

# FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES



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| <b>Relevant to:</b>                | <b>All parents, School Staff</b>                                                           |
| <b>Developed by:</b>               | <b>Business Manager, Principal, College Executive</b>                                      |
| <b>Date of Introduction:</b>       | <b>July 2015 (as Grievance Policy and Procedures)</b>                                      |
| <b>Date of Most Recent Review:</b> | <b>Jun26</b>                                                                               |
| <b>Date for Review:</b>            | <b>Jun28</b>                                                                               |
| <b>Approved:</b>                   | <b>School Board Jun26</b>                                                                  |
| <b>Related Documents:</b>          | <b>WHS, Behaviour Management, Bullying &amp; Anti-discrimination, Current Fee Schedule</b> |

## WHY DO WE HAVE A FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY?

Tamar Valley Steiner School (TVSS) welcomes the opportunity to receive and act on complaints as part of our culture as an inclusive community. In addition to complaints, Tamar Valley Steiner School welcomes feedback which includes questions, clarifications and concerns where there might not necessarily be an element of complaint. TVSS seeks to work with all members of the community in a supportive manner to assist with responding to and incorporating feedback and the satisfactory resolution of complaints in a timely manner.

The focus throughout this policy is to meet Tamar Valley Steiner School's public commitment to safety and well-being of all children and young people and to meeting the standards of the National Principles for child safety. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making, with particular attention paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability and vulnerable children.

TVSS is committed to acting on any feedback and complaints received to ensure that:

- Individual feedback, complaints, concerns and grievances are received in an open and positive manner, taken seriously, addressed fairly, objectively, in a timely manner and with transparency, accountability and due regard for the severity of the matter;
- Any systematic improvements are identified and implemented; and
- TVSS does everything it can to protect the welfare of all students and their families.

This Feedback and Complaints Management Policy (Policy) is made in compliance with Standard 11 of the Non-government Schools Registration Board Guidelines.

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY?

The purpose of this Policy is to outline:

- Which types of feedback and complaints are covered by this Policy and the Feedback and Complaints Management Procedure (Procedure);
- Which types of feedback and complaints are excluded from this Policy and the Procedure;
- The overarching principles that apply to the management of all feedback and complaints;

- d) The responsibilities of persons involved in the feedback and complaint process; and
- e) Where to access further information for support during the feedback and complaint process.

#### **WHICH TYPES OF COMPLAINTS DOES THIS POLICY APPLY TO?**

This Policy applies to feedback and complaints made in relation to, or by

- a) The Northern Tasmania Steiner Association Inc., trading as Tamar Valley Steiner School, and its members,
- b) All staff of the Tamar Valley Steiner School,
- c) All Clients of the Tamar Valley Steiner School i.e. Parents, caregivers and children of the Tamar Valley Steiner School,
- d) School Board, and
- e) Community stakeholders.

The following types of feedback and complaints are not covered by this policy:

- a) Child safety and mandatory reporting matters (these matters are covered by the Child Safety Policy, the Mandatory Reporting Policy and the Mandatory Reporting Procedure and the Reportable Conduct Scheme);
- b) Incidents occurring outside of school hours or off school grounds, unless it is a School Activity;
- c) Complaints by one parent against another, unless the complaint is in relation to breaches of the Parent Code of conduct;
- d) Family law matters;
- e) Complaints about a school decision regarding implementing State or Commonwealth legislation and associated legal requirements; and
- f) Criminal offences.

#### **PRINCIPLES THAT APPLY TO ALL COMPLAINTS**

The following principles apply to the management of all complaints:

- a) Feedback and complaints shall be received in an open and positive manner;
- b) All feedback and complaints will be addressed with transparency, accountability and with due regard to the severity of the matter;
- c) Every reasonable attempt will be made to resolve the complaint and, where relevant, restore relationships satisfactorily. To facilitate this, complainants are encouraged to identify what they believe would be a satisfactory outcome. While some dissatisfaction may be unavoidable, where intolerable dissatisfaction persists after resolution of the initial complaint, complainants are encouraged to pursue another complaint to resolve complaints as satisfactorily as possible;
- d) Feedback and complaints will be addressed in a timely manner and where delays occur, parties to the complaint will be kept informed as to the reason for any delay and expected progress;
- e) There must be a clear and separate process for dealing with complaints by students, parents, members of the community, and staff;
- f) Complaints against the school principal will be processed separately from other complaints and will be directed to the School Board;

