



Complaints & Grievances Policy

Version: 1.0
Effective date: 11/2021
Next review date: 11/2024

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline Hume Anglican Grammar's process for the management of complaints and grievances.

2. Scope

This policy and its associated procedure applies to all members of the Hume Anglican Grammar community and is inclusive of all school environments (physical and online).

This policy does not apply to:

- Issues that are outside of the responsibility or scope of Hume Anglican Grammar as an employer; or
- Circumstances where an existing review, appeal or complaint procedure is already in process.

3. Alignment to the Strategic Plan

Values:

Christian, Excellence, Resilience, Respect and Integrity.

Goals:

3. Staff – professional and dedicated staff committed to the success of the School.

4. Parents – engaging families and forging strong relationships

Pathways:

b. Establish a supportive and collegial workplace culture based upon optimism, respect and professionalism.

a. Foster a fruitful partnership between home and school.

b. Establish a model of home communications based upon principles of timeliness, openness and trust.

Desired Outcomes:

1.1 Have connected parents who support the School as an intrinsic and steadfast element of family life.

4. Definitions

Complainant	The person making the complaint.
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction by any person about any act, behaviour, omission, situation, decision or service provided.
Due process	The principle that both the complainant and the respondent have the right to a fair, impartial and consistent process that governs all complaints and grievances. This process ensures that the complainant is provided with information about the complaint, and given adequate opportunity to respond.
Formal Complaint	A complaint that has been escalated to management: the Deputy Principal, Principal or the Chair of the School Board.
Grievance	A cause for complaint regarding either real or perceived unfair treatment.
Informal Complaint	A complaint that may be addressed by a classroom teacher, Head of Student Wellbeing, Year Level Coordinator, Head of Teaching and Learning, or Assistant Principal.
Natural Justice	A process that involves the avoidance of an initial judgment being made, ensuring that the respondent is provided with an opportunity to present their case before a determination is reached.
Respondent	The person (or organisation) about whom a complaint is made. The respondent is required to respond to the complaint and must be provided with a fair and reasonable opportunity to do so.

5. Policy Statement

Hume Anglican Grammar offers its local communities affordable, high quality, independent education in a caring and inclusive Christian environment. The School strives to provide a safe, respectful and supportive environment for staff, students and its community, and to develop professional, trusting and cooperative relationships.

The School understands that from time to time, parents may be dissatisfied, or have a concern or complaint about a decision made or action or activity for which the School is responsible. Wherever possible, the School encourages such complaints to be resolved through informal processes. This policy is designed to apply where informal resolution proves difficult, and a more formal process is required.

This policy and its associated procedure should be read and understood by all staff, and by the complainant and respondent. A copy of this policy must be provided at the commencement of any formal process.

5.1 Principles

The School believes that a complaints and grievances process is an important mechanism that provides opportunities for continual improvement. The School is committed to providing a process that:

- is consistent with the values, goals and pathways of the School;
- is fair, transparent and equitable, adhering to the principles of natural justice;
- allows parents, students and families to raise concerns with the expectation that those concerns will be formally addressed;
- provides opportunities for the School to demonstrate its commitment to timeliness, openness and trust; and
- provides key information about future improvement opportunities.

Complaints and grievances raised through this process will:

- be taken seriously, and acted upon promptly;
- be managed according to the clear processes outlined in this document and its attachment(s);
- contribute to a process that is intended to be conciliatory, non-adversarial and non-legal; and
- result in clear and informative feedback to all concerned parties.

The School respects the right of complainants to contact the School under a pseudonym, or anonymously, as permitted by legislation. Complaints and grievances received in this way will be managed according to the process outlined in this document; however, it may not be possible for the School to respond to a complaint received in this way.

Complaints or grievances made regarding child safety will always be acted upon and taken seriously, irrespective of how they are received.

5.2 Managing a complaint or grievance

The School will respond to all complaints promptly. Both complainants and respondents will be informed regularly of the progress of the complaints process, particularly where the complaint is complex and may take more time to resolve.

The School will ensure that its complaint procedure is responsive and flexible. In practice, this means that staff, students and the School community will be able to make a complaint in person, by phone, or in writing. The School will provide support for parents with specific needs (e.g., translation).

