

COMPLAINTS POLICY STATEMENT A GUIDE TO RAISING CONCERNS AT HILLBROOK

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Our aim is to be a community with high levels of mutual trust and respect among students, staff and parents.
- 1.2 Complaints are an important way for the School to be accountable to the School community, as well as providing valuable prompts to review performance and the conduct of people that work within the School and for it.
- 1.3 A complaint is an “expression of dissatisfaction made to or about the School, related to its, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required”. If our culture is welcoming, friendly, informal and open, the potential for complaints will be limited. Rather, it is more likely that a potential complaint will take the form of an ‘expression of concern’ or ‘a request to clarify’.
- 1.4 If a mistake or unprofessional behaviour has occurred, it is our ethical responsibility to acknowledge and correct it.
- 1.5 Complaints, expressions of concern, and requests to clarify should be treated as opportunities to:
 - Correct an injustice or a mistake;
 - Evaluate how well the school is doing;
 - Identify weak behaviours or processes and act to correct them;
 - View situations from a parent’s, student’s or member of the wider community’s perspective;
 - Improve on what is already done and what we do;
 - Generate greater loyalty from parents and students; and
 - Build Hillbrook’s reputation in the wider community.

2.0 Exclusions

- 2.1 This policy will not apply in the following circumstances where a complaint relates to:
 - 2.1.1 The abuse of an enrolled student under 18 years of age and is an allegation of sexual abuse or likely sexual abuse, significant harm or unacceptable risk of harm or inappropriate behaviour. Such complaint shall be made and dealt with in accordance with the *Student Protection in Anglican Schools Policy and Procedures* and the Hillbrook Anglican School Student Protection Policy which are available on the school’s website and on Online@Hillbrook.
 - 2.1.2 The abuse of a school staff member or other person not enrolled at the school and is an allegation of sexual assault. Such complaint will be dealt with in

accordance with the *Professional Standards Canon* which is available from the *Anglican Church Southern Queensland* website.

2.1.3 Alleged workplace bullying, discrimination, physical assault, harm, harassment or sexual harassment. Such complaint will be made and dealt with in accordance with the *Administrative Guidelines for Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Workplace Bullying* which is available from the *Anglican Schools Commission's* website.

3.0 Guiding Principles

- 3.1 All teachers and administrative and support staff should be committed to making Hillbrook a community with high levels of mutual trust and respect among staff, students and parents. It is important this is modelled by the School Board and the School Leadership Team. In itself, this will greatly minimise complaints.
- 3.2 The School Board and the School Leadership Team will ensure that the school culture is 'complaint friendly' rather than defensive.
- 3.3 The complaint should be received politely, and treated with respect. This does not necessarily accept the validity of the complaint: it does respect the dignity of the person making it, and acknowledges that the person believes it is valid. At all times the safety of the complainant will be guaranteed.
- 3.4 A complaint, including an expression of concern or request to clarify, should be handled as informally as possible by being directed to the person who can best address it. If appropriate, every attempt should be made to discuss the matter with the person most immediately and directly concerned.
 - 3.4.1 A complaint about a teacher should where possible be handled by an informal discussion between the complainant and the teacher. The teacher will keep a record of the complaint and report the meeting and any outcomes to the Principal. If the issue remains unresolved, it may be directed in writing to the Principal.
 - 3.4.2 A complaint from within the school about a student or students should be directed to the Year Coordinator.
 - 3.4.3 A complaint from outside the school about a student or students, including a complaint from a parent, should be directed to a member of the School Leadership Team.
 - 3.4.4 A complaint about a member of the School Leadership Team should be directed to the relevant member of the School Leadership Team. If the issue remains unresolved, it may be directed to the Principal.
 - 3.4.5 A complaint about the Principal should in the first instance be directed to the Principal. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, the complaint should be taken in writing to the Chair of the School Board.
 - 3.4.6 A complaint about the School Board should be directed in writing to the Chair of the School Board.

- 3.4.7 A complaint about any of the school's policies, or the implementation of any of those policies, should be directed in the first instance to the Principal, who may seek guidance from the School Board in particular cases. If the complainant remains dissatisfied the complaint can be taken to the Chair of the School Board.
- 3.4.8 A complaint about a member of the school's support staff should be directed to the Chief Financial Officer.
- 3.4.9 Where a complainant considers a complaint has not been properly dealt with by the Chair of the School Board, having regard to the school as a Church Institution but respecting the corporate independence of the Board, the complainant may appeal to the Archbishop. The appeal to the Archbishop must be in writing, clearly state the grounds on which it is believed the complaint has not been properly dealt with and contain full details of all relevant documentation regarding the original complaint. The Archbishop shall liaise with the Chair of the School Board with a view to resolving the complaint.
- 3.4.10 If the *Student Protection in Anglican Schools Policy and Procedures* is not followed then a complaint must be made to the Director of Professional Standards, Anglican Church Southern Queensland dops@anglicanchurchsq.org.au or telephone 07 3835 2266.
- 3.4.11 The Anglican Church Southern Queensland *Protocol for Dealing with Complaints of Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault or Sexually Inappropriate Behaviour* applies to clergy and other church workers. This Protocol outlines the process by which a complaint is made to the Director of Professional Standards alleging misconduct of clergy and church workers in relation to sexual harassment, sexual assault or inappropriate behaviour. The Protocol and a Guide to the Protocol is available on www.hillbrook.qld.edu.au and for staff at Online@Hillbrook.

4.0 Documentation

- 4.1 Complaints from or about a student and the result of the complaint should be recorded in the relevant student file.
- 4.2 Complaints handled by the Year Coordinator should be recorded in the relevant documents.
- 4.3 Complaints about a member of staff, and the action taken, should be recorded in the staff member's file.
- 4.4 Complaints about the School Board should be recorded under Correspondence in the Minutes of the relevant School Board meeting

5.0 Natural Justice

5.1 A complaint is made about a member of staff.

5.1.1 The member of staff must be made aware of the complaint.

5.1.2 The member of staff must be given an opportunity to respond to the complaint.

5.1.3 The complaint must be handled with discretion to avoid any unnecessary embarrassment to the member of staff.

5.1.4 Due process must apply.

5.2 A complaint is made which affects a child.

5.2.1 Parents have a right to information concerning their child.

5.2.2 Parents have a right to be informed about and involved in the decision-making process involving their child.

5.2.3 Parents have the right to be informed of the decision.

5.3 A complaint is received about a student, the student has a right to a fair hearing, and the interview protocol of the Year Coordinator will be invoked.

6.0 Parent Contract with the School

6.1 All parents who formally accept the offer of a place at Hillbrook sign a declaration, one section of which states: *I/We undertake to support the policies and rules of the school...*

6.2 In the last resort, if all other avenues have failed to resolve an issue, this condition may be invoked by the Principal or the School Board. The parent then has the option to exercise the power of choice and remove the student from the school.

7.0 Related Documents

7.1 External:

- Student Protection in Anglican Schools Policy and Procedures
- Complaints Management in Anglican Schools

7.2 Internal:

- Procedures to Implement the Anglican School Student Protection at Hillbrook
- Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy