

# Blue Mountains Steiner School

## Policies and Procedures



### Grievance Policy and Procedures: Parents

<b>Policy Principle</b>	Our school community is a place where individuals should feel safe to express their points of view openly, honestly, constructively and in a spirit of co-operation and respect. At times concerns regarding educational, behavioural or school management issues may arise.
<b>Policy Statement</b>	We are committed to fostering a productive, equitable and harmonious relationship with parents. We aim to ensure that parents concerns and grievances are managed promptly, impartially and fairly.

#### Definitions

##### **Parent**

This means the person/s responsible as carer of a child that may include a guardian, foster parents etc.

##### **What is a grievance?**

A grievance is any school related problem, concern or complaint raised by a parent for resolution by the school. As well as genuine concerns, this may also include false, mischievous or vexatious claims.

##### **What grievances are covered by this policy?**

Concerns and complaints from parents about:

- Educational/child welfare issues
- School management issues

##### **What is excluded from this policy?**

This policy **DOES NOT** apply to:

- **Child protection issues** (reportable conduct, harm, abuse)
- **Discrimination**
- **Criminal matters.**

Grievances of this nature must be referred to the Principal immediately and the relevant policy followed. Where the Principal

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	is unavailable, contact should be made with the College Chair or School Council.
<b>Other policies that may be relevant</b>	Student Grievance Policy Student Code of Behaviour & Positive Behaviour Policy Behaviour – ‘Our Anti - Bullying’ Policy Violent or Aggressive Behaviour Policy and Procedures Transport Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
<b>Raise the grievance as soon as possible after it arises.</b>	Raise all grievances early because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It is easier to investigate and resolve concerns if reported early.</li><li>• It causes less disruption to parent/school relationships.</li><li>• It is less likely to escalate into a more complicated problem.</li></ul>

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### **Confidentiality**

Grievances will be kept as confidential as possible when applying this policy while taking into account legal obligations and responsibilities.

### **Communication**

Communication should be open and honest, focusing on the issue and not the person. This includes listening carefully and respectfully while the other person is talking, and exercising responsibility and mutual respect: respect by staff for parents' special relationships with their children; respect by parents for staff as professionals.

If communication is not effective or respectful when following procedures, the process can be halted and resumed at a future time or the matter referred to the School Council or Principal.

### **Conflict of Interest**

In a school community of our size and nature it is not uncommon for a conflict of interest to exist that can affect the resolution of a grievance. All conflicts of interest should be considered and declared at an early stage. Where this fails to happen Council will consider appropriate action.

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### Applying the Policy

There are two different procedures to be followed dependent on whether the concern is about:

- Educational/child welfare issues OR
- School management issues

Once this is decided, follow the procedure below under the appropriate heading.

It is important to take into account the exclusions to this policy noted on page 1.

### Educational/Child Welfare Issues

#### Talk to the class teacher

Where possible the parent should make every effort to resolve the issue or concern by speaking to the child's class teacher. This should occur at the time the issue arises.

A meeting should be arranged. This can be done by leaving a message for the teacher at the school office or by approaching the teacher after school to arrange a meeting time.

#### Inform the Principal

If the parent has been unable to resolve the issue or concern with the child's teacher within a reasonable time they should communicate the grievance to the Principal who will take appropriate action to resolve the matter.

In the first instance, if the grievance is straight-forward, it may be raised verbally and as soon as possible.

#### Write it down

If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome at this point it is necessary to write down the grievance stating the outcome that is sought. A meeting with the Principal and teacher representative will be arranged with the parent. At this meeting, attention will be paid to the principles and statements that form the basis of this policy document ie.

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communication, confidentiality etc.

A support person may attend this meeting with the parent. Notes of this meeting should be taken. These notes will be read and signed by all people in attendance.

### **Where the grievance remains unresolved.**

If the grievance remains unresolved then it will be referred to the School Chaplain by the Principal. Previous correspondence and the notes from the previous meeting will be tabled. The parent will be given the opportunity to speak to the School Chaplain about the grievance before it is determined. A support person may attend with the parent if requested. The parent will be informed of the outcome of the meeting within a reasonable period of time.

### **If the parent wishes to take further action.**

If the matter remains unresolved, because the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the action of the School Chaplain, the matter will be referred to the School Council by the Principal.

All documentation of the grievance will be made available to Council.

The parent will be given the opportunity to respond to the decision of the School Chaplain prior to a final decision being made by Council. This may be in the form of a meeting that can be attended by a support person or by providing a letter outlining the nature of the appeal and the outcome that is requested.

The parent will be informed of the outcome within a reasonable period of time.

At the discretion of the Council an independent mediator may be engaged to assist in resolving the grievance.

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### School Management Issues

#### **Talk to the Principal**

Bring the concern to the Principal who will direct it to the appropriate person or school body.

In the first instance, if the parent has a straight-forward concern, it may be raised verbally. This should be done as soon as possible.

The Principal will inform the parent of any school policy relevant to the concern and/or any action taken.

#### **Write it down**

If the issue has not been resolved in a reasonable time the grievance should be put in writing to the School Council stating the outcome that is sought. This will be referred to Council by the Principal.

The parent will be informed of the outcome of Councils consideration within a reasonable period of time.

#### **If the parent wishes to take further action**

If the parent is not satisfied with the results of Councils consideration they should contact the Council Chairperson.

The parent will be given the opportunity to respond to the decision of Council. This may be in the form of a meeting that can be attended with a support person, or by providing a letter outlining the nature of the appeal and the outcome that is requested.

If a meeting is held, attention will be paid to the principles and statements that form the basis of this policy document ie. communication, confidentiality etc.

The parent will be informed of the outcome within a reasonable period of time.

At the discretion of the Council, an independent mediator may be engaged to assist in bringing the grievance to a resolution.

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## Issues Remaining Unresolved

**If the above processes have not led to resolution**

A joint meeting of Principal, School Chaplain and Council may be called to review the grievance, all processes to date and to decide on employing any other unexplored options to find a resolution.