

Complaints Resolution Policy



Hills
Grammar





Complaints Resolution Policy

Approval and Review	Details
Document Owner	Deputy Principal
Responsibility	Deputy Principal
Approver	Principal
Issue Date	June 2022
Reviewed and Updated	June 2023 June 2024 June 2025
Review Date	June 2026

Purpose

This policy is intended to ensure that the School handles complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively. This policy provides guidance to key stakeholders (governing body, staff, parents, students & community members) who wish to make a complaint about some aspect of the School's operations.

This policy outlines the key principles of Complaints Resolution best practice

Scope

This policy applies to the receipt and management of complaints by the School from key stakeholders (staff, parents, students and community members) made to or about the School, regarding our performance, services and staff, or our complaint handling process. When addressing complaints, care needs to be taken that the policy and procedure is implemented in accord with other policy or statutory requirements.

Our Commitment

Hills Grammar is committed to providing a safe and effective response to those who wish to express dissatisfaction to, or about, the School. Complaints and compliments are best viewed as an opportunity:

- for organisational improvement
- for improved outcomes
- to build better relationships with, and between, key stakeholders.

Hills Grammar expects staff at all levels of the School to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint resolution.

Who	Commitment	How
Principal	Promote a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to the Council on complaint resolution. Provide adequate support and direction to key staff responsible for handling complaints. Regularly review reports about complaint trends and issues arising from same. Encourage all staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling same to resolve them promptly. Encourage staff to make recommendations for system improvements. Support recommendations for service, staff and complaint resolution improvements arising from the analysis of data.
School Executive	Demonstrate exemplary complaint-handling practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints. Assist people to make a complaint, if needed. Comply with our policy and associated procedures. Provide regular feedback to the Principal on issues arising from complaints. Provide suggestions to management on ways to improve our complaints resolution system. Implement changes arising from individual complaints and from the analysis of the data as directed by management.
All staff	Understand and comply with complaint resolution practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints. Be aware of complaint resolution policies and procedures. Assist people who wish to who make complaints access our complaints process. Be alert to complaints and assist staff handling same to resolve matters promptly.

Guiding Principles

An effective complaint resolution system must be modelled on the principles of fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency and integration into organisational culture.



Facilitate Complaints

The School is committed to seeking and receiving feedback and complaints about our services, systems, practices, procedures, products and resolution handling.

Any concerns raised in feedback or complaints will be dealt with within a reasonable time frame. People making complaints will be:

- Provided with information about our complaint resolution process and how to access it.
- Listened to, treated with respect by staff and actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate.
- Provided with reasons for our decision/s and any options for redress or review.

No Detriment to People Making Complaints

The School will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.

Anonymous Complaints

The School accepts anonymous complaints if there is a compelling reason to do so and will carry out a confidential investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided.

Accessibility

The School will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about it is well publicised on our website. The School will ensure that its systems to manage complaints are easily understood and accessible to everyone, particularly people who may require assistance.

If a person prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist or represent them in the making and/ or resolution of their complaint, we will communicate with them through their representative if this is their wish. Anyone may represent a person wishing to make a complaint with their consent (e.g., advocate, family member, legal or community representative, member of Parliament, another organisation).

Respond to Complaints

Early Resolution

Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact with the School. When appropriate the School may offer an explanation or apology to the person making the complaint.

Responsiveness

The School will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints. The School will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

The School is committed to managing people's expectations, and will inform them as soon as possible, of the following:

- The complaints resolution process
- The expected time frames for the School's actions
- The progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
- Their likely involvement in the process
- The possible or likely outcome of their complaint.

The School will advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to deal with any part of their complaint and provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate).

The School will also advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to meet time frames for responding to their complaint and the reason for our delay.

Objectivity and Fairness

The School will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.

The School will ensure that the person handling a complaint is different from any staff member whose conduct or service is being complained about.

Conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly. In particular, internal reviews of how a complaint was managed will be conducted by a person other than the original decision maker.

