

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

BACKGROUND

Danebank School is committed to providing a safe, fair and honest environment where complaints and grievances are dealt with promptly and sensitively. Parents, guardians and students are encouraged to come forward with their concerns and grievances in the knowledge that the School will hear their complaints, and that action will be taken in the manner that the School deems as appropriate and lawful.

This policy outlines a framework for staff of the School (and, as applicable, members of Council and its committees) to respond where students, parents, customers, contractors, local residents, visitors and others have a complaint (excluding issues raised by staff within the school).

Exceptions include specific issues that are dealt in accordance with:

- Student Suspension, Transfer, Expulsion, Exclusion Procedures
- Child Protection – Risk of Harm and Significant Harm and/or Allegations*
- Student Bullying
- Criminal Jurisdictions

**If a complaint or allegation is about a person's behaviour and concerns the protection of children and young people or any other behaviour which, if substantiated, could amount to an internal investigation (and possibly a crime), then the Principal is to be notified immediately*

All members of staff are responsible for receiving complaints, treating them as a serious matter and dealing with them politely and in a timely manner.

Wherever possible, complaints should be resolved by a process of discussion and joint cooperation. The aim is to reach an acceptable outcome that minimizes any potential detriment to ongoing relationships.

DEFINITIONS

A complaint is defined as "an expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation, related products, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected."

The person making a complaint is referred to as "the complainant". The person about whom the complaint is made is "the respondent". The "parties" refer to both complainant and respondent. The person handling the complaint is the 'complaint manager', usually a Principal, Director or Manager. Persons who directly witness an alleged incident are referred to as 'witnesses'.

THE FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The following procedures are a guide explaining how the School will address/capture a complaint. There may be cases where the procedure is not appropriate and other actions will be taken. The School will determine on a case by case basis on the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.

■ Making the Complaint

The School has determined that any issue raised in writing (by email or letter) that is an expression of dissatisfaction, should be considered a complaint and managed in accordance with complaints handling procedures.

Complaints can be addressed to the Executive Staff as follows:

- The Principal
- The Deputy – Administration
- The Deputy – Pastoral Care
- The Head of Junior School

depending on what is the most relevant point of contact for the nature of the complaint.

If a Complainant is in any doubt of the best person to contact, the complaint should be addressed to the Principal.

The receiving party may refer the complaint to a more appropriate person for further information and explanation. In many cases, matters can be resolved by discussion and explanation.

Any staff members receiving a complaint verbally should encourage the Complainant to present them to the school in writing. They should also notify the most relevant Executive staff listed above about the discussion so that the matter can be received appropriately when it does arrive.

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■ **Acknowledging and handling the Complaint**

On receipt, The Principal, the Deputy - Administration, the Deputy - Pastoral Care or the Head of Junior School, will acknowledge the complaint and advise an approximate time frame to investigate the matter.

They also should:

- Carefully listen to the Complainant's concerns and their desired outcomes
- Request further information from the Complainant and/or from third parties if required
- Keep appropriate, confidential records of the matter**
- Refer the complaint to a more senior staff member or the Principal where appropriate
- Keeping all informed in regards to the progress of the complaint

***Danebank School keeps a Complaints Register which is shared with the School Executive. The document is administered by the Executive Assistant to the Principal.*

OUTCOMES

The outcome of a complaint will vary on a case to case basis depending on the circumstances surrounding the grievance.

However, outcomes could include:

- The Complainant understanding the situation and no longer feeling aggravated or upset
- The Complainant receiving a written response, and where appropriate an apology
- Where appropriate the respondent receiving disciplinary action where a School Policy or Code of Conduct has been breached.
- Where the complaint is regarding the actions of another parent, if appropriate a mediation process may be initiated by the School in an attempt to address the concerns, acknowledging that the School cannot enforce an outcome.
- Where the complaint is regarding the actions of students, the involvement of the School Counsellors may be recommended.