Handling Complaints
# Handling Complaints

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This document has been prepared to assist member schools develop and implement policy and procedures for handling complaints from parents and students.

There is greater expectation from governments and the community that schools will have in place best practice procedures to manage complaints.

The Non-Government Schools Registration Board now requires that non-government schools have documents outlining their complaints handling procedures.

This document will assist member schools to prepare these procedures or to enhance existing policy and procedures.

All schools are encouraged to develop and publish their policy and procedures for the resolution of complaints. This information could also be made available to the school community.

The information in this publication identifies:

- Some principles to encourage the positive resolution of concerns or complaints
- Guidelines for handling complaints
- A checklist for developing policy and procedures in your school

This publication does not cover complaints from staff about aspects of their work or employment conditions. It is appropriate that schools handle these matters in accordance with the appropriate Industrial Award and/or Enterprise Agreements.

1.2 Mandatory Reporting

Legal obligations relating to child abuse may limit a school’s ability to undertake a comprehensive investigation. This particularly applies to the mandatory reporting requirements outlined in the Children’s Protection Act (SA) 1993. Involvement by police in some investigations may also limit the nature and scope of your investigation.

AISSA has prepared a comprehensive Student Protection Kit (August 2004) which can assist member schools in developing appropriate procedures in the handling of matters related to child abuse.

1.3 National Safe Schools Framework

The National Safe Schools Framework outlines key elements of good practice in creating a safe school environment. The key elements of the Framework could also apply to the management of complaints. It was prepared by the MCEETYA Student Learning Support Services Taskforce and has been circulated to all schools across Australia. The five key elements include:

- School values, ethos and structure
- The establishment of clear policies and procedures
- Working closely with parents
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- Managing incidents
- Provision of professional development
- Providing support for students.

The framework recommends that policies, programs and procedures are developed with staff, students and parents and include a statement of rights and responsibilities of members of the school community. These could be disseminated and promoted across the whole school community in a way that is sensitive to parents, students and community members from diverse backgrounds.

The above framework also recommends periodic evaluation (including risk assessment procedures) of polices, programs and procedures.

It may be beneficial for member schools to make reference to the above framework in preparing polices and procedures relating to handling complaints and establishing strategies to enhance the safety and welfare of children and staff.

School and School Authority funding agreements with the Commonwealth include a statement requiring them to “... make a commitment to put into effect, before 1 January 2006, the National Safe Schools Framework.”

1.4 The Role of AISSA

AISSA can assist member schools by:

- providing advice on handling specific complaints
- providing legal advice if required
- referring schools to other sources for assistance or advice as required.

In some situations the same roles may be undertaken by other recognized school authorities such as a system authority (e.g. Lutheran system).

On some occasions parents or other members of the community contact the AISSA office seeking assistance in relation to a complaint they have about the alleged actions of a member school.

Generally, AISSA adopts the following approach:

a) Indicate and explain to the person that AISSA is a representative body for Independent schools and an advocate for the particular member school
b) Inform the person, if s/he has not already done so, to formally notify the school of the grievance/complaint and, with the school, seek appropriate resolution of the matter, in accordance with that particular school's complaints handling procedures.

c) Inform the person that s/he may contact the Principal to discuss his/her grievance.
d) Contact the Principal of the school to ensure they are aware of the complaint and possibly offer them advice on how the matter may be resolved. A member school may seek on-going assistance from AISSA in handling the complaint. This may involve advice on strategies, legal advice or identification of other expertise.
e) Any other role of AISSA would only occur with the consent of the member school.
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In some situations the parent or student may not be prepared to name the person(s) who is/are the subject(s) of the complaint. This obviously limits the ability of AISSA staff to assist with the problem.
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2 RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

2.1 Introduction

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 the school has:

- done something wrong, or
- failed to do something it should have, or
- acted unfairly or inappropriately.

It may be about the school as a whole, about a specific department in the school or about an individual member of staff or student.

Once a complaint is raised it is advisable the school deal with it as quickly and professionally as possible, according to the approved policy and procedures. Failure to do so will potentially leave the school open to a range of criticism within the school community and in the wider community/possibly via the media. In some circumstances the complaints can be used for political purposes by various pressure groups or others.

It is more effective to resolve complaints before they become on-going disputes.

