

GRIEVANCE POLICY

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1. Statement of Context and Purpose

At The Knox School (the **School**) our approach to learning is to recognise that each student is different, with something particular that they can bring to the world.

Part of this approach involves a commitment to ensuring the School community has access to processes that allow for grievances to be managed appropriately, promptly and fairly.

This policy provides clear and transparent information about how a parent, student or other member of the School community can raise grievances about the School, staff conduct, a student's education and/or student wellbeing, as well as how the grievance will be managed and resolved.

This policy does not apply to:

- Employee concerns and complaints, which should be raised in accordance with the School's Policies and Procedures, the *Knox School Enterprise Agreement 2017* (or its successor) or rights pursuant to the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth).
- Concerns about child abuse, reportable conduct and student safety, which will be addressed in accordance with the student protection policies in the Student Safety at The Knox School Handbook.
- Legal matters, including requests for compensation, payment and redress.

2. Scope

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

3. Guiding Principles

We believe that resolving grievances is an important way in which the School can support its contemporary approach to education and integrate the attributes of the School into

every aspect of a student's learning experience.

A clear process for grievance resolution also fosters the wellbeing of the School's students (and staff and volunteers for that matter), and by which the School community (in particular, parents, volunteers, carers, guardians and students) can otherwise provide the School with feedback to enable future improvements.

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 concern or complaint.

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

- Be treated with courtesy and respect.
- Have the grievance taken seriously, considered impartially, and dealt with on the merits.
- Have the grievance dealt with in a confidential and timely manner.
- Have access to appropriate and easily understandable information regarding the grievance resolution process being followed by the School (including this policy).
- Be kept informed of the progress and outcome of the grievance.
- Not be victimised, or subjected to reprisal, for raising grievances in good faith.

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

- Treat others (including staff, students and parents, both former and present) with respect and courtesy.
- Raise grievances in accordance with this policy, and as soon as possible after the event giving rise to the grievance has occurred.
- Provide complete and factual information about the grievance.
- 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 grievance.

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

4. Framework

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

- Stage 1 – A concern is raised with the School
- Stage 2 – A complaint is made to the Principal
- Stage 3 – A review by the Chair of the Board is requested

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 grievance 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 grievance, and the steps taken (or to be taken) to progress a resolution.

Stage 1- Raise the concern

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.

How can a concern be raised?

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 (including a member of the Executive Team). Contact details for the Leadership Team can be found on the School's [website](#).

Students can directly raise concerns with their classroom teacher or Year Level Coordinator, as well as 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.
- 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).
- Decide whether the issue or problem is in the nature of a concern, enquiry or grievance. This will help in finding a solution.
- If there is more than one issue or problem, write a list so that you are properly prepared.
- Consider whether there are any interim measures you would like the School to consider whilst the School 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 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', '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.

Once a concern is raised, the School will record (either by way of an electronic file note or written correspondence) the details of the concerns 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.

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) School file.

Stage 2 – Make a complaint

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 calendar month of the initial concern first being raised with the School.

A formal complaint should at first instance be addressed to the Principal. If the complaint concerns the Principal, the complaint should be made to the Board Chair, in which case the Chair will manage the process outlined below.

You may write to the Principal, who will then acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as practical (being usually within three (3) business days), or telephone the School 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.

When the Principal is dealing with a complaint, the School's objective is to achieve a resolution by:

- Clarifying the substance of the complaint, and the steps taken by the School to address the initial concern.
- Identifying whether the complaint raises an issue regarding non-compliance with the School's procedures.
- Identifying whether the complaint raises an issue that would be more appropriately addressed under the student protection policies in the Student Safety at The Knox School Handbook, or another School policy.
- Communicating with you and relevant parent(s), student(s) and staff, in an attempt to resolve the issue by agreement (where practicable).
- Failing agreement, investigating the complaint and deciding appropriate outcomes in accordance with procedural fairness and natural justice principles.

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.

The Principal will aim to communicate the outcome of a complaint in writing within fifteen (15) business days where practicable.

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.

The Principal will promptly report any formal complaints, and relevant outcomes, to the Board.

Stage 3 – Requesting a Review

If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been adequately resolved by the Principal, you may request a review by writing to the Chair of the Board at boardchair@knox.vic.edu.au.

Members of the School community who raise grievances with other Board members will be directed to follow the procedures set out in this policy, including by raising a complaint with the Principal or requesting a review by writing to the Board Chair.

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.

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.

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.

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.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Board Chair will not delegate to the Principal a review of a decision he or she has already made. However, if the Chair is satisfied that a complaint has not been properly raised (or dealt) with the Principal (and the Principal does not otherwise have a conflict of interest), the 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).

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.

5. 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 complaint 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.

6. Anonymous Grievances

The School is committed to dealing with grievances 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 grievances.

The School treats complaints about the School, a staff member, a student's education and/or a student's wellbeing with the utmost importance, and will investigate such complaints 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 it is therefore not encouraged.

7. Vexatious Grievances

The School does not tolerate vexatious concerns and complaints.

8. Previously Addressed or Stale Grievances

Grievances 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 grievance), will not be considered in the absence of highly relevant new information and/or evidence coming to light.

9. External Complaints and Redress

The School acknowledges that complaints relating to the School can also be made to an external body, such as the Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority, or be the subject of legal action.

However, the School encourages its community to raise any concerns and grievances, and work to resolve such matters in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy.

10. Confidentiality

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

need to know.

11. 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 SCHOOLBOX (which will replace SEQTA), School newsletters and bulletins as required.

12. Related documents

- Student Safety at The Knox School Handbook
 - Student Safety Risk Register
 - Occupational Health and Safety Policy
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