



LAMBERT SCHOOL

Complaints Management Policy

This policy is designed to create a strong and reliable partnership between parents and school. Parents and other school community members must be confident that staff will listen and respond to their needs and concerns.

Lambert School is committed to ensuring a harmonious and fair working and learning environment. This policy is to ensure that parents, students, staff and members of the community have an understanding of the processes to allow complaints, grievances and disputes to be resolved effectively. As a community we have the responsibility to ensure a safe place of work and learning free of bullying, intimidation and discrimination, whether this is between students, between staff members, between parents and staff, between students and staff or between parents and students. All grievances will be dealt with in a supportive environment without victimisation or intimidation of anyone involved with the grievance.

The process is accessible to all aggrieved parties and is underpinned by a commitment to cooperation on the part of Lambert School staff.

- Resolution at the local level is preferred, wherever it is appropriate to do so.
- Procedural fairness is afforded to all parties.
- The subject of the complaint is informed of the substance of the complaint.
- Vexatious, trivial or previously finalised issues are not pursued.
- Warranted investigation will be pursued with or without the active involvement of the complainant.
- Confidentiality is maintained, to the extent consistent with legislative requirements.
- Complaints and disputes are monitored and their management evaluated so as to reduce the occurrence of recurring problems.
- In all matters the educational well-being of students is the first priority.
- All persons in the school community including students, parents, administrators, teachers and support staff, have a right to be treated with respect and courtesy.
- Complainants are able to make inquiries, raise concerns or lodge complaints about the provision of education and the conduct of staff and have them dealt with efficiently, fairly and promptly.
- Information about the process for raising concerns and making inquiries or complaints is to be available to parents, students and members of the local community.

Parent guide to raising a concern or complaint

The relationship between the home and school play a very important part of a child's education. We can not overestimate the critical role parents play in successful learning: parents contribute much to their child's development and are among the most important influences on the way in which the child approaches learning.

Teachers are responsible for the formal aspects of children's learning, and successful teaching builds on the home experiences of the child. This is most effective where there is an active partnership with parents.

Two-way communication is a critical factor in the partnership between parents and the school. Where a partnership exists, it is easier for parents to feel confident about the teaching and learning taking place in the classroom and to solve problems. We all expect quality and expert care and teaching for your child in order that they achieve their potential. Working together will give us the best chance of solving a problem that may arise during your child's years at Lambert School.

We also recognise that at times things may go wrong. If you have a concern or a complaint, we want you to let us know. It's important to learn from mistakes or misunderstandings so that we can improve your child's experience and learning, and also improve processes where possible. The first step in working through a complaint is to talk to your child's teacher or the principal.

Use this guide to help you think through what you are concerned about and how to resolve the matter respectfully and effectively.

What might you talk to your school about?

Issues particular to your child:

- Attitude
- Academic progress
- Participation
- Behaviour
- How he/she gets along with teachers and other students socially and emotionally
- Physical development and well-being
- Development of responsibility
- Non-attendance or truancy
- Learning program issues
- Special events and celebrations
- Learning support programs
- Parent information booklets
- Parent information sessions

School or class issues:

- Homework
- Learning environment
- General student behaviour
- School's policies and procedures
- Conduct of staff

How Lambert School communicates with you:

- Two formal reports each year on student progress
- Regular information about the school through newsletters and Lambert School website
- Parent – Teacher interview (Formal interviews in Term 3)
- Informal discussions by phone, email or face to face as required
- Notes
- Surveys
- Displays of children's work
- Special events and celebrations
- Learning support programs
- Parent information packs
- Parent information sessions

Information that is available from Lambert School

- Information on school policies and policy changes
- What is expected in relation to homework
- School charges and fees
- Camps & Excursions
- School dress code

About complaints or concerns

This information may be helpful in explaining what a complaint is:

A complaint may be made by a parent if they think that the school has, for example:

- done something wrong
- failed to do something it should have done
- acted unfairly or impolitely.

A parent's concern or complaint may be about:

- the type, level or quality of services
- the behaviour and decisions of staff
- a policy, procedure or practice.

What can you do if you have a problem?

Seeking information as early as possible can solve many problems. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's progress, the homework set or the assessment procedures, contact the class teacher or the principal. The best way to do this is to contact the school to arrange a mutually convenient time for a telephone conversation or meeting.

When you have a problem

- Try to identify the problem clearly before going to the school. If there is more than one problem,
- list them to ensure that the extent of the problem is clear to the school.
- Decide whether the problem is a query, a concern or a complaint. This will help in finding a solution.
- Make an appointment to talk with the teacher. If your concern is about the conduct of a staff member, you may prefer to discuss the matter with a school leadership member or, the Chairperson of the board if your complaint involves the principal.

Try to stay calm. Even if you don't feel it, being calm will help to get your concerns across more clearly than if you are upset or angry. It may help to take someone with you.

How the complaint will be handled

- Complaints will be handled promptly, confidentially and in accordance with procedural fairness.
- The person who is the subject of a complaint, who made a complaint or provided information in the course of an investigation into a complaint shall not be subject to prejudice, intimidation, and harassment or be subject to any detriment because of their involvement.
- Appropriate confidentiality is to be observed in any discussion of complaints. This means that at the workplace these matters will remain confidential.

Procedures for making complaints – step for Parents If you need assistance in resolving a concern or complaint.