- g) All who provide feedback and complaints will be treated with respect, dignity and equity and all reasonable support will be offered to complainants (and their families if the complainant is a student);
- h) A complainant and the person who is the subject of the complaint must be given an opportunity to be heard (in person or in writing as appropriate to their needs), and an opportunity to respond to the allegations and/or evidence offered by the other. While sufficient details paraphrasing the complaint or response and evidence should always be shared with both parties, evidence from either party will not be shared with the other directly or in full where doing so might reasonably be expected to cause further harm to the other. This is at the discretion of the person or people managing the complaint.
- i) Where the complaint is more complex or requires an investigation and is not initially received in writing, a written record may be made from complaints made by in person by the person receiving the complaint to be signed as a true record by the person making the complaint.
- j) A person who is the subject of a complaint may be provided with a written copy of the allegations, (subject to it being considered unlikely to cause further harm to do so, and at the discretion of the person or people managing the complaint) where the complaint has been submitted in writing, in order to be able to respond to the complaint;
- k) Where feedback or a complaint requires the determination of facts (including, but not limited to situations where there are disputed facts), an investigation may be conducted. The person or people managing the complaint (which will generally be the Principal or may be College Executive if the complaint has been escalated via the complaint process) can determine whether it is most appropriate that they investigate or appoint an independent investigator. In making this decision, they can take into account any preferences expressed by either complainant or recipient about who conducts the investigation.:
  - a. The investigation will be conducted in a manner that, acting reasonably and in the spirit of this Policy, The person receiving the feedback or complaint considers appropriate and proportionate to the subject matter of the complaint;
  - b. Investigators will be impartial, free from bias or the perception of bias and will ensure Conflicts of Interest (be they actual, potential or perceived) are avoided or well-managed in accordance with the Conflict of interest policy; and
  - c. Findings of fact will be based on the balance of probabilities (that is, whether the evidence supports that it is more likely than not that particular facts either occurred or did not occur).
  - d. Final decisions may be made by an adjudicator appointed by College Executive where required. The adjudicator may also be the investigator, provided that the investigator is free from bias or the perception of bias;
- l) The manner of resolution of the feedback or complaint will be made clear to the person providing the feedback or complaint (complainant) and the person who is the subject of feedback or a complaint (where applicable) in writing, and where deemed beneficial and necessary, may be communicated in person prior to the written outcome being made available.
- m) Feedback and complaints will remain confidential and parties to the complaint and those involved in the resolution process are expected to respect the confidentiality of the process, unless:
  - a. The circumstances reasonably require disclosure to afford a relevant party procedural fairness, in which case TVSS will disclose the complaint so far as is

reasonably practicable to enable the fair, objective and timely resolution of the complaint; or

- b. Disclosure is required by law, in which case disclosure will be made as required by that law.
- n) Mediation will always be possible and legal advice may be sought at any time by any party to a complaint;
- o) The person providing the feedback or making a complaint (complainant) will be kept informed about the progress of the complaint;
- p) Additional support will be provided to persons during the feedback and complaint process where appropriate;
- q) People providing feedback or making complaints will be offered the opportunity to arrange support of an adult support person;
- r) A person providing feedback or making a complaint will not be subjected to recrimination and will be protected from victimisation;
- s) People providing feedback or making complaints who are also employees within the scope of this policy will be protected from adverse action in accordance with the protections contained in the Fair Work Act 2009 (Commonwealth); and
- t) People providing feedback or making complaints can request anonymity. Any such request will be genuinely considered but must be balanced against the requirement to manage feedback or a complaint in a procedurally fair manner and a request for anonymity may impact the steps that TVSS is able to take to investigate and determine a response or resolution to feedback or a complaint.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