Schools can do a great deal to create a positive approach to facilitate the effective resolution of complaints. Problems are more likely to arise if parents or others consider the school is not willing to consider their concerns.

It is usually preferable that investigations not be conducted by anyone with direct involvement with the person or matter which is the subject of the complaint. Irrespective of the particular circumstances of the case, it is beneficial if that the person investigating the allegations remains impartial at all times.

Not every complaint will require a detailed investigation. The majority of complaints should be resolved at an informal level or through immediate mediation.

2.2 Informing the School Community

Positive resolution of complaints is more likely when:

- the school’s values, which underpin all policies, are clearly communicated to the school community
- parents and students can expect that their complaints will be taken seriously
- relevant school policies and procedures are accessible to the school community
- the school community knows how complaints are handled and which staff members have been specifically delegated authority to handle the various complaints
- translations into languages other than English are provided where appropriate
- the language of policies and resolution processes and procedures is in plain English
- the complaints handling process is publicized within the school community and transparent.
2.3  Sound Preparation

It is often the case that the person making a complaint may be anxious and feel vulnerable. The establishment of clear procedures for handling complaints may dispel this uncertainty and anxiety. Parents are usually less anxious when they are assured the school values their opinions, staff are approachable and the school will not be defensive. They are also generally less anxious when they are familiar with the school’s “system” and when they know about the avenues of communication.

Complaints tend to be resolved more readily when parents are able to discuss issues openly with appropriate school staff. Schools which actively seek the opinion of parents help to create an open and positive climate.

Staff may handle some complaints if they have the authority and preferably the training about how to appropriately handle these matters. It is easy for staff, who may not be questioned about their work very often, to perceive questions from parents to be threatening. Where the complaint is complex, serious, or where the staff member is not - or should not - try and resolve it him/herself, the matter should be dealt with by a person within the school with appropriate delegated authority and impartiality.

2.4  Responsive Attitude

A complaint may be resolved more readily when:

- there is a demonstrated commitment at all levels within the school to identify a satisfactory resolution to the complaint
- issues are dealt with promptly and with appropriate discretion and sensitivity. This often saves escalation into an on-going dispute
- complaints are treated seriously
- school policies and procedures are clearly understood, publicized and supported by the school community
- appropriate flexibility is shown in dealing with concerns.

2.5  Fairness and Objectivity

Complaints are more likely to be resolved quickly and effectively when:

- the complainant knows whether the school has followed its policies and procedures
- information about the process of resolution is received by the complainant in a timely manner and when reasons are given for decisions
- the school acts with appropriate discretion
- the school considers complainants are entitled to be taken seriously and heard
- schools consider complaints generally as one means of receiving information that contributes to the overall improvement in the services provided
- people believe that the principles of natural justice have been followed.

It is important that schools be as clear as possible with the complainants about what will and will not be treated in confidence. This may be a difficult area. Schools are advised to obtain advice from AISSA and/or legal advice if they are in doubt about this area.
2.6 Pathways of Effective Communication

Clear protocols and lines of communication should be established to handle complaints. Many issues can be dealt with best at the level at which they occurred.

It is important that staff are able to recognize when a complaint needs to be dealt with by a more senior member of staff, especially the Principal. Schools are encouraged to be clear about which issues are generally the province of particular staff (allowing for professional judgment and obligations identified by legislation, e.g. mandatory notification).

If a complaint remains unresolved after action by the Principal, there may be circumstances where a parent will wish to write to or meet the Chairperson of the school board. In some circumstances they will seek redress by approaching other avenues, such as their local Member of Parliament or with the State Education Minister. AISSA can provide advice on handling such matters.

2.7 Keeping Proper Records

A record of the complaint should include the following detail:

- Date when issue was first raised
- Name of parent(s)
- Name of student(s)
- 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) handing complaint
- Location of files established as part of office records management.

It should be noted that documents that may be created during the course of investigations and handling a complaint might have to be produced in legal proceedings. It is important this be borne in mind at all times.

The record should contain clear and accurate notes of conversations with parents, students and staff.

Records will be very useful if further disputation occurs or in the case of future legal action. It is recommended that an appropriate records management system be established which protects the privacy of the individual(s) concerned and which contains full details of the complaint and subsequent actions taken to resolve the matter.

There are three chief sources of information:

1). Witnesses
2). Other persons with relevant knowledge or information
3). Written records.