The School is committed to natural justice and due process, and will endeavour to respond to each complaint in a fair, objective and unbiased manner, in accordance with the School's mission and values. Anyone managing a complaint process will be required to declare any conflicts of interest. The complainant and respondent will be provided with opportunities to present their point of view,

and will be treated with dignity and respect at all times. In dealing with the complaint, the School is committed to acting confidentially, and asks that those involved in the process will do likewise.

Complaints procedures will be limited to dealing with the matter raised by the initial complaint, and will not engage with any other matters, except where the School determines that patterns of past behaviour may be relevant to the proceedings.

The School may determine that a complaint is vexatious (that is, intended to harass, annoy or embarrass the School or the respondent) or spurious (without basis, or manifestly groundless). Where this is the case, the complainant will be informed in writing of the decision, and of the closure of the complaints process.

The School will ensure that any actions, outcomes, and the final resolution of the complaint are documented and kept on file, and that both the complainant and the respondent have a copy of the final decision.

The School will ensure that the handling of complaints does not contravene its Privacy Policy. The disclosure of personally identifiable information outside of the scope of the complaints process is forbidden.

5.3 Informal complaints

Where possible, the School encourages the resolution of complaints and grievances through informal processes. This is most often achieved by speaking directly with the staff member involved (e.g. class/homeroom teacher or subject teacher). Where required, the issue may be escalated to management.

Matters related to student welfare and pastoral care will be managed by the appropriate Head (or Assistant Head) of Student Wellbeing. Matters related to curriculum, teaching and learning will be referred to the appropriate Head of Curriculum or Head of Teaching and Learning.

The Assistant Principal, as the senior leader in charge of their sub-school, will monitor and respond as required to any heightened concerns during the process. Complaints that cannot be resolved through informal processes will be escalated to a formal process.

5.4 Formal complaints

Formal complaints must be directed in the first instance to the Deputy Principal, who may then refer the complaint to the Principal at their discretion.

Complaints regarding the decisions, activities or actions of the Principal may be directed to the Chair of the School Board. Any appeals process should be addressed to the Chair and will be handled at the discretion of the School Board.

All records generated or consulted during a formal complaints and grievances process will be retained, along with the initial details of the complaint. Such records may include (but are not limited to):

- records of phone conversations;
- email;
- written correspondence; and
- notes of meetings and/or interviews.

5.5 Responsibilities and delegations

The School Board is responsible for:

- determining the conditions of this policy, and reviewing it regularly;
- responding to any formal complaint that relates to the Principal; and
- advising the Principal regarding complaints and grievances reports

The Principal is responsible for:

- determining the complaints procedure, and ensuring that it is implemented in a manner consistent with this policy;
- ensuring that the complaints policy and its accompanying procedure are communicated to staff, students and the School community, both online and in print;
- ensuring that complaints received are recorded appropriately and that any action taken to resolve those complaints are well-documented;
- ensuring that the School maintains a record of all complaints, irrespective of the mechanism through which they are received (formal, informal, verbal or written);
- seeking external advice where required;
- responding to a formal complaint brought to the School under this policy;
- reporting to the School Board formal complaints, listing the date, subject and resolution.

Members of staff are responsible for:

- responding to and seeking to resolve concerns and complaints raised informally; and
- responding to concerns raised by students and their families.

5.6 Breach of Policy

The School seeks to embed a safe and supportive culture for the whole school community. Any breach of this policy by students, parents or staff will be considered by the Principal and dealt with on a case-by-case basis. The Principal may take such action as considered appropriate, including:

- the provision of a verbal or written warning;
- the withdrawal of certain privileges or opportunities;
- exclusion from future school events or functions;
- exclusion from school grounds or facilities;
- revocation of an enrolment; or
- summary dismissal.

6. Links to other documentation

Hume Anglican Grammar Privacy Policy

Hume Anglican Grammar Child Safety Policy

Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)

Education and Training Reform Regulations (2017)

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Minimum Standards

Child Safe Standards Ministerial Order 870

Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

7. Policy communication

This policy is publicly available on the School's website, and through the Parent Access Module of SIMON. It will be provided to all families at enrolment.