| Role Title                                      | Responsibilities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| School Principal                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Familiarise themselves with and comply with this Policy and Procedure</li> <li>Ensure that school level processes for investigating, managing, and documenting a complaint align with this Policy and Procedure;</li> <li>Ensure this Policy and Procedure are accessible via the school's website and upon request</li> <li>Ensure school staff have appropriate training in complaints management process and procedure</li> <li>Ensure all information regarding a complaint is recorded and securely stored</li> <li>Ensure any child safety matters arising are treated in accordance with Child Safety Policy and the Reportable Conduct Scheme may apply</li> <li>Report criminal activity to Tasmania Police or relevant authority</li> <li>Determine if a complaint is a frivolous or vexatious complaint</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| School staff                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Familiarise themselves with and comply with this Policy and Procedure</li> <li>Declare and resolve any conflict of interest (actual, potential or perceived) that may arise</li> <li>Take all complaints seriously, listen carefully with an open mind, remain calm, do their best to investigate and resolve the matter in a timely, fair, sensitive, constructive, positive and objective way</li> <li>Work towards achieving restorative justice for all parties</li> <li>Cease communication and refer to School Principal or supervisor where a person with a complaint behaves in an unacceptable manner</li> <li>De-escalate a situation of immediate conflict and after student and staff safety is ensured, allow a period of time to reflect and calm down for all involved</li> <li>Ensure any child safety matters arising are treated in accordance with Child Safety Policy</li> <li>Report criminal activity to Principal or supervisor and ensure it is reported to Tasmania Policy or relevant authority</li> </ul> |
| People providing feedback or making a complaint | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Familiarise themselves with and comply with this Policy and Procedure</li> <li>Ensure a complaint is made in good faith</li> <li>Work proactively towards a resolution that is acceptable</li> <li>Not make a frivolous or vexatious complaint</li> <li>Adhere to the parent/employee code of conduct and/or not engage in unacceptable behaviour</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

## RECORD KEEPING

The school will maintain a record of all feedback and complaints received (Feedback and Complaint Log). The record must include the following documentation:

- a) Summary details will be noted in the complaint log against a unique complaint number of:
  - i. Date of feedback or complaint
  - ii. Name of person providing feedback or making a complaint (complainant)
  - iii. Method of submitting feedback or complaint
  - iv. Nature of feedback or complaint
  - v. Staff notified and date
  - vi. Incident report if applicable
  - vii. Response provided
  - viii. Whether feedback or complaint resolved
  - ix. Notes for reason and evidence of resolution
  - x. Further notes
  - xi. Details of location of other information
- b) To the extent that is practically reasonable, all other documentation will also be saved electronically in a Feedback and Complaints folder, with complaints of a confidential nature stored securely. These may include:
  - i. A copy of the written feedback or complaint where provided, or otherwise notes of the feedback or complaint (made by the person receiving the feedback or complaint) where the feedback or complaint is provided in person (must be signed by the complainant for significant complaints);
  - ii. All significant associated documentation included in the feedback or complaint;
  - iii. Notes from all formal meetings in relation to the feedback or complaint;
  - iv. Correspondence relating to the feedback or complaint and the resolution of the feedback or complaint;
  - v. A record of all decisions taken in response to the feedback or complaint;
  - vi. A record of all outcomes in response to the feedback or complaint.

## COMPLIANCE

This Policy relates to the following legislation and guidelines:

### ***Commonwealth legislation***

- a) *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- b) *Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)*
- c) *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)*
- d) *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*

### ***Tasmanian legislation***

- e) *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (Tas)*
- f) *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 (Tas)*
- g) *Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023 (Tas)*
- h) *Education Act 2016 (Tas)*
- i) *Education Regulations 2017 (Tas)*

- j) *Teachers Registration Act 2000 (Tas)*
- k) *Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (Tas)*

***Other***

- l) Non-Government Schools Registration Board Guidelines
- m) United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- n) National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

## **PROCEDURE**

### **WHAT: Identifying when there is a concern or feedback that requires this procedure**

Every person in the Tamar Valley Steiner School needs to take responsibility for ensuring that our community has a positive approach to addressing feedback and resolving complaints by using this procedure or referring anyone who identifies a concern about something at the school to this Feedback and Complaint procedure. Parents and staff are asked to be proactive and bring feedback and concerns directly to the school using this procedure.

