



GERALDTON  
GRAMMAR SCHOOL

# Complaints Policy Parents and 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.

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

## COMPLAINTS POLICY PARENTS AND STUDENTS

### **RATIONALE:**

Geraldton Grammar School values the partnership between the School and parents and encourages open communication in order to best meet the needs of our students. 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 likely to have a satisfactory outcome. Having a sound system will, therefore, reflect positively on the ethos, mission and values of the School.

Geraldton Grammar School is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment within which diversity is valued and encouraged. All students and their parents are expected to behave in accordance with the School Values and the Codes of Conduct that apply respectively, to students and parents.

This Policy establishes the procedures for all students and their parents to follow for resolving a complaint concerning the School. For purposes of this Policy, parents include guardians of a student.

Key principles for handling complaints at Geraldton Grammar School:

- The School is open to the concerns of parents and students.
- Complaints are received in a positive manner.
- Parents and students can expect to be taken seriously and can approach a member of staff about their concerns.
- Concerns are dealt with speedily, and those who have raised them are kept informed about progress.
- It is not acceptable for students to receive adverse treatment because they or their parents have raised a complaint.
- Clear, confidential records are kept.
- Confidentiality is respected and maintained so far as is possible.
- Resolution of the matter is sought.
- Staff training covers the handling of complaints as appropriate.

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

### **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 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 matters except those involving the School Board, the Principal is the final decision maker and as such is not able to act as a support person for any involved party.

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 parents and guardians will not rebound adversely on their children. 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 is committed to ensuring the complaints process is child-friendly and that students feel respected, valued, listened and responded to.

### **GUIDELINES FOR COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR PARENTS:**

You can contact the School in person, by telephone (08 9965 7800), by email at [ggs@gegs.wa.edu.au](mailto:ggs@gegs.wa.edu.au), or by letter (PO Box 76, Geraldton WA 6531). Please ask if you require some assistance in expressing your concern.

When you contact the School, be as clear as possible about what is troubling you.

Members of staff will be happy to help. It may be best to start with the person most closely concerned with the issue being the classroom teacher or for example, sports concerns could be addressed to the Head of Physical Education. The appropriate Head of Learning Area may be able to sort things out quickly, with the minimum of fuss. However, you may prefer to take the matter to a more senior member of staff, for example, a member of the Senior Leadership Team including the Principal.

Please refer to the following flowcharts, at the end of this policy, to assist with identifying the appropriate person in different circumstances:

- Students Pastoral Care (Appendix 1)
- Curriculum & Co-Curriculum Issues (Appendix 2)

If the complaint is regarding the alleged misconduct of a staff member, the Deputy Principal will meet with the relevant staff member <sup>1</sup> to inform her/him of the appropriate details of the complaint and the staff member will then be invited to respond as he/she wishes or at a later time within a reasonable timeframe.

Where a complaint is against the Principal, first seek to resolve the matter by a discussion with the Principal. If the matter is still not resolved, the student and/or their parent may seek to refer it to the Chair of the School Board.

<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.

The decision of the Chair of Board in relation to the complaint shall be final, binding on the complainant and the last step in this Policy.

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

## **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 “Top tips for making 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.

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Anonymous Complaints**

Anonymous complaints may be where there is no name or address supplied, or where the

complainants say they do not wish to be identified.

Parents and students are encouraged to give their names and will be given reassurance on the issue of confidentiality. If they persist in wishing to remain anonymous, it is at the Principal's discretion as to what action, may be able to be taken, depending on the nature of the complaint.

### **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, Parents and Guardians**

Complaints from former students, parents or guardians will be accepted and dealt with in accordance with this policy.

