IVANHOE GIRLS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL

OUR GIRLS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES.

Policy Title	Complaints & Grievances Policy (Parent, Student, Community)
Policy Owner	Director of Corporate Services
Effective Date	February 2024
Approved by	Board
Review Date	February 2026
Internal Only Document ☐	Public Document ☒

1. Purpose

1.1 Rationale

Occasionally, misunderstandings, grievances and conflicts occur within our School community, which require a clear process for resolution. When problems arise, we welcome contact to achieve a fair and efficient resolution, recognising that dealing with complaints in a timely and professional manner is of utmost importance.

1.2 Scope

This policy details how the School manages complaints and grievances received from students, parents/ guardians and members of the School community. Staff grievances are handled in accordance with the School's Human Resources policies.

In all cases where a complaint involves matters which may be subject to criminal charges, or where the subject of the complaint must be reported to a regulatory authority, including the police, reporting appropriate to the nature of the matter will be actioned. Pending the advice of the regulatory authority, the School will take necessary steps to prevent further occurrences of the behaviour in question.

1.3 Aims

The primary aims of this policy are to ensure procedural fairness in the management of complaints and to resolve complaints in a timely and effective manner, by:

(a) Maintaining a fair, inexpensive complaints and appeals process
(b) Giving both sides of a dispute the chance to be heard at minimal or no cost
(c) Allowing the complainant to be assisted or accompanied by a support person
(d) Maintaining a written record if the complaint or appeal cannot be resolved informally
(e) Completing a written statement of the outcome, with details and reasons for the decision
(f) Maintaining confidentiality at all times, for the protection of everyone involved
(g) Finalising all grievance procedures within a reasonable timeframe.
(h) Treating all parties to a dispute fairly and equally

(i) Providing adequate notice to all parties to a dispute regarding procedures and outcomes

(j) Ensuring that neither party is discriminated against as a result of the complaint process.

2. Definitions

The School	Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction relating to School matters including tuition, curriculum, assessment, application of School policies, processes and procedures.
Support Person	A friend/teacher/relative not involved in the Complaint. Lawyers and/or education agents are not acceptable support persons.
Working Day	Any day other than a Saturday, Sunday or public holiday during school term time.

3. Policy

3.1 Guiding Principles for all Complaints

Four principles have been identified that will guide the management of conflicts of interest:

1. Protecting the School's interests;
2. Supporting transparency and accountability;
3. Promoting individual responsibility for integrity and impartiality;
4. Building a supportive organisational culture.

Making a complaint and acknowledgement

Prior to making a formal complaint, complainants are encouraged to discuss the grievance informally with the person involved in an attempt to resolve the issue directly. If this discussion leads to a resolution then no further steps need to be taken.

A formal complaint may be made through the completion and submission of a Formal Complaint Form located on the School's website.

A complaint should include the following information:

(a) Name and contact details of the complainant

(b) Dates, times and locations of any specific incidents relevant to the complaint

(c) Names of any students or staff relevant to the complaint

(d) Any outcome being sought.

The School will endeavour to provide written acknowledgement of any complaint within 5 business days which will:

(a) Confirm the nature of the complaint and the details provided

(b) Advise of the Grievance Officer(s) handling the complaint and provide their full contact details

(c) Confirm any initial steps being undertaken to resolve the complaint

(d) Provide a copy of this policy.

Investigation and Response

In order to provide a considered response to any complaint, Grievance Officer(s) will undertake an investigation of the complaint and will generally provide a response to the complainant within a period of 10 to 15 working days.

If the complaint is of an urgent nature the School will endeavour to provide a considered response as soon as practicable after receipt of the complaint.

The response will include the following:

(a) Any investigations undertaken and the findings made as a result, subject to our Privacy Policy

(b) The School's position with respect to the complaint

(c) A recommended resolution.

If the complaint relates to child abuse, the Grievance Officer(s) will first refer to the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the Responding to Child Abuse Policy (child safety policies) to determine whether the response is most appropriately provided under this policy or under the obligations and responsibilities set out in those child safety policies. In the case of the latter, any response will be provided in accordance with the requirements of those policies which set out a framework for a response that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and sets out the respective roles and responsibilities of school staff and volunteers.