2.8 Staff Training

Complaints can be handled by various staff within a school. It is therefore appropriate that those staff receive professional development in handling complaints, including on school policy and procedures.

Such training could include the following topics:

- Complaints procedures
- Active listening
- Questioning and negotiation skills
- Mediation
- Observation, recording and reporting skills
- Privacy legislation.

Staff may also need support when complaints have been made against them.
3 GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS/GRIEVANCES

3.1 Dealing with the Complainant’s Feelings

This can be achieved by:

- listening
- acknowledging his/her concerns
- avoiding immediate judgments
- avoiding debate in early stages of the discussion.

3.2 Dealing with the Specific Elements of a Complaint

This can be achieved by:

- determining the nature of the complaint. Is it about procedures, the quality of education, the behaviour of individuals, etc?
- clarifying the specific details of the complaint
- determining what the complainant wants to achieve in terms of resolution.

3.3 Minimizing the Risk of Escalation

The next steps in the process can be used if the complaint is not immediately resolved.

They could include:

- further investigation/research
- determining if there is another appropriate mechanism to handle the complaint, including meeting any legislative requirements
- setting boundaries on the investigation
- setting a timeline for responses
- referral to key personnel with expertise, where appropriate

3.4 Objective Judgment

Present the complaint without being in any way judgmental if it needs to be presented to others during investigation.

3.5 Responding

Good practice in responding to a complaint would include:

- Meeting timelines (or inform about delays)
- Providing reasons for decisions
- Allowing the complainant a fair hearing
- Responding in accordance with the merits of the complaint, along with the ethos/values of the school and/or on legislation and/or legal advice. Please note it is not a legal right
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...of a complainant to be afforded procedural fairness or natural justice. This is not to say that schools should not treat people fairly in handling complaints.

3.6 Monitoring and Follow-Up

Follow-up by a designated staff member (for example on student behaviour issues) should take place to ensure that the action taken is effective.
4 ANGRY AND AGGRESSIVE COMPLAINANTS

Some suggestions in handling angry and aggressive complainants include:

- listening attentively
- making notes of each key point
- not becoming defensive or angry in response
- showing empathy with the complainant’s emotion but reserve the right to request that the complainant be civil
- giving due consideration to the complainant’s concerns, even if you consider they have a particular motive
- taking notes without defensive comment, repeating them to the complainant and asking whether it represents an accurate record of the allegations
- ensuring the safety and well being of staff and students present during an interview. This may involve terminating the interview.

Some requests for action may be dealt with immediately. For example, a parent may demand that a teacher be dismissed, or suspended from classroom activities. In such an instance, the complainant should be informed that matters of staff management remain the province of the Principal. Principals may wish to declare the areas of action which are not negotiable.

Staff should be informed to refer complaints to appropriate positions as outlined in the policy and procedures. (Note: Each school has to decide whether staff should deal with a complaint at all, or simply hand the matter over to senior management at the school. Much depends on how and by whom the complaint is received and its seriousness).
5 THE SCOPE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Dealing with information and documentary material is an important matter in handling complaints. Often it is not possible to keep the information only with the complainant and the staff member(s) who receives the complaint in order to reach resolution. Generally speaking, the details of the complaint should be disclosed only to people who need to know them, either because they are dealing with the complaint, or are advising about how it should be handled, or are providing information such as witness statements.

The term "confidentiality" can cause confusion. In one sense, it describes a situation where there is a legal obligation not to disclose information. Another sense of the word is that it describes situations where there is a desire to restrict the availability of information, even if there is no legal obligation to do so.

In handling complaints, it is important to distinguish between situations where a legal obligation of confidentiality arises and cases where it does not.

People responsible for handling complaints therefore need to have an understanding of how legal obligations of confidentiality can arise, and how they may be avoided. Also, they need to be aware that in some situations documentary evidence may have to be produced to other parties by operation of law, notwithstanding that the school may have intended that the information would be kept confidential.

As a general rule, communications do not have to be treated as confidential. A school receiving complaints is under no obligation not to disclose details of the complaint to others.

The exception to the general rule is where the school actually agrees, either expressly or by implication from the school's statements and conduct, to receive information and documents in confidence. In that case, a legal obligation to maintain the confidentiality can arise, and if the school breaches its obligation it can be liable to an injunction to stop the disclosure and/or payment of damages to compensate for any loss suffered by the party who provided the information.

