

Tranby College is building an accessible and inclusive community in which students are educated to discover and realise the excellence within themselves.

Within the values and ethos of the Uniting Church in Australia, it is developing people of conscience who play a responsible role in creating sustainable compassionate communities.



COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCE POLICY

(This policy replaces “Policy on Relationships and Lines of Communication, November 19th 1997.)

Related Policies: *Child Protection Policy; Sexual Harassment Policy*

Definitions:

- A complaint expresses a person’s or a group’s concerns about another person’s or group’s behaviours, actions, decisions or processes.
- A grievance is analogous to a complaint, although it is possibly of a more serious nature either due to the nature of the allegations, or the way in which the allegations are being made.
- This policy does not cover complaints, grievances or disputes which should be dealt with under the relevant Tranby College Enterprise Bargaining Agreement or underlying Awards and Employment Contracts (where relevant).

Beliefs:

- Complaints will occur from time to time in any dynamic organisation, and in a school they may arise from parents, guardians, pupils, staff and the public.
- There are different types of complaints and grievances, ranging from simple matters of concern to formal complaints set out in written signed documents.
- As a school of the Uniting Church in Australia, the grievance procedures within the College should reflect the values and ethos of the Church.
- Procedures for the resolution of complaints and grievances should be fair, equitable, ethical and consistent and should at all times follow the principles of natural justice.
- If the culture of the school is open and committed to the establishment of respectful, learning relationships, all complaints will be taken seriously and received in a positive, caring manner.
- An effective complaints procedure can diffuse problems and provide the school with helpful information.

Principles

- The College will be open to the concerns of members of its community.
- Members of the College Community can expect to be taken seriously and can choose to approach the person whom they believe will be the most helpful.
- If at any time there is a situation involving the Police, the Principal must take responsibility for the actions of the school, and the Chairperson of the College Council will be contacted as soon as possible. If the Principal is not available, the next most senior member of staff who is available will take responsibility.
- All grievances or complaints will be treated with respect and in a confidential manner.

- Concerns will be dealt with speedily and those who have raised them will be kept informed about progress.
- Clear confidential files and a log will be kept.
- Confidentiality will be respected and maintained so far as is possible.
- Complaints made by parents will not rebound adversely on their children, and similarly complaints made by pupils or staff will not rebound onto them or onto other pupils or staff.
- All members of staff will be given the opportunity to respond to any complaints that are made against them.
- Procedures will include the courses of action to be taken if the grievance is against the School Principal or the School Council.
- Every reasonable effort will be made to resolve internal grievances before the intervention of outside agencies or mediators.
- There must be an end to the process at some point. That is, it may be necessary for the complainant to accept that their complaint has been heard and that it cannot be resolved as they would wish it to be.

Practices

1. Lines of Approach

1.1 Complaints from parents (or guardians)

- Parents (or guardians) should feel free to approach whichever member of staff they believe is the most appropriate to deal with the issue. This may be the Principal or Head of School, although in the first instance the most productive approach would normally be to the relevant class or form teacher, or house tutor.
- If the complaint is about a Head of School, the parent would normally go straight to Principal.
- If the complaint is about the Principal, the parent is entitled to contact the Chairperson.
- If the complaint is about the College Council, the parent should contact the Principal.

1.2 Complaints from students

The lines of approach for students are similar to those for parents, although younger students should also feel that they can approach senior students, e.g. prefects, house officials, members of the Student Council. Senior students will take the complaint to the staff member whom they judge to be appropriate.

1.3 Complaints from Staff

Staff are entitled to choose an appropriate avenue of complaint. This might be a trusted colleague, a senior member of staff, the Chairperson or the Union.

1.4 Complaints from the public

These are most likely to come to the Principal, Administrator or Chairperson. If members of staff or other members of the school community are aware of such complaints, they should forward them to the Principal.

2. Procedures

2.1 Complaints to staff

In many instances, staff will be the first point of contact for a complaint, especially from parents and students. All staff are encouraged to deal with complaints that lie within their area of responsibility.

In dealing with such complaints, staff should:

- Keep a written record of all complaints and how they are handled;
- Let the complainant know what they will do in response to their complaint, and when they will do it;
- Maintain confidentiality and respect the concern that many complainants have that their complaint will rebound adversely on themselves or on their children or friends;
- Ensure that a senior member of staff, e.g. a coordinator, the Business Manager, a Head of School or the Principal, is aware of the complaint and of its proposed resolution.
- Keep appropriate written records (see Section 3, below).