Resolution

Resolutions will vary from case to case depending on the nature and circumstances of each complaint. Resolutions could include, but are not limited to:

(a) Acknowledgement of the complaint circumstances

(b) Reassurance of the complainant

(c) A verbal or written apology

(d) Disciplinary action

(e) Any other resolution that may be appropriate in the circumstances.

A communication confirming the resolution of the complaint will be sent to the complainant.

At any time the School may in its discretion refer a complaint to an independent external mediator or appoint an independent external investigator to investigate a complaint on terms deemed by the School to be appropriate.

Appeal

Appeals against a decision of the School in relation to a complaint must be made in writing and addressed to the Principal.

Receipt of the appeal will generally be acknowledged in writing within 5 business days, and the process to consider the appeal will generally commence within 10 working days of receiving the appeal.

The Principal will convene a review panel of two or three senior staff members of the School to further investigate the original complaint and appeal. This may involve communication / meeting with the complainant and other relevant parties.

When the Principal has received advice from the review panel and has made a decision regarding the complaint / appeal, the complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome and reasons for the outcome.

Records Management and Reporting

Strict confidentiality will be maintained with respect to all documentation received and generated by the School relating to complaints. All documentation will be stored securely, with physical and electronic access restricted to appropriate users.

3.2 Student Specific Grievance Resolution Procedures

If a student feels uncomfortable approaching, or does not have the ability to approach, a staff member informally to discuss a grievance, or the informal approach does not lead to a resolution of the grievance, a formal complaint should be made following the guiding principles outlined in Section 4 of this Policy. Complaints should be directed to:

(a) Year Level Co-ordinator
(b) School counsellors
(c) Deputy Principal / Head of Senior School
(d) Head of Junior School
(e) Director of Student Wellbeing

A staff member accepting a verbal complaint must complete a Formal Complaint Form. A formal interview with a student must adhere to the following:

(a) staff interviewing students should do so with the knowledge of the Year Level Coordinator or Director of Student Wellbeing in the Senior School, or the Director of Curriculum, Learning & Innovation (Junior School) or Head of Junior School in the Junior School
(b) no aggrieved students should be interviewed by a staff member with whom there is a dispute
(c) when interviewing students, all staff should be within the line of sight of passers-by
(d) a copy of this policy is to be handed to the student and explained to them in language appropriate to their age and circumstances so that the process is clearly understood
(e) the student's cultural needs, if any, must be considered in the interview and in the recording of the complaint to help the student feel safe participating in the process
(f) another member of staff will act as note-taker.

Throughout any complaint or appeal process, the student is required to maintain enrolment and complete coursework as normal even though she may have elected not to attend class.

If the School has determined that it is appropriate for the student not to attend school, the student will be provided with work at home until the appeal process is completed.

3.3 Additional Requirements for International Students

The International Students Coordinator must be informed if an International Student lodges a complaint or appeal and be kept updated on the progress and outcome.

Any complaint or appeal lodged by an International Student will be dealt with in accordance with the International Students Complaints and Appeals Policy.

3.4 Parent, Guardian or Community Member Specific Grievance Resolution Procedures

If the informal approach does not lead to a resolution of the grievance, a formal complaint should be made following the guiding principles outlined in Section 4 of the Policy. Complaints should be directed to one of the School's Grievance Officers:

(a) Deputy Principal / Head of Senior School
(b) Head of Junior School
(c) Director of Student Wellbeing
(d) Director of Corporate Services.

In no circumstances will members of the School Board be approached, or become involved in hearing, assessing or adjudicating disputes between parents/guardians and the School.

If resolution cannot be achieved using the procedures outlined in this policy, the School may refer the complaint to an external Mediator nominated by the School.

3.5 Related Policies and Documents

(a) Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy
(b) Responding to Child Abuse Policy
(c) Privacy Policy
(d) International Student Complaints and Appeals Policy