Staff will help you:

- Obtain information about school policies and procedures
- Make inquiries about student programs, performance and behaviour
- Clarify a problem and aware the school of a concern
- Direct letters of enquiry or complaint

Sometimes a complaint is about something we have to do because of state or federal law. In such cases we are able to talk to you about the matter and help you understand the requirements and why they exist. If a formal complaint is made, mediation can be offered at all stages of the process and a copy of our grievance policy will be given when a grievance is reported.

PROCESS FOR RESOLVING GRIEVANCES

Informal Process

The flow charts available outline the steps to be taken by:

1. Staff
2. Parents
3. Students

Formal Process

- A formal complaint may occur if informal processes are unsuccessful or in situations where the allegations are more serious and informal procedures would be inappropriate.
- Assistance may be sought from the school who can arrange mediation.
- The **FORMAL GRIEVANCE FORM** must be completed and submitted to the Principal. If the complaint is against the principal, then refer to the Complaint Management Policy-Grievance Against the Principal and the grievance form must be submitted to the Deputy Principal.
- The school will seek to resolve the matter within 10 working days. All parties involved will be notified in writing of the decision made or action taken.
- Any decision made may be appealed to the Principal or an external investigator, who will be responsible for the case.
- At any stage of the process, a participant involved may seek external support or assistance.

Records

Where there is a formal complaint made the school will keep records of meetings, correspondence and steps taken to resolve the matter. Once the matter is resolved all records will be kept confidentially.

Investigation

The Principal will ensure that the complaint is given to the person against whom it is made as soon as practical after receiving it. The Principal must be satisfied that:

- The case is appropriate for a formal complaint
 - The conduct is sufficiently described in the complaint
 - The correct procedures under this policy have been followed.
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- The person against whom the allegation has been raised must respond within 10 working days.
 - Following receipt of the response the Principal will then meet with each party involved to identify the issues, review what steps have already been taken and give both parties the opportunity for further informal measures. If the matter remains unresolved the Principal will advise them of the formal procedures to be taken.
 - If necessary, the Principal will appoint an external investigator to carry out investigation into the complaint. A report would be submitted to the Principal.
 - The Principal and investigator will meet with both parties individually to discuss the report, its implications and the steps that will be taken to resolve the matter.
 - If at any stage of the resolution, the Principal (or other delegate) believes or is advised that the matter may involve criminal activity, the Principal (or other delegate) is obliged to refer the matter to the appropriate authorities. In this incidence the activities to resolve the matter will be suspended until the time the authorities have completed their inquiries. The school reserves the right to take whatever steps may be appropriate to manage the matter during the intervening period.
 - If the issue is unresolved due to lack of evidence, both parties will be advised that the matter cannot proceed.

Natural Justice

Both individuals accused of harassment and/or bullying and individuals making a complaint of harassment and/or bullying within the terms of these guidelines have the right to be afforded natural justice.

A person accused of harassment and/or bullying has the right to:

- be informed of the nature of the allegations in the first instance
- respond to the allegations
- an impartial hearing, and fair and equitable treatment
- an understanding that all reasonable care will be taken to ensure the matter is handled confidentially
- engage the person or organisation of their choice to provide assistance and support throughout the course of the matter (e.g. assisting with the preparation of responses, representation, accompanying to meetings, etc)
- access to any documentation to be relied on by any person in the hearing relating to the complaint (including the person hearing the complaint)

A person making a complaint of harassment or bullying has the right to:

- an understanding that all reasonable care will be taken to ensure the matter is handled confidentially
- an impartial hearing, and fair and equitable treatment
- engage the person or organisation of their choice to provide assistance and support throughout the course of the matter

Process For Resolving Grievances Against The Principal

Once a grievance has been received:

- Contact between the Principal and the Complainant would not occur (except in an exceptional circumstance) and the Deputy would assume responsibility for school communication with the complainant.
- The Deputy will inform the Chairperson of the School Board of the complaint.
- The role of the Chair of the School Board is to:
 - Ensure the School Board is properly briefed and the individual members of the Board adhere to the mutually agreed guidelines.
 - Ensure the Principal is accorded natural justice and the guidelines for the role of the Board are adhered to.
 - Be responsible for controlling the publicity and communication to the whole school body when the complaint is filed and concluded if necessary.
- The role of the Board is to ensure correct processes are observed along mutually agreed guidelines.

Formal Process

The Deputy will inform the Chairperson of the School Board and a mutually agreeable independent investigator will be appointed. The investigation will include interviews with the complainant and the respondent, and if necessary any witnesses called by either party.

For the purposes of this policy, the independent investigator's decision will be final. (Either party has the right to pursue other avenues.)

Following the Independent Investigator's Report, the School Board will determine the consequences for the Principal. This may range from 'no case to answer' to dismissal. The School Board should notify the Principal in writing and include any follow-up processes needed to be undertaken.



FORMAL GRIEVANCE FORM

To be submitted to the Principal or Deputy Principal who will acknowledge receipt of the complaint.

Grievant's Name: _____

Date: _____

Best Contact Phone Number: _____

*In most incidences the grievant must have initiate the Informal Grievance Procedure before filing a written grievance. This statement should include sufficient information to clarify the issues relating to the grievance, a description of any actions already taken and an indication of the resolution sought.

Summary of Grievance:

Action already taken:

List persons who may be contacted to provide further evidence:

Grievant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