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

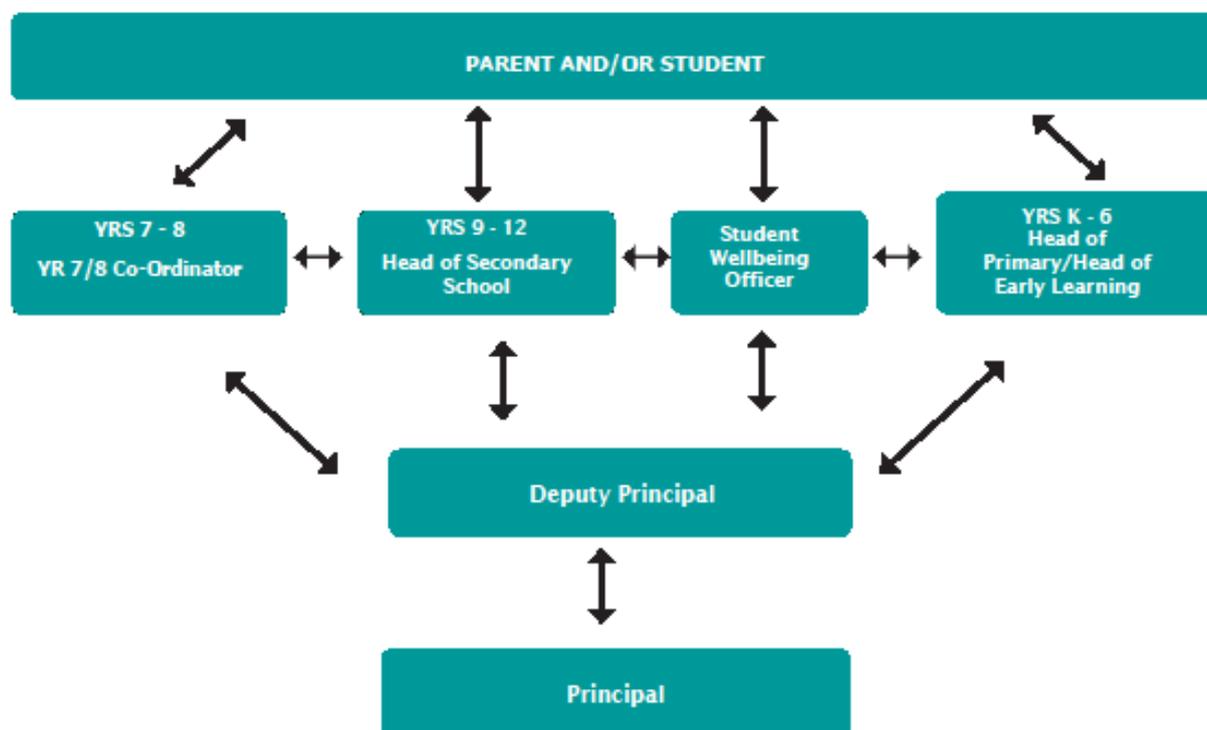
The Director General of the Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that the school observes the registration standards, including the standard about its complaints handling system. Any student, parent or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how 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, she does 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.