8. Policy review details

The School will review this policy on a routine basis, or to reflect changes in practice, legislation, or governance.

All policies produced by Hume Anglican Grammar are owned by the Principal.

9. Policy document history

Policy Approved by: Senior Leadership Team

Version:	Date:	Author:	Status:
1.0	11/2021		Initial release.

Complaints & Grievances Procedure

Version:	1.0
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Hume Anglican Grammar strives to provide a safe, respectful and supportive environment for its staff, students and community.

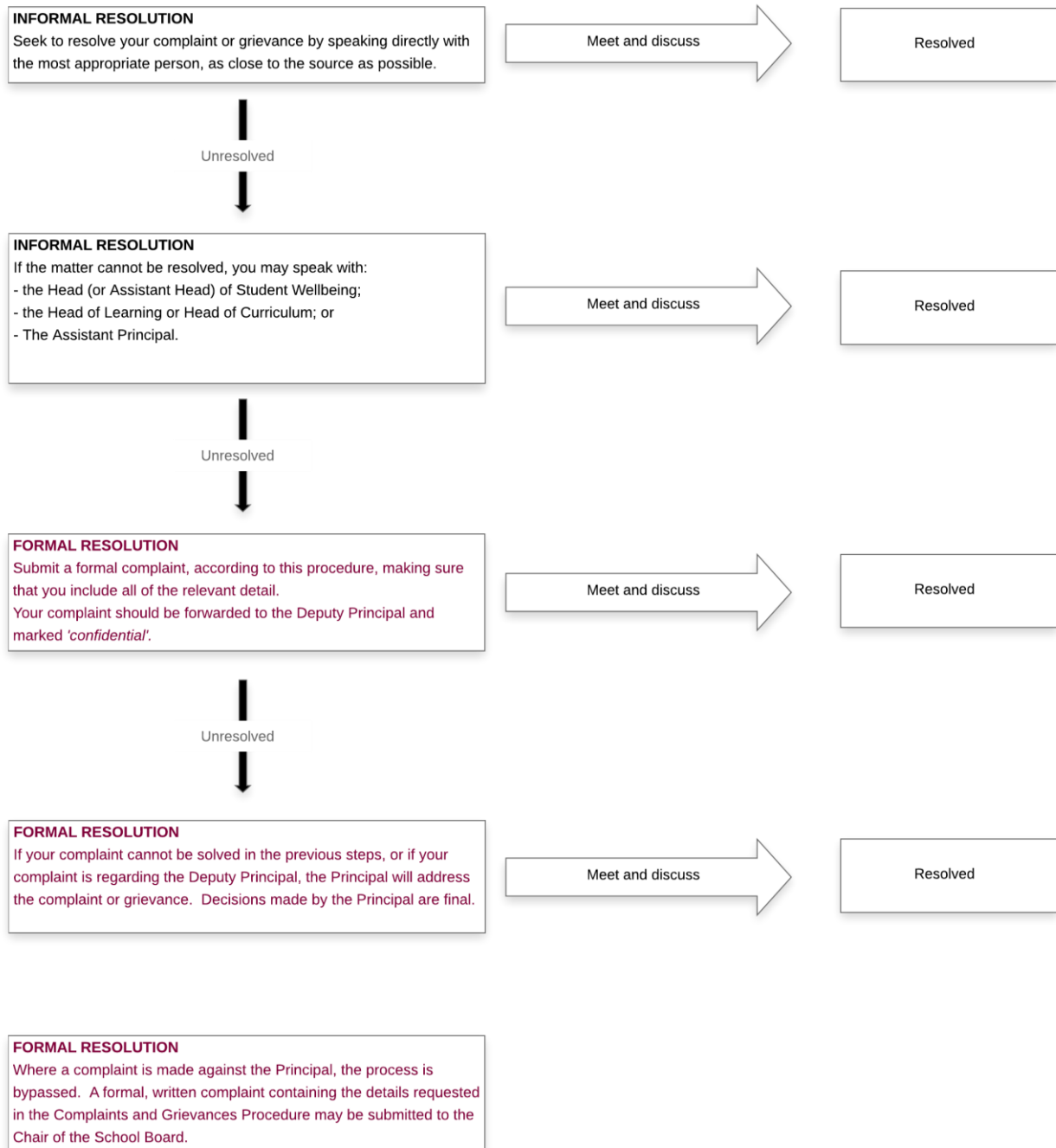
The School understands that from time to time, students, parents or members of the community may be dissatisfied or have a concern regarding the School's programs or services, its decisions, actions or activity. Wherever possible, the School encourages an informal resolution as close to the source as possible, and in line with the Complaints and Grievances Policy. This allows the issue to be identified and rectified as quickly as possible. Where the severity or nature of the concern does not allow for informal resolution, it may be necessary to follow a more formal process. The purpose of this document is to set out the School's process toward the resolution of complaints and grievances.

