



# Complaints Policy Students

## VISION STATEMENT

Geraldton Grammar School will provide outstanding education and a strong sense of community, cultivating people of integrity, independence of mind and a love of learning.

## VALUES

| Respect | Responsibility | Inclusivity | Perseverance |

Introduction	This statement outlines the Geraldton Grammar School policy on grievances by a parent/s or student/s.
Scope and application	Policy applies to all employees and students, including overseas students, of Geraldton Grammar School.
Related legislation and guidelines	National Safe Schools Framework, School Registration Standards, National Child Safe Principle, Whistleblower Policy, Children and Community Services Act 2004
Related Policies	Code of Conduct Policies, Privacy Policy, Communications Policy
Policy Locations	O: drive, SEQTA, website
Evaluation	Annually

Date	Action (issue, reissue, amendment, replacement of pages, etc)	Initials
08/05/19	Redrafted	M Nelson
06/06/19	Ratified	D Lange
18/06/19	Redrafted following feedback	MNN/DLE
05/08/19	Ratified	SLT
05/05/20	Reviewed and amended to reflect the requirements of <i>Standard 9 Complaints, as outlined in the Guide to the Registration Standards and Other Requirements for Non-Government Schools, January 2020</i>	MNN
17/09/20	Update following clarification from the regulator ( <i>identify who within the school is permitted to know or access the information about a complaint</i> )	MNN
01/04/21	Reviewed and minor amendments	NFT
11/05/22	Complaints Policy split to Complaints Policy Parent and Complaints Policy Students	Student Wellbeing Committee
11/12/23	Reviewed – No amendments	TLE

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY STUDENTS**

### **RATIONALE:**

Geraldton Grammar School values the partnership between the School and the community and encourages open communication in order to best meet the needs of our children and young people. We encourage concerns to be raised in order to find a resolution to an issue. If a concern/complaint is dealt with seriously and sensitively at an early stage, it is more likely to have a satisfactory outcome.

Geraldton Grammar School is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment within which respect, responsibility, inclusivity, and perseverance are valued and encouraged. All children and young people are expected to behave in accordance with the School Values and the Codes of Conduct that apply respectively to students.

This Policy establishes the procedures for all students to follow for resolving a complaint concerning the School.

### **POLICY:**

All matters will be handled with sensitivity and apply the principles of procedural fairness including a hearing appropriate to the circumstances, a lack of bias, evidence to support a decision and an inquiry into the matter in dispute. It is important to protect and maintain confidentiality and not discuss the matter with others. It is also important to recognise that all parties must be given an opportunity to be heard and for there to be a reasonable time frame for consideration of issues and their response.

We recognise that it is critical to empower children and young people to understand their rights, to report problems and concerns and effectively support them to address the issue. The nature and extent of investigation will be proportionate to the seriousness of the complaint.

For all the Principal is the final decision maker and as such is not able to act as a support person for any involved party. If a complainant is not satisfied by the decision of the Principal, the matter may be referred to the Chair of Board for review. The review by the Chair shall be final, binding on the complainant and the School and the last step in this Policy.

Any complaint or concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect. Knowledge of it will be limited to the Principal, the Deputy Principal and those directly involved. The Chair of the school's Governing Body may also need to be informed. It is the school's policy that complaints made by children and young people will not rebound adversely on them. The school will not tolerate victimisation or adverse consequences shown towards a person who raises a concern and/or complaint.

We cannot entirely rule out the need to make third parties outside the school aware of the complaint and possibly also the identity of those involved. This would be most likely to happen where, for example, a child's safety was at risk and it became necessary to refer matters to the Police or other external authority. Matters of this nature would include an allegation/complaint of grooming, child abuse and/or there was a breach of the Code of

Conduct/student code of conduct. If information is passed to a third party, you will be informed, unless this is prevented by legal obligation

The Principal may consider a complaint and determine that the School will not proceed further with the complaint procedure where the Principal considers the complaint to be not substantiated, vexatious, trivial or regarding previously finalised issues.

The School will maintain clear confidential records of the complaint, the actions taken and the outcome on a Complaints Register and through SEQTA for students. The Deputy and Principal will review the Complaints Register and SEQTA each school term to enable the detection of any patterns emerging over time. The School can lock records on SEQTA to only the Principal and Deputy Principal in order to maintain confidentiality.

The School is committed to ensuring the complaints process is child-friendly and that students feel respected, valued, listened and responded to.

All parties may be accompanied to a meeting by an appropriate support person.

## **Definitions**

### **Complaint**

An expression of dissatisfaction made to the school about its services, decisions, actions or those of its staff, or about the complaint management process itself.

### **Director General**

The Director General is the chief executive officer appointed in accordance with s.151 of the School Education Act 1999; currently the Director General, Department of Education.

### **National Child Safe Organisation Principles**

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations incorporate the ten standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in December 2017 but cover all forms of child abuse. They were developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission and endorsed by all members of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in February 2019.

### **The School will follow the guidelines set out by the National Office for Child Safety and commit to the following:**

- Ensure children and young people are aware of the complaints process and how to make a complaint, who they can talk to, and will receive timely feedback about the complaint
- Meet all legislative obligations to report to child protection authorities and police, and to notify that reportable allegations or incidents are met

- Ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities in handling complaints
- Ensure the School knows the type of information it can share with children, their parents and carers and children are told about the information that must be reported whilst protecting the privacy and confidentiality of the child including what will happen next
- Treat a child or a young person's personal information arising from a complaint in accordance with the law whilst respecting and explaining what can be kept confidential and what must be shared or disclosed to the external bodies
- Teach the child safe curriculum across the school and ensure all staff are trained in child safety matters
- Ensure complaints affecting children and young people are properly investigated and their rights are safeguarded throughout the investigation process and actions arising.
- Ensure all investigations are planned, fair, proportionate, and thorough with findings supported by available evidence
- Identify and manage conflicts of interest to ensure a fair process and outcome for the affected child or young person, complainant, and the subject of the complaint.
- Be fair and objective
- Explain outcomes and review options whilst ensuring all parties feel safe
- Ensure processes are being followed
- Ensure timeframes are being met (within one week)
- Ensure complaint trends/patterns and risks relating to certain individuals are identified
- Ensure systemic problems are detected and mitigated by the School
- Ensure procedural fairness is applied

### **Rules of procedural fairness**

- a) a hearing appropriate to the circumstances;
- b) lack of bias;
- c) evidence to support a decision; and
- d) inquiry into matters in dispute.

**Geraldton Grammar School will always give priority to any complaints involving the safety, welfare and wellbeing of students.**

## **GUIDELINES FOR COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR STUDENTS:**

Any Problem, Complaints, or Suggestions? If so, the School would like to hear.

**How do I make a complaint?** By talking about it or by writing it down if you find that easier. You can do it yourself, as part of a group, or through your parents. Look at the poster at the end of this policy and around the School for “Speak up and make a complaint at GGS.”

**Who can I make a complaint to?** To anyone on staff or at the end of this policy, see the flow charts to assist with identifying the appropriate person in different circumstances:

- Students Pastoral Care (Appendix 2)
- Curriculum & Co-Curriculum Issues (Appendix 3)

**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 solutions.

**What will happen next?** If possible, the staff member will deal with it in person. If not, he or she will go on your behalf to someone who can help.

**Do others have to know?** If you are worried about confidentiality, tell the staff member, they will understand. Even if you find the issue hurtful or embarrassing, don't worry, It will only be discussed by the staff who can help you.

<sup>1</sup> Should the complaint refer to a Child Protection or Mandatory Reporting matter, this will then be referred immediately to the Child Protection or Mandatory Reporting process.

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Anonymous Complaints**

Students are encouraged to give their names and will be given reassurance on the issue of confidentiality. Anonymous complaints may be where there is no name or address supplied, or where the complainants say they do not wish to be identified.

It is at the Principal's discretion as to what action, may be able to be taken, depending on the nature of the complaint as it may not be possible to obtain sufficient details when a complaint is made anonymously however the complaint will still be accepted, recorded, evaluated and actioned to the extent possible for any information they may contain.

### **Overseas Students Ombudsman – external process**

In the event of an overseas student being dissatisfied with the result or conduct of the internal complaint appeals process, the School will advise the student of his right to access the external appeals process by contacting the Overseas Students Ombudsman at [www.ombudsman.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.gov.au) or phone 1800 117 000. This service is free and independent for external appeals and complaints about decisions made by the School.

