



The Launceston Preparatory School

Truth and Happiness

Complaints Management Process

(i) Rationale

It is important to the culture and philosophy of The Launceston Preparatory School that strong lines of communication are maintained among staff, students, parents/guardians and members of the community. We aim to provide a climate within our school where

- good relationships among all stakeholders of the school can be fostered,
- concerns can be raised, safe in the knowledge that they will be listened to in a positive manner, and
- constructive suggestions for change are valued and well-considered.

The academic, social, physical and emotional well-being of the students in our school is paramount. Strong partnerships with the students' families, among our staff and with our local community are essential to the achievement of success in this area.

We recognise, however, that not all parties to this goal will agree on everything all of the time. This document therefore seeks to establish clear procedures for the handling of disputes that may arise from any source among the stakeholders of The Launceston Preparatory School.

Early resolution of disputes is an important goal and we expect this document to allow officers of The Launceston Preparatory School to diffuse problems before they become destructive, using constructive suggestions for the improvement of standards and to minimise future complaints.

(ii) Scope

This document outlines procedures for resolution of grievances emanating from employees, students, parents/carers/guardians and the general community.

These procedures are designed to deal with complaints relating to general concerns. They are not intended to assume the place of procedures for grievances where a legal process is relevant.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. This may relate to something which the school is thought to have done wrongly, or where the school is considered to have failed to do something it should have done, or where the school is alleged to have acted unfairly or impolitely. The complaint may relate to the school as a whole or an individual member of staff.

Procedures for a complaints management process need to be flexible to deal with the variety of complaints and sources of grievance that may arise. This document is designed as a guide to manage both formal complaints and issues of concern that may arise informally. Quite often the seriousness of the issue is not commensurate with the formality of the lodgement of a complaint.

(iii) General Requirements

All complaints will be handled seriously and confidentially.

Interviews will be conducted in a measured and respectful way and may be suspended if any participant behaves in an insulting, offensive or dangerous manner.

Complainants will be provided with a copy of this document at the time of notification of a possible grievance.

Any party can elect to take the matter to mediation at any stage of the complaints management process.

Each party is free to seek legal advice at any stage of the process.

Complaints will be acknowledged within five working days and dealt with in a timely manner.

Confidentiality will be respected to the greatest extent consistent with the resolution of the matter.

Witnesses, or people who make written statements, can be assured of support and (where appropriate) confidentiality.

If a resolution is agreed upon, it will be implemented in good faith by all parties without rancour or victimisation.

Clear and contemporaneous records will be maintained of interviews and actions taken in the handling of a grievance.

Staff are trained to deal with complaints so that concerns can be appropriately managed as soon as they arise. Such training will include familiarity with the complaints procedure, communication skills (such as listening, questioning and calming), negotiation and mediation skills, skills in observing, recording and reporting and the benefits of handling complaints well and the consequences of poor grievance management.

(iv) Lines of approach

Where the complaint is made by a student, he/she should be able to raise the concern with any member of staff with whom he/she feels comfortable. This staff member may need to involve other staff or the Principal in order to satisfactorily resolve the concern.

Where the complaint is made by a parent/carer/guardian, it is usually appropriate that the issue is raised initially with the staff member with whom responsibility rests for the area of concern. For example, if a parent/carer/guardian is concerned about a child in a particular area of learning, the teacher working with the child in that area of the curriculum should be the first point of approach. For general concerns, the home group teacher should be the first point of contact.

If a staff member is approached about a matter that lies outside his/her remit, he/she will refer it to the appropriate person and inform the parent/carer/guardian.

Sometimes parents/carers/guardians may wish to take their concerns directly to the Principal. This mode of contact will be respected. However, the Principal may not be able to resolve the issue until relevant staff members have been consulted. This will be explained to parents/carers/guardians if relevant.

Where the issue of concern relates to school policy or matters beyond an individual classroom situation, the Principal should be the initial point of contact. Grievances from outside The Launceston Preparatory School (e.g. from a member of the local community) should also be raised directly with the Principal.

Where the complaint is made by a staff member against another staff member, the concern should be raised with the Principal and the responsibility for managing the complaint left with them. Discussions with the Principal where a concern is raised by one staff member against another must be kept confidential by all parties.

Complaints will be shared by the Principal with The Launceston Preparatory School Board (through the Chairperson) where the level of risk has been assessed at a level determined by the Board from time to time.

There may be certain circumstances, such as complaints about the Principal, where the parents/carers/guardians/staff will need to write directly to the Board of Management Chairperson whose email address will be supplied upon request.

Last staff review date – June 2022

Last Board review date – June 2023

Due for next Board review - June 2024 (Annual)

Due for next Staff review – June 2024 (Biennial)

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If resolution of a grievance is unable to be achieved through the above lines of approach, there are several mechanisms for external arbitration. Unresolved disputes may be referred to Courts of Law (in civil matters), relevant statutory bodies or commissions for further investigation and resolution.

(v) Procedures

Any party can elect to take the matter to mediation at any stage of the complaints management process.

We encourage informal attempts at resolution of a complaint in the first instance. Where possible, the protagonists should meet to discuss the issue of concern and attempt reconciliation.

If resolution cannot be achieved through informal means, more formal discussions will need to be held between relevant parties. All participants will be entitled to be accompanied by another person, in a support or informal mediation role, at any meetings convened to discuss resolution of that dispute.

Formal mediation will be pursued if resolution of the grievance is still not able to be reached. Parties to the dispute will agree on a mediator who will:

- listen to representations from all parties concerned,
- document points of agreement and disagreement, and
- seek reconciliation or a solution that is acceptable to all parties.

Mechanisms for external arbitration will be utilised if no resolution of the grievance can be attained to this point.

(vi) Communication and documentation

In keeping with the ethos and philosophy of The Launceston Preparatory School, we aim to be always open to concerns raised by our stakeholders. As people voice their concerns, we hope to be able to respond to them as quickly and fully as possible in the belief that this fosters a positive culture and helps prevent matters from festering and becoming more serious than they otherwise might. Communication is therefore a vital element in the grievance resolution process.

Information about the complaints procedure will be made clear.

Relevant officers of The Launceston Preparatory School will keep complainants informed about what is happening in response to their concerns and, if a more detailed response is needed, by what date it will be received.

It is important that the nature of the concern is quite clear to all parties. If it is not immediately obvious, the complainant may need to be given more time to explain or be asked to put their concern in writing.

All complaints will be recorded by The Launceston Preparatory School. The following information will be maintained:

- date when the issue was raised
- names of all parties concerned
- a brief but comprehensive statement of the issue
- notes of all discussions on the issue
- procedures to be pursued
- staff who will undertake the agreed action
- a brief statement of the outcome.

Complaints will be rated according to level of risk in accordance with The Launceston Preparatory School Risk Assessment Register. Those registered at the level of risk as determined by the Board from time to time will be reported to the Board of Management.

It is essential that all complaints be treated confidentially and with respect. It is the policy of The Launceston Preparatory School that the treatment of grievances does not rebound adversely upon any parties involved. This will be made clear to complainants.

Where it is necessary to involve other parties, the issue of confidentiality will be explained and matters handled with sensitivity.

If a complaint is made against a member of staff, he/she has a right to know about it. Such complaints will be made known only to him/herself and to those who have to be consulted. The Launceston Preparatory School will encourage staff to pursue Professional Development opportunities that will help staff deal with complaints made to them and about them. The Principal and Board of Management will provide support for staff against whom a complaint is made, including referral to the school's EAP provider.

The above considerations will apply equally (as far as practicable) to anonymous complaints where either the complainant's name is not supplied or the complainant does not wish to be identified. However, we aim to develop a culture in which people can feel secure about giving their names when raising issues of concern with the school.

(vii) Resolution

Sometimes the very acknowledgement of an issue by the school brings relief to the complainant. Satisfactory resolution can also be achieved by the complainant:

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- knowing that suitable changes have been made and that matters will be different in the future,
- knowing that the school is now alert to a potential problem, or
- feeling that the concern has been considered seriously and perceiving that the outcome has been well-considered, even if it was not the one originally sought.

This Complaints Management Process is made available to all staff members and reviewed annually. It is also publicised on the school's website.

Related information:

[A Whole School Approach to Bullying](#)

[Accident / Incident / Injury Reporting](#)

[Guidelines for Staff Members for the implementation of the Grievance Resolution Process](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Sexual Harassment Policy](#)