



Annesley Junior School
Values Matter

Grievance Policy



GRIEVANCE POLICY

Annesley Junior School Values

The Grievance Policy at Annesley Junior School supports our school values of respect, responsibility, justice, civility and integrity.

Policy Statement

It is recognised that from time to time grievances may arise within our School community. This policy and accompanying flowchart sets out processes by which matters of concern can be addressed expeditiously, confidentially and sensitively. Annesley Junior School aims to resolve problems and grievances promptly and as close to the source as possible with graduated steps for further discussions and resolution at higher levels of authority as necessary.

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 inappropriately or unfairly.

Annesley Junior School commits to:

- ensuring the school is safe and just
- being proactive in seeking to minimize the incidence of conflict
- listening objectively to all grievances and complaints, and ensuring proceedings are conducted honestly and without bias
- attempting to resolve grievances and complaints using a non-threatening and respectful manner in a supportive environment
- adopting a problem solving approach and generating solutions for discussion
- ensuring proceedings are not unduly delayed
- maintaining a written record of meetings.

Students, staff and parents and other members of our school community are addressed by this policy.

Guiding Principles

- Complainants are encouraged to firstly and, where practicable, seek to resolve a complaint informally. Formal procedures for the resolution of grievances will normally only be invoked when a matter cannot be resolved by informal means.
- The 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, focusing 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 means, in practical terms:
 - Subject to duty of care or other legal obligations, respondents should normally be informed of allegations, and the basis for and the specific circumstances which give rise to the grievance.
 - The right of all parties to be heard and to put 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.
- We will treat your grievance with respect and sensitivity. However you should not assume that your communications with us, or any documents you may supply to us, will necessarily be kept confidential. Although we endeavour to deal with complaints with appropriate discretion, we reserve our right to disclose details of the matter to other persons who in our opinion need to know them, in order to facilitate the resolution of the complaint or where statutory or 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/or particular information to assist with that investigation. Complainants are therefore encouraged to identify themselves.
- Where complaints or grievances are made in circumstances where an alleged crime may have been committed, the police or similar outside agencies will be contacted and formally advised of the complaint or grievance. In some cases (eg mandatory reporting), there is no discretion and the matter must be reported to the relevant authorities.
- Please note neither the Minister for Education and Child Development nor the Department for Education and Child Development has any power to directly intervene in any complaints relating to the operations of a non-government school.

Options for the Resolution of Grievances

According to the nature and seriousness of a grievance, a student, parent or staff member may elect to deal with his/her grievance in one or more of the following ways:

Self-Resolution

In the first instance Annesley Junior School encourages members of the school community to try to resolve the matter with the person concerned. Sometimes issues arise as a result of a misunderstanding, communication breakdown or personality difference. Someone who feels aggrieved with an issue should request to meet with the person concerned and to discuss their concerns in an open, non-threatening manner with a focus on resolution. Seeking advice in relation to the different options and the support of another person to assist in informally resolving the grievance can also be useful strategies to employ.

Reporting a Grievance

- When making a report to a member of the Management Team (Business Administrator, Director, ELC or Principal) explain the nature of the complaint, including the specific details.

- 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.
- 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 as deemed appropriate and necessary.
- The complainant and respondent will, be informed of the outcome and action taken.
- When a grievance is not or cannot be resolved within the School, the parties may contact the Chair of Council.
- If the grievance has still not been resolved the complainant may seek the assistance of outside professional agencies or other relevant bodies in order that a further attempt can be made to resolve the matter.

Referral of a grievance to School Council

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

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

In other exceptional and special circumstances, a member of the School community may make a direct approach to the Chair of Council to bring his/her 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 Chair of Council will take advice from appropriate persons and make a determination as to how the grievance should be dealt with.

Withdrawal of a grievance

A person may withdraw a grievance at any stage of the resolution process. If a grievance is withdrawn, the matter will be deemed to be closed unless there is a legal requirement to proceed further.

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 include the following detail:

- Date when issue was first raised
- Name of complainant
- Detailed statement of concern/complaint including:
 - Nature of complaint
 - Identity of person(s) 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 complaint
- Location of files established as part of office records management. The records management system must protect the privacy of the individual(s) concerned.

Outcomes

A matter is dealt with successfully if all parties find the outcome(s) acceptable. Should any party not be satisfied with the result, he/she can choose to pursue the matter further.

Each complaint or grievance is to be dealt with on its particular circumstances and merits and 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 involved in grievances or complaints should maintain confidentiality unless otherwise required by appropriate circumstances or law, so as to minimise disruption in the School and the risk of a civil suit for defamation.