

Complaints Handling Procedure

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| Purpose: | To provide a process for the effective management and resolution of concerns, disagreements or complaints that may arise between members of the Cairns Hinterland Steiner School and its associated stakeholders. | |
| | To facilitate a school climate where all stakeholders feel they can voice concerns and those concerns will be heard and dealt with fairly and expeditiously using a transparent and consistent process. | |
| Scope: | Students, parents, and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements. | |
| Status: | Current | Supersedes: September 2018 |
| Authorised by: | Board Chair | Date of Authorisation: 15/06/2020 |
| References: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cairns Hinterland Steiner School Complaints Handling Policy | |
| Review Date: | Annually | |
| Policy Owner: | School Governing Body (Cairns Hinterland Steiner School) | Next Review Date: 31/03/2021 |

Issued by the:
Governing Body of the Cairns Rudolf Steiner School Limited



Mr. Alan MacLean
Cairns Rudolf Steiner School Limited
Issued: 15th June 2020

Application:

Key Principles:

Cairns Hinterland Steiner School is committed to managing complaints according to the following principles:

- complaints will be resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible
- complaints will be taken seriously
- anonymous complaints will be treated on their merits. Such complaints will be dealt with fairly and objectively and in a timely manner
- Cairns Hinterland Steiner School will determine the appropriate person to deal with the complaint in the first instance. Complaints should be resolved with as little formality and disputation as possible
- mediation, negotiation, and informal resolution are optional alternatives for matters that do not require formal notification to either/or the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) or Queensland Police Service (QPS).
- procedural fairness will be ensured wherever practicable, including the right of interested parties to the complaint to be heard
- confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible
- all parties to the complaint will be appropriately supported
- Cairns Hinterland Steiner School will give reasonable progress updates
- appropriate remedies will be offered and implemented
- provide a review pathway for parties to the complaint if warranted
- complainants, respondents, and people associated with them will not be victimised as a result of lodging the complaint and they will not suffer any other reprisals
- the school will keep records of complaints
- the school's insurer will be informed if a complaint could be connected to an insured risk

Action prior to lodging a formal Complaint

1. The aggrieved party is encouraged to voice their concern appropriately and quickly so a timely resolution can be achieved.
2. Where appropriate, the aggrieved party should seek to resolve a difficulty themselves, by communicating with any other involved persons (excluding students) and attempting to negotiate a mutually agreeable outcome.
3. If the aggrieved party is not satisfied with the outcome of informal and direct attempts to resolve the issue, or they feel that the issue cannot be resolved without assistance, they should proceed to the formal Complaints Handling Procedure.

Lodging a Formal Complaint

A formal complaint should be lodged if a party has an honest belief, based on reasonable grounds, that they or their children, have been adversely affected by a decision or action and that decision or action was unfair and unreasonable.

Lodging A Formal Complaint – Cont.

1. To lodge a formal complaint, parties must write to a member of the Executive Management Team. The written complaint should contain information regarding:
 - the nature of the concern
 - the grounds for the belief of unfair or unreasonable treatment
 - the potential resolution of the complaint from the aggrieved party's point of view
2. The Executive Management Team will promptly acknowledge the receipt of the complaint within 48 hours of receipt via the school office.
3. The Executive Management Team will take further steps to enable resolution to be reached. They will promptly initiate appropriate action, possibly including but not limited to:
 - a. making enquiries
 - b. informing all other involved persons or parties that a complaint has been lodged
 - c. reviewing reasons for the action or decision central to the complaint
 - d. referring the complaint to an appropriate person
 - e. conducting an investigation
 - f. arranging or facilitating mediation
4. A member of the Executive Management Team will contact the aggrieved party to inform them of the action taken. If the aggrieved party chooses to meet with a member of the Executive Management Team, a report will be written with her/his help and signed by the aggrieved.
5. If the complaint concerns a teacher or teacher support staff or volunteers, the Executive Management Team will convene between the teacher and a support person and the aggrieved party and a support person. Details of the complaint and aggrieved parties will be kept confidential.
6. The Executive Management Team will ensure that the following three steps are followed to ensure an effective complaint handling system:
 - **Step 1 Enabling Complaints**
Arrangements for enabling people to make complaints are customer focused, visible, accessible, and valued and supported by management.
 - **Step 2 Responding to complaints**
Complaints are responded to promptly and handled objectively, fairly, and confidentially. Remedies are provided where complaints are upheld and there is a system for review.
 - **Step 3 Accountability and Learning**
There are clear accountabilities for complaint handling and complaints are used to stimulate organisational improvements.
 - a. any investigation will be carried out in a thorough, fair, and impartial manner
 - b. all parties to the complaint have an opportunity to be heard and given an opportunity to present all aspects of the complaint
 - c. comprehensive written records are kept of the process and the outcomes including: the original complaint lodged, record of any response made, records of all action taken, details of any investigation, including the methods used and the findings and outcomes

Step 3 Accountability and Learning – Cont.

- d. the aggrieved party suffers no reprisal from any person employed by or in the service of the school for lodging a complaint.
7. The Executive Management Team will inform the staff members involved (if applicable) of their right to seek support from a colleague or a union representative.
8. The Executive Management Team will inform the aggrieved party of their right to be supported by any other parent, staff member or person of their choice, provided that a conflict of interest does not exist. This will be determined by the Executive Management Team.
9. Each party is entitled to only one support person at conflict resolution meetings. The members of the Executive Management Team will not meet with large groups of people during the resolution process, unless the Executive Management Team feels comfortable and consents to do so.
10. The content of a complaint is kept confidential by all parties involved in the complaint or the resolution process. Any person with direct or indirect knowledge of the complaint may not discuss the matter with any other persons without formal permission from all parties involved.
11. A resolution should be reached within 30 days of the lodgement of the complaint. If this has not been achieved a member of the Executive Management Team shall contact the aggrieved party, in writing, describing why a resolution has not been reached and the action that is to be taken to reach a resolution and the expected time frame for the matter to be resolved.
12. Records of all complaints are held by the school Administration Office in a central, secure register.
13. If the aggrieved party believes that due process has not been followed in a fair, unbiased, and expeditious manner, then they have the right to lodge a further complaint with the Board of Directors.

If the complaint concerns a member of the Executive Management Team, including the School Administrator or Education Director, then this should be reported directly to the school's Governing Body, who will follow the necessary procedures to investigate the complaint.