Schools handling complaints should not agree to treat communications as confidential, in the sense of creating a legal obligation to maintain the confidence, unless they have obtained professional advice first. Otherwise if a legal duty of confidentiality is created in relation to certain information, the school's ability to investigate the complaint and defend itself against future legal action can be seriously compromised.

To avoid unwittingly creating an obligation of confidentiality, the school should therefore avoid telling the complainant that the matter will be dealt with in a confidential way or words to that effect.

Schools can still of course assure a complainant that the matter will be handled with due discretion and sensitivity, but they should not go beyond that and say anything to suggest that the school regards itself as being under any legal obligation of confidentiality.

So, for example, if a complainant wishes to complain about the conduct of a teacher but does not want their name to be disclosed to the teacher, the school should in most cases say that it cannot deal with a complaint on that basis.

Schools may wish to insert a statement on this topic into their complaint handling policies. For example, the policy could say:
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“We will treat your complaint 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.”

Similar considerations apply to communications with witnesses. To deal with a complaint properly the school may need to interview people and seek written statements from them. Witnesses often agree to give information, or sign a written statement on the condition that it will be kept confidential. Often they are particularly concerned that their statement will not be seen by the person who has made the complaint, or by the person who is the subject of the complaint. However it is generally unwise for the school to give witnesses such assurances because documents created in the handling of a complaint, including witness statements, may have to be produced in legal proceedings, despite any promise of confidentiality that the school may have given to the witness. Generally, parties to litigation have to make “discovery of documents”, which means they have to disclose all documents in their possession or power that are relevant to the issues in the case, and allow the other parties to inspect the documents and obtain copies of them if they wish. So, even if witnesses have been told that their statement will be kept confidential, it may yet have to be produced if the complainant or someone else issues legal proceedings.

It is better that potential witnesses are told at the outset that any statement they provide may have to be disclosed in legal proceedings. Then, they can decide whether to provide a statement, or decline to do so.

There are exceptions to the general rules about confidentiality and disclosure of documents. Some communications and documents are privileged, meaning that they do not have to be produced in legal proceedings.

Privilege applies to communications between a lawyer and his or her client. If a school obtains legal advice in connection with a complaint, the advice is privileged.

Furthermore, privilege applies to documents that are brought into existence for the main purpose of obtaining legal advice, or for use in actual or anticipated legal proceedings. So, for example, if the school believed that a particular complaint could result in legal proceedings against the school (or even proceedings where the school itself would be the complainant) and if it sought legal advice, the lawyer might recommend that an investigation be carried out in order to assist the lawyer in providing the advice. The investigation might well involve obtaining statements from witnesses. The witness statements and any report of the investigation would then in most cases be subject to privilege.

In any case where legal proceedings could eventuate, schools should consider obtaining legal advice before any major steps are taken in the investigation of the complaint, and before any documents such as witness statements or investigations reports are created. This is particularly important where the school would not want the documentary material to be made available to other parties.

The following additional guidelines may also be helpful:

- Although a parent who seeks an assurance of confidentiality before expressing their concerns should be told that no such assurance can be given, the school may still wish to emphasise that the fact of making a complaint will not result in adverse treatment of the complainant or their child.
- It may be possible to investigate a complaint without naming individuals. However, even if no names are given, the source of the complaint may be obvious. Depending on the nature of the
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complaint and on the circumstances, it may be impractical to undertake and investigation without disclosing the identity of the complainant, the staff member(s) and/or the child concerned.

- Staff members generally wish to know about complaints that may be damaging to their reputation. It may be disturbing for staff if anonymous complaints about them are investigated, possibly resulting in unfairness to them. Fairness to the teacher who is the subject of a complaint is a strong reason for not agreeing to treat complaints confidentially, if that means not disclosing the details to the staff who are in fact the subject of the complaint.

- Any staff member involved in the investigation should be instructed very clearly not to discuss the matter with any other people. It should be made clear that failure to follow this instruction could result in disciplinary action against the staff member, and could even expose the staff member to defamation proceedings.

- Staff members who are questioned in connection with a complaint are sometimes reluctant to provide information. As a general rule, staff can be instructed to provide information if it relates to their activities in connection with their employment.