### **Past Students**

Complaints from former students will be accepted and dealt with in accordance with this policy.

**Role of the Director General of the Department of Education:**

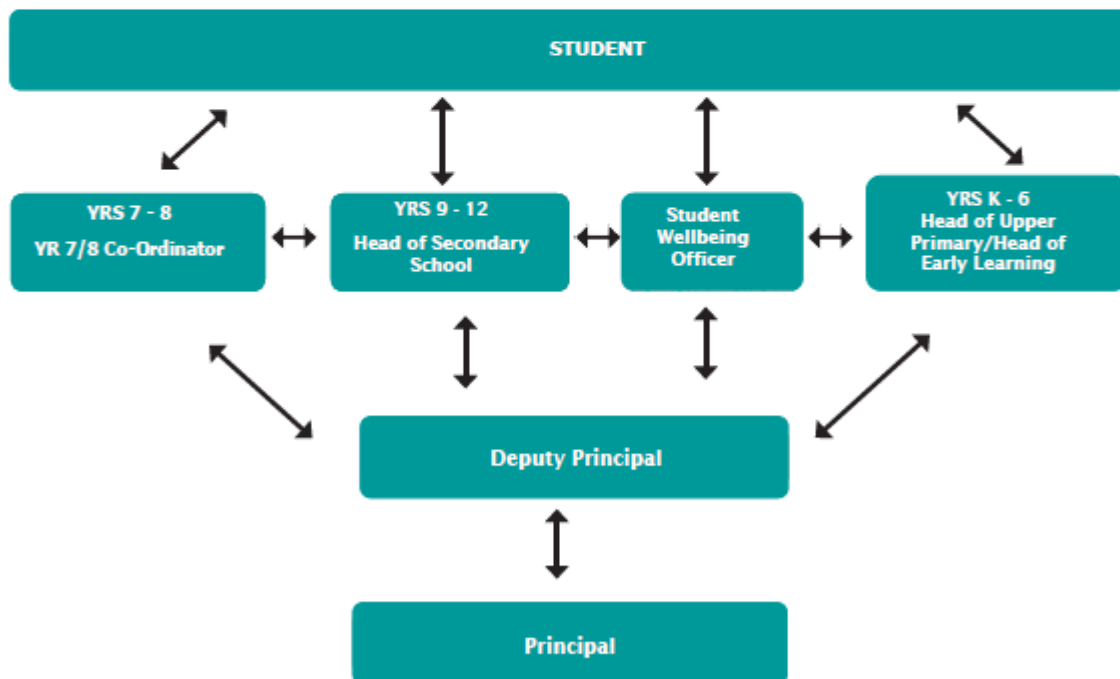
The Director General of the Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that the school observes the registration standards, including the standard about its complaints handling system. Any student, parent or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how the school has dealt with a complaint. Information is available on the Department of Education website. While the Director General may consider whether the school has breached the registration standards, they do not have power to intervene in a complaint or override the school's decision.

**APPENDIX 1: Student Pastoral Care**

**STUDENT PASTORAL ISSUES/CONCERNS/QUERIES**

Should you have any queries, concerns or issues regarding pastoral matters, (for example disorganisation, peer relationships, discipline), the suggested points of contact are shown below.

