



Complaints Policy

Purpose:	The purpose of the Complaints Policy is to ensure that student, parent and employee complaints and disputes are dealt with in a responsive, effective and fair way.	
Scope:	This policy applies to students, parents and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers, and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements.	
Status:	Authorised	Supersedes: Complaints Policy 20200116
Authorised by:	School Board	Date of Authorisation: 04.07.2022
References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017 • Australian Education Regulations 2013 • Fair Work Act 2009 • Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld) • Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) • Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld) • Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth) • Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) • Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth) • Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) • Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) • Complaints Resolution Policy • Child Protection Policy • Anti-Harassment Policy • Anti-bullying Policy • Behaviour Management Policy • Privacy Policy • Adapted from ISQ's Complaints Policy Template Version January 2018 	
Definitions:	<p>Complaint - an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem. A complaint may be made if a parent/carer, student, staff member or volunteer thinks that the School has, for example: <i>done something wrong;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>failed to do something it should have done; or</i> ○ <i>acted unfairly or impolitely.</i> ○ <i>issues of student or employee behaviour that are contrary to their relevant code of conduct</i> ○ <i>issues related to learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning</i> ○ <i>issues related to communication with students or parents or between employees</i> ○ <i>issues related to school fees and payments</i> ○ <i>general administrative issues.</i> <p>Student complaints may be brought by students or by parents on behalf of their children, as appropriate in the circumstances. A Complaint may be made about the school, as a whole, a specific department in the school or an individual member of staff.</p> <p>Anonymous Complaint - Anonymous complaints may be where there is no indication of either name or address, or where the complainants say that they do not wish to be identified.</p>	
Review Period:	Every two years	Next Review Date: June 2024
		Policy Owner: School Board

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Policy Statement

Birali Steiner School is committed to ensuring that student, parent and employee complaints are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, and effective and fair way.

Birali Steiner School views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process.

Birali Steiner School acknowledges the right of students, parents and employees to complain when dissatisfied with an action, inaction or decision of the school and the school encourages constructive criticism and complaints.

Birali Steiner School recognises that time spent on handling complaints can be an investment in better service to students, parents and employees.

Rationale

Problems are likely to arise if parents/carers, students, staff members or volunteers feel that the School is not open to their concerns or complaints. It is better to have a direct complaint to a member of staff than to have parents or students sharing their dissatisfaction with others. Parents and students like to feel valued and involved with the school and they are encouraged to voice their concerns.

An expression of concern, or a simple query, may grow into a painful matter if parent/carer or student, staff member or volunteer feel they have been brushed aside. Equally, issues with the potential to become acutely difficult may dwindle and fade if they are handled well at the initial stage.

The key principles for the handling of complaints are:

- *The school is open to the concerns of parents/carers, students, staff members, volunteers.*
- *Complaints are received in a positive manner.*
- *Parents/carers, students, staff members, volunteers can expect to be taken seriously and can approach any member of staff about their concerns.*
- *Information about complaints is clear and readily available.*
- *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/carers have raised a complaint.*
- *Clear confidential files and a log are kept.*
- *Confidentiality is respected and maintained so far as is possible.*
- *Resolution of the matter is sought.*
- *Staff & School Board training covers the handling of complaints.*

The school will ensure that all members of staff and School Board have appropriate training in handling complaints on induction, annually and as required throughout the year. Training will cover:

- *the complaints procedure*
- *communication skills, such as listening, questioning and calming*
- *handling complaints, negotiation and mediation skills*
- *skills in observing, recording and reporting*
- *the benefits of handling complaints well and the consequences of handling them badly.*

Parental complaint

Complaints will be dealt with fairly and objectively, in a timely manner. Birali will determine the appropriate person to deal with the complaint in the first instance. Complaints should be resolved with as little formality and disputation as possible. Matters incapable of resolution at a particular level should be referred to the appropriate senior person. For example, a complaint made to a relatively junior member of staff about a more senior colleague.

Senior staff will recognise when issues need to go straight to the Principal, with whom the responsibility for most complaints lie.

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The Principal will share serious complaints with the School Board, to be reported and recorded in the first instance, in Minutes at FRACS and Board Meetings. If a serious complaint is about the Principal, parents/carers, may write directly to the School Board, via email to chair@biralisteiner.qld.edu.au.

If a staff member receives a complaint and decide to respond to the parent or carer in writing, the staff member must act in accordance with the school's Complaints Resolution System (procedure).