- If there is a situation involving the police it is recommended that the Principal or the approved delegated staff member, if the Principal is unavailable, should take responsibility for action in the school. The Board Chairperson may in some schools be delegated to handle those situations. The school is entitled to carry out its own investigation, but should proceed very carefully when the police are also investigating the same subject matter. Guidance can be sought from the police as to what the school should, or should not, be doing while the matter is in the hands of the police especially in relation to the dissemination and gathering of information about the complaint.
6 RESOLUTION OF A GRIEVANCE OR COMPLAINT

Resolution can take many forms, for instance:

- acknowledgement of a problem can reassure a complainant
- knowing that the school is now aware of a possible problem
- feeling that the concern has been taken seriously and that all reasonable steps are being taken to address it
- accepting an outcome which may be different from the one sought, but which is perceived to be well-considered and fair to all concerned
- a considered letter issued to the complainant covering the issues raised, how they were considered and what action will be taken
- a formal apology, but subject to prior consultation with the school's insurers and/or legal advisers regarding potential or actual insurance claims or civil liability
- a positive change in the particular school's policy or procedures in light of the complaint.
- a monetary payment (with or without a Deed of Release being signed).
7 ANONYMOUS AND/OR PERSISTENT COMPLAINTS

7.1 Anonymous Complaints

Despite serious limitations, it is advisable to investigate anonymous complaints as much as is practicable. Parents and students should be encouraged to provide the relevant names of persons involved with the complaint so that it can be addressed more effectively. Complainants may raise issues under the veil of anonymity because parents or others may say that they are concerned about alleged victimization of their children.

7.2 Persistent Complainants

Parents or others may not be satisfied with the outcomes of an investigation conducted by a school and continue to seek redress either through the school, other agencies or local Members of Parliament.

It is important that schools follow the steps set out in any documented policy and procedures.

A number of strategies can be considered by a school if the complainant remains dissatisfied and continues to seek redress. Such actions could include:

- discussing the matter with the Chair of the school board and identifying additional strategies consistent with the risk management plan of the school board
- instructing staff and complainant that contact must be made only through the Principal or Chair of the school board
- indicating to the complainant that no further discussion will be held on a particular issue
- seeking further advice from AISSA or appropriate school authority
- seeking legal advice on how to handle the complainant, including the preparation of a letter by a lawyer to the complainant
- seeking a Restraining Order (this should be reserved for very serious issues)
- seeking the involvement of an external mediator.
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8 WHAT HAPPENS IF THE COMPLAINT/GRIEVANCE IS NOT RESOLVED?

8.1 Some Options

Complainants often enquire about the next avenue of resolution when a complaint remains unresolved. Many parents are not familiar with school structures, nor with the process of negotiating their way through the decision making hierarchy within a school; may they wish to consult a person who has greater decision making authority than say a teacher. This will usually be the Principal or the Chairperson of the school board.

If the complaint is still at an impasse after discussion at that level, the Principal may wish to declare that there is to be no further debate; i.e., the school and the complainant will have to “agree to disagree”.

Some parents may still wish to consult the Chairperson of the board. The Principal can brief the Chairperson on the actions taken by the school and whether they followed approved school policy and procedures.

At times they may seek advice from government agencies or another school authority. It is recommended member schools seek advice from AISSA if this latter step is proposed or taken.

8.2 Conciliation Committee

The formation of a Conciliation Committee is an option to be considered by member schools. Terms of reference should be documented for this committee.

This gives the complainant another (impartial) avenue if the concern remains unresolved after speaking with the Principal and/or Chair of the school board. It also states implicitly that the school has adopted a conciliatory approach.

The Principal, in consultation with the Chair of the school board, will need to decide when it would be necessary to refer a complaint to the above Committee.

The relationship of such a committee to the responsibilities of the Principal and the school board will need to be clarified and documented.

Such a committee may not be able to consider some complaints; for example some complaints about staff members. The Principal will have information which, for reasons of confidentiality, may not be passed onto others.

The outcomes of the committee’s deliberations should be documented.
9 ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING STUDENT COMPLAINTS

The principles and procedures that apply to parental complaints can also be applied to complaints and concerns from students.

There are, however, some fundamental differences. For instance, students should be able to raise concerns with any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable. If the issue is a sensitive one, or if exploration of the matter takes considerable time, a student may need support from another student or from an adult (e.g. student counsellor). Students should be encouraged to choose a person with whom they feel comfortable to provide this support.