Responding Flexibly

Staff are empowered to resolve complaints promptly and with as little formality as possible. The School will adopt flexible approaches to enhance accessibility for people making complaints and/or their representatives.

The School will assess each complaint on its merits and involve people making complaints and/or their representatives in the process as far as possible.

Confidentiality

The School will protect the identity of people making complaints where this is practical and appropriate.

Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by the School as permitted under the relevant privacy laws, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations.

Manage the Parties to a Complaint

Informal complaints

The majority of issues causing concern in schools can be handled promptly and in an informal manner.

Generally, concerns should first be raised directly with, or complaints made to, the relevant staff member. This should occur as close as possible to the time of the issue arising. Discussing the issue or concern immediately and face to face may clarify the situation and resolve any misunderstanding and/or allow remedial action to be taken before any lasting adverse impact occurs.

If it is not possible to resolve the issue informally at this level, the complainant should contact the relevant senior staff member. In the case of:

- Academic matters: the Head of Department or Junior School Year Coordinator or Head of Junior School or Director of Learning and Teaching Pre-K – 12
- Co-Curricular matters: The Director of Co-Curricular activities
- Student issues: The ECEC Nominated Supervisor, Heads of Year, Junior School Year Coordinator, Head of Wellbeing 7 – 12 or Head of Junior School

If the issue remains unresolved, then the person making the complaint should approach the Deputy Principal.

Some concerns or complaints may be about a particular staff member, and it may not be appropriate to raise the concern or complaint directly with them. If this is the case, the concern or complaint should be raised first with that person's supervisor. In some cases, the staff member may be in a position of conflict of interest if they were to manage the complaint and it may be necessary for the complaint to be passed on to an independent member of staff. Some complaints may need the involvement of the Deputy Principal or other executive staff members.

As issues are clarified, a complaint may be referred to another suitable complaint handler.

Complaints Involving Multiple Agencies

Subject to privacy and confidentiality considerations, communication and information sharing between the parties will also be organised to facilitate a timely response to the complaint. Where a complaint involves multiple areas within Hills Grammar, responsibility for communicating with the person making the complaint and/or their representative will also be coordinated.

Where services are contracted out (eg catering, OOSH, Hills Grammar bus services) the School expects contracted service providers to have an accessible and comprehensive complaint management system. The School will take complaints not only about its actions but also the actions of our service providers.

Empowerment of Staff

All staff managing complaints are empowered to implement our complaint management system as relevant to their role and responsibilities.

Staff are encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of our complaint management system.

Managing Unreasonable Conduct by People Making Complaints

The School is committed to being accessible and responsive to all people who approach us with feedback or complaints. At the same time success depends on:

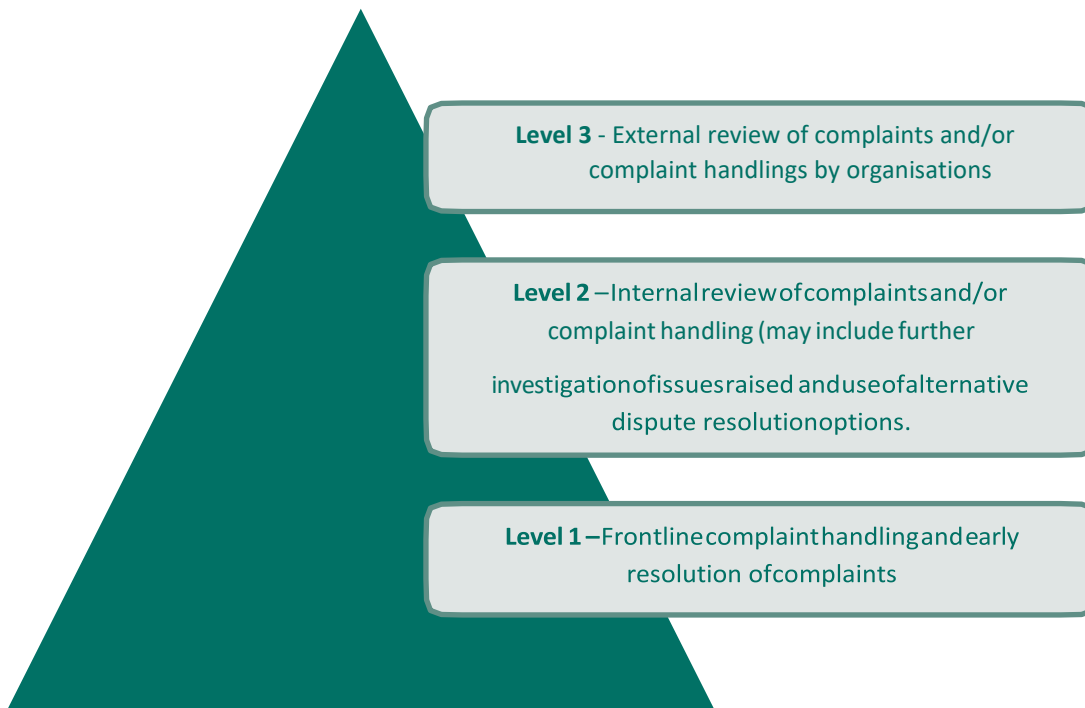
- Our ability to do our work and perform our functions in the most effective and efficient way possible.
- The wellbeing, safety and security of our staff.
- Our ability to allocate our resources fairly across all the complaints we receive.

When people behave unreasonably in their dealings with the School, their conduct can significantly affect the progress and efficiency of our work. As a result, we will take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct that negatively and unreasonably affects the School or its personnel and will support our staff to do the same in accordance with this policy.

Alternative Avenues for Dealing with Complaints

We will inform people who make complaints to or about us about any internal or external review options available to them (including any relevant Ombudsman or oversight regulatory bodies, e.g., NESAs, Police)

The Three Levels of Complaint Handling



Level 1

The School aims to resolve complaints at the first level, the frontline. Wherever possible staff will be adequately equipped to respond to complaints, including being given appropriate authority, training and supervision.

Level 2

Where this is not possible, the School or complainant may decide to escalate the complaint to a more senior person such as a member of the School Executive. This second level of complaint handling will provide for the following internal mechanisms:

- assessment and possible investigation of the complaint and decision/s already made, and/or
- facilitated resolution (where a person not connected with the complaint reviews the matter and attempts to find an outcome acceptable to the relevant parties).

Level 3

Where a person making a complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome of our review of their complaint, they may seek an external review of our decision or lodge a complaint with an external body (e.g., NESAs, Association of Independent Schools)

Complaints to the Hills Grammar School Council

All complaints pertaining to the operation of the school will be managed by the staff of the School. Complaints made directly to the School Council will be referred back to the relevant staff member for resolution. The Council will only manage complaints relating to the serious misconduct of the Principal.

Accountability and Monitoring

Analysis and evaluation of complaints

The School will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis by management and the governing body. The School will run regular reports on:

- The number of complaints received.
- The outcome of complaints, including matters resolved at the frontline.
- Issues arising from complaints.
- Systemic issues identified.
- The number of requests we receive for internal and/or external review of our complaint handling.

Regular analysis of these reports will be undertaken to monitor trends, measure the quality of our customer service and make improvements.

Monitoring of the Complaint Resolution Management System

The School will continually monitor our complaint resolution management system to:

- Ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints.
- Identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the system.
- Monitoring may include the use of audits, complaint satisfaction surveys and online listening tools and alerts.

Continuous Improvement

The School is committed to improving the way our organisation operates, including our management of the effectiveness and efficiency of our complaint resolution management system. To this end, we will:

- Support the making and appropriate resolution of complaints implement best practices in complaint handling
- Recognise and reward exemplary complaint handling by staff.
- Regularly review the complaint management system and complaint data.
- Implement appropriate system changes arising out of our analysis of complaints data and continual monitoring