Make sure you, the staff member are clear about the nature of the complaint before responding. If it is not immediately obvious:

- the parent or carer may need more time to explain;
- parent or carer may be asked to put their complaint in writing;
- it may be helpful to discuss possible outcomes.

All complaints will be taken seriously

It is the policy of the school that all complaints will be acknowledged as soon as possible. Birali has developed an online Feedback submission form that ensures complaints are acknowledged promptly and delegated to the correct staff member for action. Please refer to the Complaints Resolution System for full details on the complaints procedure, including expected timeframes for responses.

Parents and students may be satisfied the situation has been resolved by any of the following:

- *knowing that changes have been made, and that matters will be different in future*
- *knowing that the school is now alert to a possible problem*
- *feeling that their concern has been considered seriously*
- *an outcome which may be different from the one they sought, but which they perceive to be well-considered*
- *a considered letter or an apology*

Recording

A log, recording complaints, is kept electronically and accurate details recorded as:

- it may become the cause of legal action in the future;
- patterns in the record may indicate a need for action; and
- the Principal should be able to check the log and report on it regularly to the School Board.

The log should contain the following information:

- date when the issue was raised
- name of complaint provider
- name of student if applicable
- brief statement of issue
- location of detailed file
- member of staff handling the issue
- brief statement of outcome.

These files are **CONFIDENTIAL** and are only to be accessed by staff members of the school as authorised by the Principal. The files should contain simple clear notes of all conversations with parents, etc. where appropriate, about sources of dissatisfaction. This applies to chats and to telephone conversations, where appropriate, as misunderstandings easily arise. There should be a clear statement of what is concerning the complainant/s. If appropriate, the notes can be confirmed with the complainant/s and agreed upon with signatures for confirmation of accuracy.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important issue for students, parents, School Board and staff. It is essential that any complaint is treated in a confidential manner and with respect.

Parents often seek an assurance of confidentiality before expressing their concerns. If, for example, they wish to discuss a particular member of staff, they may fear that their child will suffer in some way because they have complained.

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It should be made clear to all concerned that it is the school's policy that complaints made by parents should not rebound adversely on their children and similarly that complaints raised by students should not rebound on them or on other students. The question of confidentiality should be discussed sensitively and on an individual basis with the parents etc and the school's policy should be carefully explained.

It may be possible to deal with a problem without naming individuals. However, even if no names are given, the source of the complaint may be clear. Depending on the nature of the complaint and on the circumstances, it may be impractical to investigate without identifying the member of staff or the child – it may also be in the interest of the child to do so.

Members of staff are rightly concerned that they should know about complaints that might be damaging to their reputation. Such complaints will be known only to themselves and to those who must be consulted. The school will provide support for staff against whom a complaint is made, upon request; this will be provided by a colleague who is not otherwise involved.

Complaints from the public about the behaviour of a group of students will be dealt with on a general basis, with reminders to all about the school's expectations.

If there is a situation involving the Police, the Principal, will take responsibility for action in the school and the School Board will be informed as soon as possible.

Anonymous complaints

Parents and students are encouraged to give their names to allow for procedural fairness when investigating the complaint. Whilst we accept anonymous complaints, this limits our capacity to investigate and validate the complaint. If a complainant persists in wishing to remain anonymous, it is at the Principal's discretion as to what action, if any, should be taken, depending on the nature of the complaint.

Anonymous allegations about child abuse should be dealt with as outlined in the school's Child Protection Policy.

Intractable complaints

There may be a small minority of persistent or aggressive complainants that will never be satisfied, whatever the school does. The school may even discover on investigation that the complaint was without foundation or motivated by malice. Nevertheless, it is wise to treat all complaints seriously and to follow the procedures.

Most complaints can be resolved if approached positively. If a complaint becomes intractable, it may be due to its nature or to the way in which it was handled, or possibly because the parent/person perceives the school to have 'closed ranks' against him or her.

Referral to the School Board

The Principal will report on a high level basis to the School Board and inform the parents/persons that this stage has been reached. If you have discussed your complaint with the Principal and still feel that you have not reached a resolution, you have the right to contact and refer your complaint to the School Board, via email chair@biralisteiner.qld.edu.au . It is preferred that any complaint to the Board is in writing.

The School Board will consider the complaint at the next scheduled Board meeting. If a briefing is required from a member of staff, this will occur in the presence of the Principal.

The School Board will respond to the parents/persons, notifying them that they are considering the matter. The School Board will respond in writing and the response will include how the issues were considered, who was consulted and the action that has been or is to be taken.

Complaints procedure

Please refer to the Complaints Resolution System for the full complaints procedure.