1) calendar month of the initial concern first being raised with the School.</p> <p>A formal complaint should at first instance be addressed to Principal. If the complaint concerns the Principal, the complaint should be made to the Education Director or the Board Chair (see Stage 3), in which case the Education Director or Board Chair will manage the process outlined below.</p> <p>You may lodge a formal written complaint to the Principal at <a href="mailto:Principal@northwest.tas.edu.au">Principal@northwest.tas.edu.au</a></p> <p>You may also telephone Reception on <b>03 6272 1711</b> to arrange a meeting. Please note that if phoning to arrange a meeting, Reception staff will take your details and endeavour to confirm a meeting time as soon as it is practicable to do so.</p>
Step 2	Acknowledge receipt	The Principal will acknowledge receipt of the formal written complaint as soon as practicable (being usually within three (3) business days).
Step 3	Review of complaint	<p>When dealing with a formal written complaint, the School's objective is to achieve a resolution by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clarifying the substance of the complaint, and the steps taken by the School to address the initial concern.</li> <li>● Identifying whether the complaint raises an issue regarding non-compliance with the School's procedures.</li> <li>● Identifying whether the complaint raises an issue that would be more appropriately addressed under the School's Student Protection Policy and/or Mandatory Reporting Policy.</li> <li>● Communicating with you and relevant parent(s), student(s) and staff, in an attempt to resolve the issue by agreement (where practicable).</li> <li>● Failing agreement, investigating the complaint and deciding appropriate outcomes in accordance with procedural fairness and natural justice principles.</li> </ul> <p>The Principal may delegate parts of the complaint-management process, and seek the assistance of third parties, however any ultimate decision will still be made by the Principal.</p> <p>If the Principal or delegate arranges to speak with you, you may request to have someone else present as a support person. The support person can be a relative or a friend, but please note that the role of a support person is to provide you with support and not to act as an advocate.</p>

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	Details	Comment
Step 4	Outcome	<p>The Principal or delegate will aim to communicate the outcome of a formal written complaint in writing within fifteen (15) business days where practicable.</p> <p>The Principal will promptly report any formal written complaints, and relevant outcomes, to the Board of Directors. This is part of the cyclical review and risk management process at the School.</p>
	Details	Comment

### Stage 3 – Request a Review

Step 1	Request a review by the Board Chair	<p>If you are not satisfied that your formal written complaint has been adequately resolved by the Principal, you may request a review by writing to the Education Director or Board Chair via email at:</p> <p>Chair: <a href="mailto:RickHergenhan@adventist.org.au">RickHergenhan@adventist.org.au</a>            Education. Director: <a href="mailto:SandraFerry@adventist.org.au">SandraFerry@adventist.org.au</a></p> <p>or by post at: via post:</p> <p>The Chair or Education Director            5 Eady St,            Glenorchy TAS 7010</p> <p>Members of the School community who raise grievances with other Board members will be directed to follow the procedures set out in this policy (eg raising a complaint with the Principal or requesting a review by writing to the Board Chair or Education Director).</p> <p>Requests for review must be made in writing within ten (10) business days of the date the Principal communicated the outcome of your complaint in writing. The grounds for the review, and in particular any concerns you have with the way the relevant complaint was dealt with, must be clearly identified in the request for review.</p>
Step 2	Review	<p>Please note that in accordance with good governance, the Board entrusts the Principal with the day-to-day management of the School, and in particular its staff and students. The Principal is accorded significant discretion regarding such matters.</p> <p>Accordingly, any review of the Principal’s decision under this policy will be confined to the Board Chair deciding whether there is evidence that the School’s procedures have not been followed, in a way likely to have meaningfully influenced the Principal’s decision, or that the Principal unreasonably exercised his or her discretion.</p> <p>The Board Chair may delegate parts of the review, or seek the assistance of third parties, however any ultimate decision will still be made by the Board Chair.</p> <p>For the avoidance of doubt, the Board Chair will not delegate to the Principal a review of a decision they have already made. However, if the Board Chair is satisfied that a complaint has not been properly raised (or dealt) with by the Principal (and the Principal does not</p>



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	Details	Comment
		otherwise have a conflict of interest), the Board Chair may refer the matter to the Principal to make an initial decision (noting that decision would then create a right to request a review).
Step 6	Outcome	The Board Chair will aim to communicate the outcome of a request for review in writing within forty-five (45) business days where practicable.  The Board Chair will promptly report any requests for review, and relevant outcomes, to the Board.

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### **SCHEDULE 2**

#### **Relevant Considerations**

##### **Withdrawal of a Complaint**

A complaint can be withdrawn at any stage during the processes outlined in this policy. A complaint can only be withdrawn by the person who made the complaint to the School.

Ideally, all complaints should be retracted in writing, however a dated notation on the School's systems, stating the complaint has been withdrawn verbally by the appropriate person can be made by a staff member at the School responsible for managing the complaint.

The School will notify affected parties if a grievance is withdrawn, where considered appropriate.

Regardless of a person's wish to withdraw a complaint, complaints that have disciplinary implications for a member of staff may still be followed up by the School.

##### **Anonymous Complaints**

The School is committed to dealing with complaints in accordance with the processes outlined in this policy. The School respects in some cases, complainants would prefer to remain anonymous and not put a name to their complaints.

The School treats complaints about the School, a staff member, a student's education, enrolment and/or a student's wellbeing with the utmost importance and will investigate such grievances raised to the fullest extent practicable. However, anonymity can make it difficult for the School to effectively resolve complaints (particularly where the School is being asked to accept an anonymous source's version of events) and are accordingly discouraged.

##### **Previously Addressed, Stale or Vexatious Complaints**

Complaints that have been previously addressed by the School or externally, or which were not raised with the School within a reasonable period of time (having regard to the nature of the relevant complaint), will not be considered in the absence of highly relevant new information and/or evidence coming to light.

The School does not tolerate vexatious complaints.

##### **External Complaints and Redress**

The School acknowledges that complaints relating to the School can also be made to an external body or be the subject of legal action. However, the School encourages its community to raise any complaints, and work to resolve such matters, in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy.

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### Confidentiality

Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained by the School at all times when dealing with a complaint, with information only being provided to those who have a right or need to know.

### Communication

This policy is available to parents, students and the School community via the School’s website. This policy (or aspects thereof) will also feature in communications to parents via the School newsletters and bulletins as required.

### Document Information

Document Name	Complaints Management Policy
Approver	Seventh-day Adventist Schools Tasmania Board of Directors,
Last Approved Date	25 <sup>th</sup> March 2024
Review Date	January 2026
Audience	Community
Links	
Custodian	Principal