



Carmel School Complaint/Grievance Policy
(incorporating parent and student complaints/grievances)

Statement of Purpose and Commitment

It is recognised that at times, grievances or complaints may arise within the School community. This policy sets out processes by which matters of concern can be addressed in a timely manner, in confidence and with sensitivity to all concerned. School leaders, staff and volunteers are responsible for communicating any complaints to the relevant staff members or authority.

Definition:

Carmel School is committed to:

- ensuring that the School is a safe, fair and just environment
- actively promoting the development of positive, respectful relationships
- proactively seeking to minimise conflict
- supporting every community member's right to have their grievance listened to and dealt with fairly, in a timely manner
- attempting to resolve disputes and grievances in a non-threatening, respectful and supportive manner

Guiding Principles

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.

Wherever possible, the School supports the informal, amicable resolution of grievances through discussion, 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 processes acknowledge different perspectives and operate under the principles of impartiality and protection from victimisation.

Communications are based on parties acting in good faith, being honest and open and focusing on the issue and not the person. At all times, the School will act and report as necessary as well as cooperate with law enforcement.

In dealing with a complaint, informally or formally, every reasonable effort shall be made to ensure that natural justice is afforded to all parties. In practical terms:

- subject to duty or care or other legal obligations, respondents will be informed of all allegations and circumstances which give rise to the complaint
- all parties have the right to be heard and to state their case
- investigations will be undertaken thoroughly and within a reasonable time frame
- only matters relevant to the grievance will be taken into account
- principles of procedural fairness can vary, depending on the context and nature of the complaint and the response sought
- as far as is possible & appropriate, confidentiality will be respected & maintained other than when legal requirements demand matters are reported
- whilst complaints from anonymous sources will be investigated as far as is practicable, it is difficult to investigate thoroughly if complainants cannot be identified to seek further information. Complainants are therefore encouraged to identify themselves.
- if a complaint alleges a crime may have been committed, the police will normally be contacted and formally advised as such. In cases of mandatory reporting, the matter must be reported to the relevant authorities.

Dealing with a Grievance

A complainant may elect to deal with their grievance through:

1. Personal resolution, for example by:
 - discussing and resolving the matter directly with the relevant person
 - seeking confidential advice & strategies to deal with the grievance
 - seeking the support of another person to help with informal resolution

2. Reporting the grievance, for example by:
 - selecting the appropriate person to whom the grievance should be referred
 - reporting the grievance including relevant, specific details and the extent of their dissatisfaction

Investigating Grievances

The investigation process may involve:

- convening meetings of parties to hear and discuss relevant evidence and submissions
- the recipient of the complaint gathering information relating to the allegations
- determining whether or not to uphold the grievance (based on thorough investigation)

Outcomes and Resolution of Grievances

At the conclusion of investigations, the complainant and the accused will be advised as to the outcome and the action taken. Both parties will be offered follow up including access to the EPA if deemed appropriate.

If a grievance cannot be resolved within the School, the parties may contact the President of the Board. 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 and members of the Carmel School Board are not directly involved in the receipt, investigation or resolution of grievances, other than grievances arising regarding the conduct of the Principal or the School Board itself.

In instances where a grievance is regarding the Principal, a person may lodge a formal complaint with the President of the Board. In consultation with the complainant, the President of the Board will implement all reasonable steps to have the complaint fully investigated in a timely manner and will attempt to facilitate a resolution.

In other exceptional circumstances, a member of the School community may directly approach the President of the Board to bring their attention to a matter of concern, to formally lodge a grievance or to 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 seek 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, in which case the matter will be deemed closed.

Beyond Carmel School

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

Complaints will be recorded in a register, kept securely by the Principal.

The register will contain the following:

Date complaint was received	Name of complainant	Summary of complaint	Investigator	Actions taken	Outcome	Date Principal closed the case
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Outcomes

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

Each complaint or grievance will be dealt with fairly and in good conscience, based 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 circumstances, policy or law, to minimise disruption to the School and the risk of a civil suit for defamation.

Both campuses (Primary and Secondary) have 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 School, our service commitment is to respond to emails within 48 business hours. Responses may be in the form of an email reply, a phone call or a face-to-face discussion. It should be made clear at the time of reporting a grievance if a written response is requested.

Contacting the appropriate person (who has the right knowledge and access to the necessary information to help resolve the grievance) helps ensure the timely resolution of grievances.