In more complex situations, once the matter is resolved, the outcome should be discussed with the student by a member of staff. A written record may be shared to make sure that it is fully understood.

Complaints that appear trivial still need to be considered. Young people may test the complaints procedures on relatively minor issues before finding the confidence to raise something more serious or painful, such as bullying or harassment.

Complaints, and ways of dealing with them, also need to be explained to students. Personal and Social Education programs can provide a useful mechanism for informing students about these procedures, including teaching students how they may support and act as mentors to others, and also in encouraging them to understand that their views and concerns matter.
10 SUMMARY

A clear and effective complaints policy and procedures is essential for the early and expeditious resolution of concerns and complaints. This can also reflect positively on the ethos, values and practices of the school.

The following principles underpin a successful policy for handling complaints:

- The school ethos encourages an openness to hearing the concerns of parents and students
- The school values feedback from parents and students and complaints are received in a positive manner
- The school has a clear policy and procedures for handling complaints which is available to members of the school community
- Complaints are dealt with speedily and sensitively and those concerned are advised about progress
- Training in communication skills and the handling of complaints is provided to staff
- Records are maintained and securely filed
- All legislative obligations are met (e.g. mandatory reporting)
- Regular reviews of complaint handling procedures should be undertaken to ensure the effectiveness and responsiveness of school policy and procedure
- The emphasis should be on early intervention, effective management and resolution.
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APPENDICES

1. Resolving Complaints from Parents

Gather the facts. Establish what you want to achieve.

Make a time to contact the staff member concerned. (Meeting or telephone.)

Outline your concerns.

Receive the response.

Concern Resolved

No further action.

Concern Unresolved

Further discussion with the staff member.

Concern Resolved

No further action.

Concern Unresolved

Make a time to see a senior staff member.

Concern Resolved

No further action.

Concern Unresolved

Make an appointment to see the Principal.

Concern Resolved

No further action.

Concern Unresolved

Write to the Chair of the Board /Council.

Concern Resolved

No further action.
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2. Sample Notice to Students

Do you have any concerns, complaints or suggestions?

If so, the School would like to hear.

How do I raise a concern??

- By talking about it – or by writing it down if you find it easier.
- You can prepare it by yourself, or as part of a group, or through your parents.

To whom?

- To your parents.
- To the staff member most directly concerned.
- To anyone on staff or you may wish to begin with a staff member with whom you relate well. The school counselor may also be able to assist you.
- You may wish to see a senior staff member, including 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.

What will happen next?

If possible, the staff member will deal with it in person. If the Staff member is not able to deal with it him/herself, he or she will refer the matter to another senior member of Staff, who is more able to respond to the matter you raise.

Do others have to know?

If you are worried about confidentiality, tells the staff member – he/she will understand and discuss this with you.

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

You have a right to raise issues of concern to you. Think through your role in the problem (if any); seek out a trusted staff member for advice on particular issues.

Even if you find the issue painful, difficult or embarrassing, don’t worry – it will only be discussed by staff that can help you. Do not feel afraid to discuss any concern – it may help others.
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3. Resolving Concerns from Students

What is the problem?

OR

Talk to the Staff member directly concerned.

Talk to another staff member, (eg: student Counselor)

Problem solved.

Problem unresolved.

No further action.

Talk to senior staff member (e.g. the Principal).
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4. Checklist for Schools

☐ Develop a Complaints/Grievance Management Policy and Procedures. Include forms and any other relevant paper work. This process may include consultation with appropriate members of the School community.

☐ Ensure the Policy and Procedures are approved and endorsed by the school board.

☐ Disseminate the policy and procedures to the school community – parents, staff, students, others.

☐ Provide appropriate and adequate training for clearly identified key personnel who will be responsible for handling complaints/grievances - e.g. Principal, Senior Staff, Chair of Council/Board, others as identified by the school.

☐ Provide appropriate and adequate training to staff about how to deal with grievances and complaints, including receiving the complaint or grievance, response, confidentiality and legal issues, referral on to others.

☐ Identify and/or establish links with appropriate outside agencies or bodies, e.g. mediators, legal counsel.

☐ Regularly review policies and procedures to ensure they operate effectively and to implement improvements.
5. Sample Grievance Policy & Procedures

See attached document provided by Pembroke School. This has been provided with the permission of the Principal of Pembroke School (September 2005).