



Carmel School
FAITH & KNOWLEDGE

Parent Grievance Policy

Statement of Purpose and Commitment

It is recognised that, from time to time, grievances may arise within the School community. This policy sets out processes by which matters of concern can be addressed expeditiously, confidentially and with sensitivity to all concerned.

Definition:

A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived situation or outcome. The dissatisfaction may be based on a perception that a student, parent or staff member has:

- Done something wrong, or
- Failed to do something he/she should have, or
- Acted unfairly or inappropriately.

Carmel School is committed to:

- Ensuring that the School is a safe, fair and just environment,
- Actively promoting the development of positive personal relationships, where persons respect one another
- Being proactive in seeking to minimise the incidence of conflict,
- Supporting the right of every member of the School community to have their grievance listened to, addressed fairly and dealt with expeditiously,
- Attempting to resolve disputes and grievances in a non-threatening, respectful manner and in a supportive environment.

Guiding Principals

- Complainants are encouraged to firstly and, where practicable, seek to resolve the complaint **informally**. Formal procedures for the resolution of grievances will normally only be invoked when a matter cannot be resolved by informal means.
- Carmel School supports, where possible, an informal, amicable, and equitable resolution of grievances through discussions, mediation and/or conciliation to achieve an agreed outcome aimed at enabling all parties to continue in the School community free from harassment or retribution.
- All resolution policies and processes acknowledge and value different perspectives and operate under the principles of; impartiality, promptness and protection from victimisation.
- Communication and resolution processes should always be based on the parties acting in good faith, exercising good judgement, being honest and open, focussing on the issue and not the person.

- In dealing with a complaint, informally or formally, every reasonable effort shall be made to ensure that natural justice is afforded to all parties. This mean, in practical terms:
 - Subject to duty of care or other legal obligations, respondents should be informed of all allegations, and the basis for and the specific circumstances which give rise to the grievance.
 - The right of all parties to be heard and state their case.
 - Investigations into the grievance must be undertaken expeditiously and thoroughly.
 - Only matters that are relevant to the grievance under consideration should be taken into account.
- It is recognised that the application of the principles of procedural fairness can vary, depending upon the context and nature of the grievance and the nature of the response proposed or sought.
- As far as possible and appropriate, confidentiality will be respected and maintained by all parties throughout the resolution process, save where persons are required to be informed on a 'need to know' basis or where statutory or other legal requirements demand that matters be reported.
- Whilst complaints from an anonymous source will be taken seriously and investigated as far as practically possible, it is very difficult to proceed or undertake a thorough and extensive investigation if the complainant cannot be identified and hence cannot provide further and better particulars or information to assist with that investigation. Complainants are therefore encouraged to identify themselves.
- Where complaints or grievances are made in circumstances where a crime may have been allegedly committed, the Police or similar outside agencies will normally be contacted and formally advised of the complaint or grievance. In some cases, (e.g. Mandatory Reporting), there is not discretion and the matter must be reported to the relevant authorities.

Options for the Resolution of Grievances

A person may elect, according to the nature and seriousness of their grievance, to deal with that grievance in one or more of the following ways:

1. Personal resolution – this might involve:
 - a. Discussing and resolving the matter directly with the person responsible for the behaviour, to see if a misunderstanding has occurred, and can be resolved,
 - b. Seeking confidential advice in relation to strategies to deal personally with the grievance,
 - c. Seeking advice in relation to different options,

- d. Seeking the support of another person to assist in informally resolving the grievance.
- 2. Reporting a grievance
 - a. Select the appropriate person to report the grievance to.
 - b. When making a report, explain the nature of the complaint, including the specific details and the extent of the dissatisfaction.
 - c. The person receiving the complaint will gather information relating to the allegations and may convene meetings of the parties to discuss the complaint with the person(s) accused, to hear all relevant evidence and submissions. A determination will then be made, on the basis of a thorough investigation, whether or not to uphold the grievance.
 - d. If the complaint is substantiated, the evidence is inconclusive or if the complaint is found to not be substantiated, both the complainant and the accused will be advised accordingly, with such follow-up counselling or other actions deemed appropriate.
 - e. The complainant and respondent will, in all instances, be informed of the outcome and action taken.
 - f. When a grievance is not or cannot be resolved within the School, the parties may contact the President of the Board.
 - g. If the grievance has still not been resolved the complainant may seek the assistance of outside professional agencies or other relevant judicial or quasi-judicial bodies in order that a further attempt can be made to resolve the matter.

Referral of Grievance to the School Board

As a general rule, the President of the Carmel School Board and members of the board are not directly involved in the first instance with the receipt, investigation or resolution of grievances, other than grievances arising with the School Board itself.

In instances where a grievance is with the Principal, a person may, if they feel the matter cannot otherwise be resolved or feels it is appropriate to do so, lodge a formal complaint with the President of the Board. In turn, and in consultation with the complainant, the President of the Board will expeditiously implement all reasonable steps to have the complaint fully investigated and to facilitate a resolution.