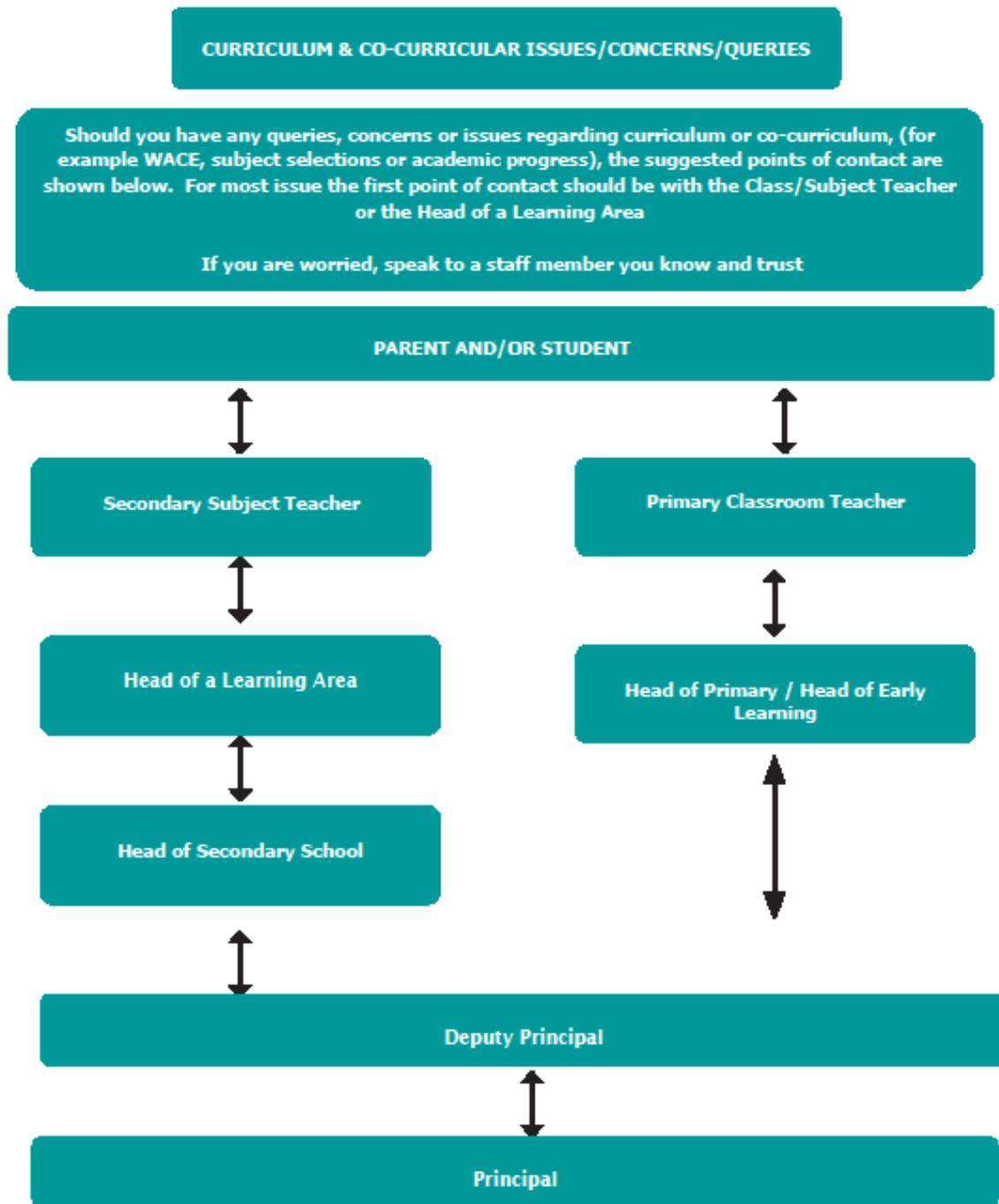
If you are worried, speak to a staff member you know and trust



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.



## Top tips for making a complaint at GGS

### 1 Get support

Talk to a parent, carer, friend or someone you trust and ask them to help you. They can even be with you when you complain. You can also use an interpreter if you need to.

### 2 Find out how

Sometimes it is tricky to know how to make a complaint. It is usually best to talk to someone at the School first to find out how.

- Talk to someone at School you feel comfortable with or check out the School website on our Policies and Documents page to find out about our complaints system.
- Find out who is the person responsible for complaints. This will save you from having to tell lots of people your full story.
- What are the different ways you can make a complaint (face-to-face, by phone, in writing - letter, email, any others)?

If you are not safe or do not want to talk to someone at School there are other agencies that can help you. Check out the website [ccyp.wa.gov.au](http://ccyp.wa.gov.au)

### 3 Plan what you want to say

Write down what you are not happy about and how this has affected you. Also decide what you think should be done.

This will help you when you have to talk about it. You may need to tell a couple of people in the process, so it will also help you remember what you've said before.



Commissioner for  
Children and Young People  
Western Australia

## 4 Be calm and ask questions

When you make your complaint, try to be calm and polite even if you feel upset. Staff of the School should also treat you with respect.

Ask as many questions as you like. You may want to know:

- How we will keep your complaint private?
- What will happen next?
- Who will get back to you and your support person?
- When will we get back to you?
- If you're not happy about the result of your complaint what is the next step - who will review your complaint then?



## 5 Keep notes

Write down who you speak or write to, the dates, anything they promise they will do and the date they say they will get back to you. This will help you keep track of things. You can also write down how you feel about the complaint process, this may be useful later.

## 6 Keep at it

Don't be afraid to complain further if you are still not safe or feel the matter has not been resolved fairly.