Common situations where a parent or staff member can use this procedure:

- Question or clarification
- Positive feedback
- Concern
- Complaint

Common situations where a parent or staff member may refer another person to this Feedback and Complaint procedure include:

- Parents are discussing school matters informally with a staff member, e.g. a teacher's assistant at drop-off, when they realise there is a question or concern that the staff member cannot address on the spot.
- Parents share their experiences and perceive that they have a similar concern for which they don't believe they have had a satisfactory resolution.
- A parent is sharing a concern about the behaviour of a child in their child's class with another parent or staff member.

## WHO: Identifying the right person/place for the feedback or complaint

What is the concern, and who to approach?

| What is the concern regarding?         | Best person to contact                               |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Student                                | Their Class Teacher, or Principal                    |
| Member of staff                        | The person, or Principal                             |
| Administrative or school communication | Send email to<br>admin@tamarvalleysteiner.tas.edu.au |
| Policy or Procedure                    | College Executive via the admin email                |
| Infrastructure or facilities           | Business Manager                                     |
| Principal                              | Principal, or Chair of the Board                     |

## HOW: Identifying the right process for providing feedback or making a complaint

When a query or concern develops the party concerned should contact the most appropriate party using the methods as outlined below.

The below steps are for resolution of concerns between two or more adults within the school community even when the issue may be about a child, or child's behaviour, this includes:

- Parent-Staff
- Staff-Parent
- Staff-Staff

### Path 1

#### When Bringing Positive feedback or simple questions and clarifications

- The feedback requires a short discussion,
- There is a sense of positive rapport or goodwill between the people involved.

Staff or parents can approach other staff or parents to request a 1-minute chat either at that time, or the next available opportunity.

If the question or feedback is not resolved at this point, then the process moves to the next step.

### Path 2

#### Feedback requiring further discussion including:

- concerns,
- unsatisfactory experience,
- suggestions for improvement
- questions and clarifications requiring further discussion

If:

- there is a sense of positive rapport or goodwill between the people involved and
- the issue does not involve heightened emotions and
- the person providing feedback is confident that they will be calm and regulated while discussing the concern,



Then the first action is to book a pre-arrange time to have a face-to-face meeting with the other person (talking to them spontaneously – without an appointment - before/after school, or while they're on duty is not the right approach for this kind of conversation).

If the above points do **not** apply, move to Path 3.

If a face-to-face meeting cannot be arranged in a timely way, and both parties are comfortable, a phone call may be an alternate option.

- ❖ Email correspondence is not the right forum for bringing this kind of feedback directly to another person. The aim is to allow back and forth communication to aid in clarification and greater understanding.

### **After Path 2**

If, during the face-to-face meeting:

- the issue is not resolved during this meeting OR
- either person is not satisfied with the outcome, OR
- either person becomes emotionally heightened

Then either party should end the meeting by letting the other person know 'I'm going to end this meeting now' and the process moves to the next option.

### **Path 3**

#### **Feedback and Concerns requiring a supported discussion**

If:

- there is not currently a sense of ease, positive rapport or goodwill between the people involved,
- there has been a previous attempt to resolve the issue/concern that has not yet been successful,
- the issue may involve heightened emotions, or
- the person providing feedback is not sure whether they will be calm and regulated while discussing the concern.

Then the first action to arrange a meeting with the Principal and/or provide the feedback in writing to the Principal

The Principal may take the following actions to address the feedback or complaint as deemed necessary and appropriate:

- Meet with the person providing feedback or making the complaint to understand their concerns
- Conduct an investigation to determine facts
- Summarise and share the feedback or complaint with a person who is the subject of the feedback or complaint
- Identify procedural or other improvements that will be made in response to the feedback or complaint
- Report back to the person who made the complaint to inform them of the outcome of the investigation and

- Hold a restorative conversation between the people involved if appropriate and an ongoing working relationship is necessary.

If the person providing the feedback or making the complaint feels it is not resolved after these steps, the complaint will be referred by the Principal to College Executive who will make a determination or decide the next steps which may include mediation.

If the issue is still not resolved the concerned party communicates the issue in writing to the School Board who determine process for resolution and delegates appropriate or otherwise makes a determination.

**END**

# PARENT, STAFF OR COMMUNITY MEMBER ISSUES RESOLUTION PROCESS CHOOSING A PATHWAY AND METHOD FOR FEEDBACK