In other exceptional circumstances, a member of the School community may make a direct approach to the President of the Board to bring their attention to a matter of concern, to formally lodge a grievance or refer a grievance where the resolution processes within the School have failed or are otherwise inappropriate. In such instances, the President of the Board will take advice from appropriate persons and make a determination as to how the grievance should be dealt with.

Withdrawal of Grievance

A person may withdraw a grievance at any stage of the resolution process. If a grievance is withdrawn, the matter will be deemed closed.

Beyond Carmel School

Please note that neither the Minister for Education and Child Development nor the Department for Education and Child Development has any power to intervene directly in complaints relating to the operations of a non-government school.

Record Keeping

Accurate and appropriate records will be kept securely, by the person(s) responsible for overseeing or managing the resolution process for a particular grievance. A record of the complaint should contain the following detail:

- Date when issue was first raised
- Name of complainant
- Detailed statement of concern / complaint including:
 - Nature of complaint
 - Identity of person involved
 - Time of allegation
- Description of the procedures applied and the time frame for reporting on the outcomes of any investigation
- Statement of outcomes
- Staff member(s) handling of the complaint
- Location of files established as part of office records management.

The records management system will protect the privacy of the individual(s) concerned.

Outcomes

A matter is deemed successful if all parties find the outcome(s) acceptable. Should any party not be satisfied with the result, they can choose to pursue the matter further.

Each complaint or grievance is to be dealt with in good conscience and with equity, and on its particular circumstances and merits. Any settlements reached through the grievance process will not constitute any binding precedent for future cases.

Appropriate Confidentiality

The School recognises that accusations can potentially be defamatory and can involve risks to those concerned, especially if such accusations are without foundation and reputations are damaged without just cause. All persons dealing with grievances or complaints should maintain confidentiality unless otherwise required by appropriate

circumstances, policy or law, so as to minimise disruption to the School and the risk of a civil suit for defamation.

Each campus (Primary and Secondary) has several options available to parents and students should they need to raise a grievance. Although it is most unusual for complaints or grievances to remain unresolved at the School, there may be times where students or parents feel the need to take their grievances further, hence the tiered options outlined below.

In all cases, parents and students are encouraged to make use of the appropriate feedback channels to raise a grievance so that it can be dealt with in the appropriate manner by the correct staff member.

Feedback channels

At Carmel, our service commitment is to respond to emails within 48 hours (2 working days). Responses may be in the form of an email reply, a phone call or a face-to-face discussion. Please make it clear at the time of your grievance if you require a written response from the School.

In order to get your query attended to quickly, efficiently and directly, it is best to contact the most appropriate person, with the right knowledge and access to the necessary information to help resolve the grievance.

The following provides a summary of the correct feedback channel for each campus:

ELC and Primary School

- For all matters, your first port of call is your child's classroom teacher (unless the matter pertains to teaching and learning within the Jewish Studies context).
- If your classroom teacher is unable to assist, please email [Mrs. Debbie Bolton](#), Head of Primary.
- If your query relates to Jewish studies or Hebrew, first email your child's Jewish Studies or Hebrew teacher. If they are unable to assist, please email [Mrs. Debbi Benn](#), Head of Jewish Studies and Hebrew in the Primary School.
- If you are unsure of who to approach, please email [Mrs. Jacqui Osrin](#) who will guide you appropriately.

Secondary School

- For day to day administrative matters (notices, to explain absences etc), please contact your child's mentor teacher. Names and email addresses of all mentors (and teachers) can be accessed via SEQTA on your child's timetable.

- For matters relating to your child’s learning in a particular subject, please start by emailing your child’s teacher. If they are unable to assist, please contact the relevant Head of Learning Area.
 - [Mr. Stephen George](#) (Maths)
 - [Mrs Nicola Dunn](#) (Science)
 - [Mrs Emily Cunningham](#) (English)
 - [Mr. Michael Duthie](#) (VAPA)
 - [Mr. Simon Lawrence](#) (Jewish Studies and Hebrew)
 - [Mr. Chris Quelch](#) (HPE)
 - [Mr Michael Raston](#) (HASS)
- For matters relating to your child’s pastoral care, please contact Director of Student Development and Wellbeing.
 - [Mrs Cherie Birch](#)
- If you require further assistance, please contact [Mr. Dean Shadgett](#), Head of Secondary.
- If you are unsure of who to approach, please contact [Mrs. Zsuzsi Shuhandler](#) who will guide you appropriately.

Whole School Queries

- For queries relating to school fees or any other area of finance, please contact [Mrs Louise Barnett](#)
- If you would like to make an appointment to see the Principal, [Dr Julie Harris](#), please contact [Mrs. Janine Myers](#). If you need to inform the Principal of an urgent matter, please email directly.
- If you would like to leave feedback, give suggestions or inform us of anything at all, you can always email our general enquires line at shalom@carmel.wa.edu.au