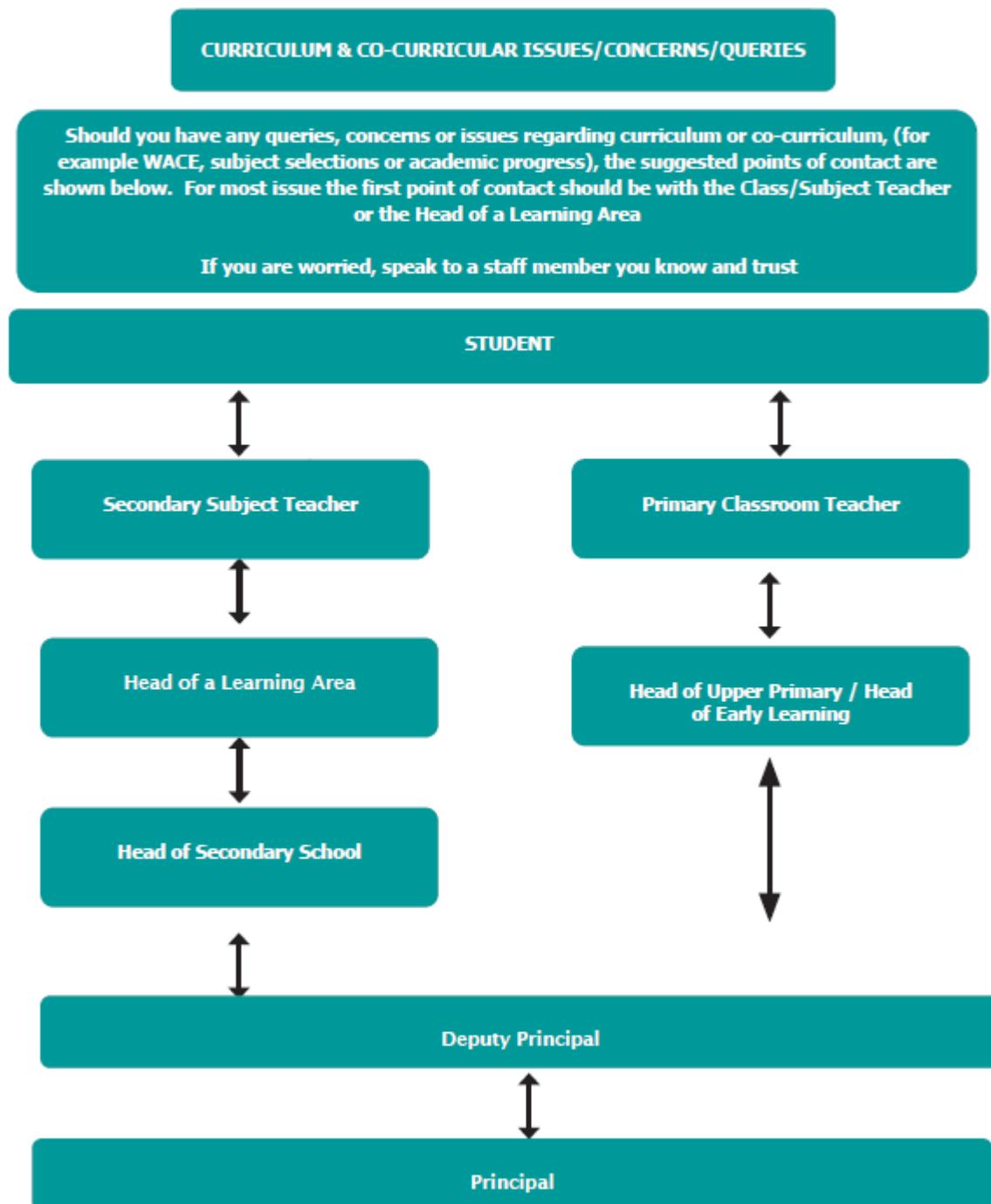
If you are worried, speak to a staff member you know and trust



If a complainant is not satisfied by decision of the Principal, the matter may be referred to the Chair of Board for review.

The review by the Chair shall be final, binding on the complainant and the School and the last step in this Policy.

APPENDIX 2: Curriculum and Co-Curricular Issues



If a complainant is not satisfied by decision of the Principal, the matter may be referred to the Chair of Board for review.

The review by the Chair shall be final, binding on the complainant and the School and the last step in this Policy.



# Speak up

Speaking up is important.  
It can make a difference.

## and make a complaint @GGS

### 1 Find support

Someone you trust, like a parent, friend, carer, teacher or coach can help you make a complaint.

### You have rights!


It's always ok to speak up if you're being hurt or if you're unhappy with the way you're being treated.

### 2 Tell your support person

- Why you're not happy.
- How the problem has made you feel.
- What would help fix it.

### 3 Make your complaint

Try your best. You can also ask:

- What will happen next?
  - Who will get back to me and my support person?
  - How long will it take?
- 

You can contact:  
**Kids Helpline**  
**1800 55 1800**  
kidshelpline.com.au

Adults should always listen, answer your questions and treat you with respect.



Australian Government  
National Office for Child Safety

[childsafety.pmc.gov.au/children-speak](http://childsafety.pmc.gov.au/children-speak)