Who to contact:

Early Learning Centre and Primary School

- The first point of contact should be the classroom teacher.
- If they are unable to assist, contact should be made with the Head of Primary.
- If the grievance relates to Jewish studies or Hebrew, contact should be the Jewish Studies or Hebrew teacher. If they are unable to assist, the Head of Jewish Studies and Hebrew in the Primary School should be contacted.
- If the best point of contact is not clear, the Primary School Administrative Officer at the reception desk will be able to provide contact details of the appropriate person.

Secondary School

- For grievances regarding day to day issues, parents and students should contact the mentor teacher. Names and email addresses of all mentors (and subject teachers) can be accessed via SEQTA timetables.
- For curriculum matters (relating to learning in a particular subject) the classroom teacher is the first point of contact. If they are unable to assist, the relevant Head of Learning Area or Learning Area Co-ordinator should be contacted.
- For matters relating to student pastoral care and wellbeing, the Director of Student Development and Wellbeing should be contacted.
- For further assistance, the Head of Secondary can be contacted.
- If the person who is the best point of contact is not clear, the Receptionist at the front reception desk will be able to assist by providing the contact details of the appropriate person.
- Grievances regarding fees or finance should be directed to the Chief Financial Officer

Appointments to see the Principal can be made via reception. In the case of a confidential or urgent matter, the Principal can be emailed directly.

Feedback, suggestions or other information can be sent to the School's general enquiries email:
shalom@carmel.wa.edu.au

Student Grievances

**Do you have any concerns, complaints or suggestions?
If so, we would like to hear them!**

FAQs

How do I raise a concern?

- by talking about it – or by writing it down if that's easier for you
- you can prepare it by yourself, as part of a group, or through your parents

Where can I lodge my concern?

With:

- your parents / guardians
- your classroom teacher or mentor teacher
- the staff member involved
- anyone on the Carmel staff with whom you feel comfortable
- the School Psychologist
- the Head of Primary, Head of Secondary or the Principal

Does it matter what the issue is?

No, it can be a big problem or a small one. By discussing it, you may come up with some positive ideas! Together, we can sort anything out.

What will happen next?

If possible, the staff member you talk to will deal with it in person. If they can't, they will refer the matter to a more senior member of staff who can help with it. For some issues, a report to the Director General will enable them to support the School in monitoring compliance with the relevant standards.

Do others have to know?

If you are worried about confidentiality, tell the staff member – they will understand and discuss this with you. If you are concerned about the safety of yourself or other students, our first priority is to make sure everyone is safe and the matter will need to be taken further.

Will I cause trouble by asking questions or making a complaint?

No! You have a right to raise issues which are worrying you. Think about what you can do and find a member of staff that you trust, to get their advice on issues.

Even if the issue is painful, difficult or embarrassing, don't worry – it will only be discussed by people who can help you. Do not feel afraid to discuss any concern – it may help others.

Feedback Channels for Students

At Carmel, we respond to emails within 48 business hours. 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 would like a written response from the School.

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

Here are the right people to contact for each campus:

ELC and Primary School

- Speak to your classroom teacher.
- If your classroom teacher is unable to assist, please email or speak to the Head of Primary.
- If your query relates to Jewish studies or Hebrew, first speak to your Jewish Studies or Hebrew teacher. If they are unable to assist, please speak to or email the Jewish Studies and Hebrew in the Primary School.
- If you are unsure of who to approach, please speak to the Primary School Administrative Officer who will tell you who to contact.

Secondary School

- For day to day issues, contact your mentor teacher. Names and email addresses of all mentors (and teachers) can be accessed via SEQTA on your timetable.
- For matters relating to your learning in a particular subject, start by talking to or emailing your teacher. If they are unable to assist, you should contact the relevant Head of Learning Area or Learning Area Co-ordinator. If you aren't sure who this is, you can ask at reception and you will be referred to the right person.
- For matters relating to your pastoral care and wellbeing, please contact the Director of Student Development and Wellbeing.
- If you require further assistance, please contact the Head of Secondary.
- If you are unsure of who to approach, ask at reception and they will guide you appropriately.

Whole School Queries

- If you would like to make an appointment to see the Principal, you can email directly. Ask at reception if you need help to do this.
- If you would like to leave feedback, give suggestions or inform us about anything at all, you can always email our general enquires line at: shalom@carmel.wa.edu.au