

Complaints Handling Guidelines

PURPOSE

These guidelines provide guidance to employees when dealing with complaints and ensures that all complaints are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, effective and fair way. The Guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Complaints Handling Policy.

PROCEDURE

STAGE 1

Informal discussion and negotiation

Wherever possible, the School aims to resolve concerns and complaints informally through informal discussion and negotiation. A person wishing to make a complaint is encouraged to approach the staff member concerned and attempt to resolve the complaint, taking into consideration the Parental and Visitor Code of Conduct and Staff Code of Conduct. This may be conducted in person, via phone or in writing.

Wherever possible, staff should attempt to directly resolve a concern or complaint raised by the complainant by providing feedback or relevant information. Staff should also attempt to resolve issues and concerns with other staff, face to face.

Timelines and steps in this procedure can be changed to meet the requirements of the complaint however, any changes must preserve natural justice or procedural fairness conditions. Wherever practical the case manager or designated decision maker will keep both the complainant and respondent informed of timelines.

STAGE 2 – if unresolved at Stage 1

Formal Complaints

Where a concern/complaint cannot be resolved informally, it should be referred to the Principal by:

Step	Procedure
1	Making a Complaint in writing to the Principal (principal@stuartholme.com)
2	The Manager – Office of the Principal, will enter the complaint into the complaints register on Assurance
3	The Principal will assess the complaint and meet with the Respondent to inform him/her of the Complaint and provide details of the complaint that are known at that time. The Principal will also supply copies of any documents received. The respondent will be invited to respond immediately and/or at a later time.
4	The Principal will inform both Complainant and Respondent of the management plan decided upon to address the complaint within 10 business days of receipt of the complaint. All parties are encouraged to have support persons of their choice at all stages of the proceedings
5	The Principal and another Senior School Staff Member (with external advice as necessary) will decide how best to investigate and manage the Complaint. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handling the Complaint under specific School Policy e.g., ICTL Policy and Staff Guidelines; • Mediation; or • Engaging an external person to investigate the Complaint.
6	If mediation has been decided upon an outside mediator may be engaged: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The choice of mediator must be suitable to both parties; • The mediation will take place;

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both parties will be requested to support any outcome; and • Sign what was agreed upon.
7	<p>If an investigation takes place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An independent investigator will be engaged. The investigator will attend the school to interview both parties and relevant witnesses as nominated by Complainant, Respondent and identified by the investigator. NB. Witness names and statements are NOT made available to either the Complainant or the Respondent; • The outside investigator makes a written report with findings and recommendations to the Principal. The findings and reasons are provided to the complainant and respondent
8	<p>The Principal will inform the parties within 20 working days in writing of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the decision taken by the School; • a summary of the reasons for the decision made; and • what and when follow-up action, if any, is to be taken. <p>If disciplinary outcomes are required this may involve a formal warning, request for an apology, demotion, termination of enrolment or termination of employment</p>
9	<p>The Principal will update the complaints register with the information above. If resolved, the complaint should be closed.</p>

The decision of the School following this complaint process constitutes the conclusion of the matter in terms of the Complaints Handling Policy. If the matter remains unresolved or in the event of a dispute, the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives or refer the complaint to the Board Chair as outlined below.

Employees have the right to pursue any external resolution provided for in any industrial instrument.

STAGE 3 – if unresolved at Stage 2 or complaint relates to the Principal

- Complaints must be in writing and addressed to the Board Chair
- The Board Chair will address the issue with the Principal
- Depending on the nature of the complaint the Board Chair may refer the matter to the Executive Director Sophia Education Ministries.
- Should the complaint involve a breach of legislation, the Board Chair will contact the appropriate legal authorities.
- The Board Chair may seek the assistance of the School Leadership Team or an External Investigator to assist in carrying out an investigation into the complaint.
- The Board Chair will decide upon the most appropriate outcome in view of the investigation and will provide the complainant and the Principal with a record of the findings and reasons.

STAGE 4 – if unresolved at Stage 3 or complaint relates to the Board Chair

- Complaints must be made in writing to the Executive Director, Sophia Education Ministries.
- Refer Code of Conduct – Stuartholme Board for further information.

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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Code of Conduct
- Code of Conduct – Stuartholme Board
- Communication Protocols
- Complaints Handling Policy
- Complaints Register
- Enterprise Bargaining Agreement
- ICTL Policy and Staff Guidelines
- Privacy Policy
- Student Positive Expectations and Behaviour Guideline
- Student Protection Processes & Guidelines
- Whistleblower Policy
- Work Health and Safety Policy
- Workplace Discrimination and Harassment Policy

REVIEW

This procedure will be reviewed every three years, or as necessitated by legislation.