



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.

Introduction

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 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. All complaints will be dealt with in a supportive environment without victimisation or intimidation of anyone involved with the process.

Policy Principles

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

- 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, seek legal advice 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 School community on the School's website and at the time of enrolment.
- Resolution directly between the parties 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.
- Confidentiality is maintained, to the extent consistent with legislative requirements.
- Mediation or conciliation is considered to resolve the complaint.
- When no resolution has occurred after all informal processes have occurred, internal or external investigation will be arranged with or without the active involvement of the complainant.
- In all matters the educational well-being of students is the first priority.
- Where a complaint involves an allegation of criminal conduct or conduct which may place a child at risk, it will be reported to the police and/or the relevant authorities and all investigation by the School will be suspended until advice is sought from the police or the relevant authorities.
- Vexatious, trivial or previously finalised issues are not pursued.
- Complaints and disputes are monitored and their management evaluated so as to reduce the occurrence of recurring problems.

Complaints Policy

Complaints are issues where a party believes rightly or wrongly that the school has not acted fairly or appropriately in its treatment of them (whether a student, teacher parent or member of the general community). Complaints are to be dealt with in a manner which is fair and reasonable to all parties. The school is committed to act in a manner which is fair and reasonable to its students, parents, members of staff and the general school community. The prime concern of Lambert School is to protect the safety, welfare and integrity of its students, parents and the wider school community and to enable its students to pursue educational goals.

School policy affirms the rights of students' access to quality education in a setting which is fair to the individual and to the school as a whole. As stated elsewhere, students are to be treated with respect and without prejudice and their educational needs are to be accommodated. Similarly, staff members are to be treated as professionals, with dignity and respect.

Parents, or guardians responsible for the placement of the child in the school, should feel that the school is supportive of them and their wishes for the student's education. The school also expects the parent or guardian to be supportive of the school's endeavors to carry out the educational program and of the welfare of the school generally.

The wider school community, for example bus contractors, neighbours, past students, as well as the general public, should not be subjected to any negative actions by the school, its teachers, students or their parents. If members of the public have any cause to complain about any member of the school community, they will be heard respectfully and appropriate action will be taken. Fairness must be accorded to both the complainant and the person against whom the complaint is made.

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 partnerships 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 by telephone or email during working hours 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 the principal or the deputy principal 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 – If you need assistance in resolving a concern or complaint.

Staff (or the Board Chair if it relates to the Principal) 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.

Legal advice and/or mediation can be sought at all stages of the complaint process.

PROCESS FOR RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

Informal Process

The flow chats available outline the process for resolving complaints made by:

- Staff
 - Parents
 - Students
 - Or made against the Principal.
1. In the first instance, the parties to the complaint should where possible seek to discuss the complaint directly to see if it can be resolved.
 2. If the complaint remains unresolved, then the teacher, the Principal or Deputy Principal or in the case of a complaint against the Principal the Board Chair, will attempt to resolve the complaint by discussion or mediation.
 3. If the complaint remains unresolved, the formal process for resolving complaints will be followed.

Formal Process

1. 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.
2. Legal advice and/or mediation may be sought at any stage of the process.
3. The **FORMAL COMPLAINTS FORM** must be completed and submitted to the Principal. If the complaint is against the principal, then submit your complaint using the Formal Complaint Form to the School Board Chair – Ms Kirsten Bacon, lambertschoolboard@lambertschool.tas.edu.au.
4. Your complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days of its receipt.
5. The school will seek to resolve the matter as soon as reasonably practicable. This may include mediation or a formal investigation. All parties involved will be notified in writing of the decision made or action taken.
6. The person against whom the complaint has been made will be informed of the substance of the complaint as soon as practical after receiving it.
7. Following receipt of the response the Principal or their delegate, or where the complaint is made against the Principal the Board Chair, will then meet with each party involved to:
 - a. identify the issues;
 - b. review what steps have already been taken;
 - c. give both parties the opportunity for further informal measures.
8. If the matter remains unresolved the Principal or their delegate, or where the complaint is against the Principal the Board Chair, will advise them of the investigation process to be undertaken.
9. The Principal or their delegate or the Board Chair will appoint an external investigator to carry out an investigation into the complaint.
10. The investigator will interview or seek further information from the complainant and may interview any other persons relevant to the complaint. The investigator will also interview the person against whom the complaint has been made and provide them with the opportunity to fully respond to the complaint.
11. The investigator then prepare a report to be delivered to the Principal or their delegate or where the complaint is against the Principal the Board Chair.
12. The investigator's report will then be considered by the Principal or their delegate or where the complaint is against the Principal the Board Chair, who will then determine the outcome.
13. The Principal or their delegate or the Board Chair will meet with both parties individually to discuss the investigation and the outcome of the complaint and its implications and the steps that will be taken to resolve the matter. The outcomes may range from No Case to Answer, Unsubstantiated or Substantiated Complaint to Disciplinary Processes Being Taken.
14. If the issue is unresolved due to lack of evidence, both parties will be advised that the matter cannot proceed.
15. If at any stage, the Principal or their delegate or the Board Chair believes or is advised that the matter may involve criminal activity, the Principal or their delegate or the Board Chair is obliged to refer the matter to the police and/or 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.
16. 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 confidential, records of meetings, correspondence and steps taken to resolve the matter. Once the matter is resolved all records will be kept confidentially.

Confidentiality

Information in relation to a complaint will be treated confidentially as far as reasonably practicable with respect to both a person making a complaint and any person against whom a complaint is made. Access to information in relation to a complaint will be limited to authorised personnel only. The school recognises that a person making a complaint may want to raise concerns in confidence and will endeavour to protect the identity of any person who does not want their name disclosed. This may, however, place limitations on the ability of the school to properly investigate or address the complaint. 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.

Effective From: 03/03/2020



Endorsed by School Board: _____ 03/03/2020