

Grievance and Conflict Resolution Policy and Procedures

Values

The Small School fosters the wellbeing and safety of children and staff.

All adults at The Small School exercise a duty of care and kindness to children.

Commitment to relationship building within the school community is highly valued at The Small School.

All adults at The Small School model respectful relationships and conflict resolution practices.

The Small School deeply values procedural fairness as a fundamental right in a democratic society.

Purpose

This policy sets out The Small School's approach to resolving differences between people.

Responsibility

The Small School has a responsibility to ensure that grievances are managed and resolved fairly, efficiently and according to the concept of 'procedural fairness'.

Procedural fairness is a basic right that refers to what is sometimes described as the 'hearing rule' and the 'right to an unbiased decision'.

The 'hearing rule' includes the right of the person against whom an allegation has been made to:

- Know the allegations related to a specific matter and any other information which will be taken into account in considering the matter.
- Know the process by which the matter will be considered.
- Respond to the allegations.
- Know how to make an appeal.

The 'right to an unbiased decision' includes the right to:

- Impartiality in an investigation and decision-making.
- An absence of bias by a decision-maker.

How the purpose is achieved

Grievances occur when a person complains that an action or decision has been taken (or not taken) within the school that he/she believes to be a breach of a relevant Act, Regulation or Order, infringes upon the principles of merit and equity, or is otherwise unreasonable.

In the first instance, a matter of dispute or grievance should be discussed and resolved between the parties concerned. Where this is not possible or appropriate, the matter should be referred to the School Manager.

It is the School Manager's responsibility to provide a healthy and positive school environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. In doing so, all staff will be made aware of their rights and responsibilities, including their right to have grievances resolved.

Undisclosed or unresolved grievances create distress and can be a violation of a person's rights.

Resolution of grievances at a local level, where appropriate, is the desired outcome.

Parents may choose to resolve grievances personally by talking with or writing to the person whose behaviour is of concern.

Parents may choose to seek assistance in resolving grievances, including assistance from the School Manager. In such circumstances the School Manager may use complaints resolution procedures including private discussions, mediation, monitoring, training or counselling. The School Manager will use the principles of procedural fairness outlined in this policy when facilitating the meeting.

It is incumbent upon the School Manager to act where unacceptable conduct is observed or brought to attention.

It is important that all complaints, ensuing procedures and outcomes are fully documented. All grievances that are reported to a school employee, including the School Manager, will be recorded.

Children are supported to resolve conflicts with other children in Special Circles with a teacher or the School Manager. This process is detailed in Student Leadership Policy and Procedures and Behaviour Management Policy and Procedures.

Staff are encouraged to lodge formal complaints in serious cases or when unwelcome behaviour persists despite advice to a respondent that his/her behaviour is causing problems and must cease. Formal complaints should be lodged with the School Manager.

The rights of complainants and respondents will be upheld at all times, including the use of fair, confidential, impartial and dignified resolution procedures.

The School Manager can determine in consultation with the School Board whether external counselling services may be employed by the school in relation to grievance resolution.

Procedures for parents

The school encourages parents to discuss any concern regarding the daily care and interactions with their child informally with the child's teacher as soon as it arises.



The school also encourages teachers to discuss any concerns they may have with the child's parent as soon as they arise.



If the issue needs further consideration or discussion, then the parent or teacher should raise the matter with the School Manager.



Meetings can be held with all parties involved to ensure that the dispute is resolved to everyone's satisfaction and steps implemented to ensure that there is no recurrence of the problem.



When no resolution can be reached then external assistance may be consulted, eg. NSW Ombudsman.

Where the conflict is between parents at the school, parents are strongly encouraged to seek the support of the School Manager if they don't believe they can resolve the issue between themselves. This is particularly encouraged where the conflict relates to an incident that has occurred between their children.

Procedures for staff

In the event of a staff member disagreeing with or being in dispute with a colleague, a number of steps should be taken to resolve the issue.