1. Procedure

1. Formal complaints and grievances should be submitted in writing to the relevant party (see below), and contain the following information:
 - a. Contact details for the person lodging the complaint;
 - b. Details of the complaint, including:
 - i. An outline (what happened?), providing specific details;
 - ii. A chronology of the events that led to the complaint;
 - iii. Details of any previous conversations, emails and meetings; and
 - iv. A description of how the matter has already been raised, including with whom, and with what outcome or actions;
 - c. Details of a preferred resolution.
2. Upon receipt of the complaint, the School will send an acknowledgement. This will occur within 24 hours.

Where a complaint is made in-person or by phone, the School may ask the complainant to make arrangements to speak with or meet the Deputy Principal at a mutually convenient time. In such cases, the items listed in point 1 will be addressed.

The School will observe the following process for all complaints and grievances:



2. Expectations for conduct

The School is committed to providing a respectful, collaborative platform for dealing with complaints and grievances. Wherever possible, issues should be resolved in partnership, through courteous and constructive dialogue.

The School asks its staff, students and families to ensure that when making a complaint or grievance, they commit to:

- being clear about the issues that need to be discussed;
- focusing on facts;
- remembering that there may be other perspectives, and that they may not have all the facts;
- avoiding speculation and hearsay;
- think constructively about how the issue may be resolved;
- being informed regarding the School's policies, procedures and guidelines; and
- acting in good faith toward a resolution.

Where in-person meetings are arranged, a complainant may choose to have a support person present. A support person may be a relative, friend or colleague. It is not appropriate for that person to be a legal or union representative.

Where a meeting or telephone conversation is arranged, the School expects dialogue to be respectful and constructive. If either party is of the view that the conversation has become confrontational and is no longer conciliatory, they may ask to reschedule for another time.

Where more than one issue is being raised, complainants are asked to list the issues concisely and clearly so that the extent of the problem is clear.

Where more than one person raises the same (or a substantially similar) issue, each complaint or grievance will be managed separately.

All discussions will be outcomes-focused, and will work toward a sensible and fair resolution. At no point will a complaints process dwell on incrimination or blame.

3. Investigating the complaint

Some complaints may be resolved through discussion, but others may require that the problem or allegation is investigated before coming to a satisfactory resolution. Investigations will only occur at the commencement of a formal process, and may involve:

- interviews with others involved;
- the review of associated documentation; or, where necessary
- the appointment of an external investigator.

All investigations will prioritise privacy and confidentiality. The complainant (and where relevant, respondent) will be informed in advance of any decision to speak to others during the course of the investigation. Records generated as part of an investigation will remain confidential, and will be retained by the School in accordance with the Policy.

Throughout the investigation, all parties will be provided with opportunities to put forward their point of view, and their testimony will be treated with due respect. It may not be possible to agree to a way forward immediately. Where further time is required, it will be allocated, until the School determines that the issue has been considered as thoroughly as needed.

At any stage in the process, the School may decide that either informal or formal mediation would be helpful in order to resolve the complaint or grievance.

4. Final resolution

The School will make every effort to resolve concerns and complaints; however, there may be times where this is not possible. In such instances, the Principal's decision is considered final.

After considering and investigating a complaint, possible outcomes may include (but are not limited to):

- Further explanation, or more information provided to the complainant;
- Counselling, mediation or other support;
- A change in decision;
- A compromised position reached between parties;
- An apology or expression of regret;
- A change of policy, procedure or practice; or
- An unchanged position.