If the complaint does not lie within the area of responsibility of the staff member who receives it, they should:

- Refer it to the appropriate person, and
- Let the complainant know that is happening.

2.2 Complaints to a Head of School, Business Manager or Principal

Essentially the procedures outlined in 2.1 should be followed.

2.3 When complaints become grievances

In the first instance it is hoped that the complaint will be resolved through open and respectful communication.

However, there will be occasions when grievances develop, or the complaints are of such a serious nature that more formal action needs to be taken. There are different stages of action available.

2.3.1 Referral to an Outside Agency

There could be instances in which the Principal, in consultation with the Chairperson of the College Council, refers the complaint to an outside agency e.g. the Police or DCD.

2.3.2 Referral to the Chairperson of the College Council

In most cases, the procedure will be that the Principal refers the matter to the Chairperson and informs the complainant that this stage has been reached. However, the complainant will also be able to write directly to the Chairperson.

The Chairperson will discuss the matter fully with the Principal and be provided with relevant documentation. If a briefing is required from a member of staff, or another person, this will occur in the presence of the Principal.

The Chairperson will respond to the complainant, notifying him/her that the matter is being reviewed, asking him/her if they wish to add anything further and providing a date by which they may expect a written response.

The Chairperson's response will be clear and detailed, and will offer a meeting if the complainant remains troubled.

2.3.3 Meeting with the Chairperson of the College Council

If a meeting is requested, the Chairperson will offer to meet the complainant at a time convenient to them both. Those involved will be:

- the Chairperson;
- the Principal and, at the most, one other member of staff; and
- the complainant.

The complainant will be permitted to bring with him/her a supportive friend who is not involved with the complaint. Legal representation is not appropriate at this stage.

If a solution is not found, the Chairperson may consider referring the matter to a Conciliation Committee.

2.3.4 Referral to a Conciliation Committee

This committee will be established by the Chairperson. It will be convened by a member of Council, but not the Chairperson, and it will have up to four other members, at least two of whom are Council Members. The proceedings of the Committee will be confidential and will be fair and objective with the overall aim being that of conciliation.

The Committee is likely to meet at least once with the parties in the disagreement. The complainants will be invited to bring a supportive friend, and the Principal would normally be involved. Any papers or submissions would be available for consideration before the meeting.

The Chairperson has no further involvement until the Convenor reports back at the end of the Committee's meetings and deliberations. The Chairperson would normally endorse the Committee's decision.

If the matter is not resolved at this stage it would be appropriate to refer it to the Moderator of the WA Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia.

2.3.5 Referral to the Moderator

It must be noted that referral to the Moderator is a grave situation and should not be resorted to until all internal procedures have been exhausted.

Referral to the Moderator would normally be through the College Council. However, if a complainant believes that their grievance has not been resolved satisfactorily through the internal processes, then they are entitled to contact the Moderator themselves.

The Moderator will proceed in the spirit of Section 9 of the Memorandum of Understanding between the WA Synod and the Uniting Church Schools Education Committee of WA, and will follow the guidelines in Appendix 8 of that Memorandum.

All parties will participate fully and openly in this process and determination made under this process will be final.

3. Records

All records of complaints should be lodged in the Principal's office.

This will enable a log to be kept of all complaints and other concerns containing the following information:

- Date when the issue was raised;
- Name of complainant;
- Brief statement of the issue;
- Location of the detailed file;
- Member of staff handling the issue; and
- Brief statement of the outcome.

Confidential files on all complaints will be maintained and kept together and cross referenced with other files as necessary. The files will contain simple but clear notes of all conversations with parents about any source of dissatisfaction. This applies to friendly chats and to telephone conversations, as misunderstandings easily arise. There should be a clear statement of what is concerning the complainants. These notes can be agreed with the complainants.

4. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints may be where there is no indication of either name or address, or where the complainants say they do not wish to be identified. They may come from members of the public, from parents or from pupils.

Parents and pupils should be encouraged to give their names and should be given reassurance on the issue of confidentiality. If they persist in wishing to remain anonymous, it is at the Principal's discretion as to what action, if any, should be taken, depending on the nature of the complaint.

Anonymous complaints will be recorded in the log in the Principal's office.



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FLOW CHART

