

Resolving Student Concerns and Grievances

Underlying Principles

Immanuel Gawler has both a desire and a responsibility to ensure that positive relationships are maintained between students, staff and parents. However, on occasions concerns and grievances will arise and Immanuel Gawler is committed to resolving all concerns and grievances through effective, fair and impartial procedures.

While members of staff are professional educators, whose aim it is to promote the learning and development of all students and help them achieve their personal best, it is recognised that there may be occasions when a student believes that they have been unfairly treated.

It is therefore important to have in place a set of procedures by which a student may seek review of a decision or raise a concern or grievance.

It is also important to recognise that not all concerns raised by students require the implementation of a formal grievance procedure.

Definitions

A **grievance** is generally considered to be a more formal complaint about any act, behaviour, omission, situation or decision that someone thinks is unfair or unjustified.

Grievances can occur when a student complains that an action or decision has been taken (or not taken) at the school that he/she believes to be of a relevant Act, Regulation or Order, infringes upon the principles of merit and equity, or is otherwise unreasonable.

A **concern** is generally considered to be less formal than a grievance and may not necessarily require an action or intervention.

Guiding Principles - Resolving Student Concerns and Grievances

It is important to note that in the event that a concern or grievance is a matter of child protection, the Principal should immediately be informed and the school's Child Protection Policy & Procedure enacted. None of the following points should be implemented if the concern or grievance is a child protection matter.

Where a complaint is made against an individual and at the appropriate point in the resolution process, that person should be informed of the nature and content of the complaint and they should have the right to respond.



All discussions should be kept as confidential as possible and details regarding the grievance made known only to those who need to know.

Ensure that the student feels they are supported when raising a concern or grievance. This may involve having an adult present to support them during discussions.

Where the concern or grievance is about an academic result, it is reasonable that should (only) be raised with in a school term of receiving it.

A person who has made a complaint may withdraw it at any time.

Parents/guardians should be kept informed, where applicable, of matters pertaining to the concern or grievance.

In most cases effective management of a grievance requires face to face, personal dialogue.

However, using electronic forms of communication (e.g. Email,) may be appropriate if a child or student feels more comfortable raising an issue with an appropriate person via email. Details of concerns or grievances raised should not be 'broadcast' via such electronic mediums as text messages, Twitter, Facebook etc.

Policy

Student to Student or Student to Adult

An immediate assessment must be made to decide if the harassment or child protection policy should be enacted, etc.

Possible steps –

- Informal discussion with a staff member
- Informal discussion with parents
- Informal discussion with the principal
- Counseling within the schools resources
- Counseling with outside agencies
- Segregated play space
- Formal meeting with all parties concerned



Records will be kept of ongoing complaints/grievances in order to

- Assess a pattern of behaviour
- Inform later decisions that may need to be made
- Inform outside agencies that might need to be employed.

In all complaints/grievance situations, the principles of Matthew 18 will be employed, 'Take your complaint directly to the individual concerned – take your complaint with another person – bring the complaint to the whole body.'

The following step process is useful and highlights the correct process/procedure in working through concerns/grievances:

- Take it to the student/individual
- Take it to a/the fellow student
- Take it to a teacher/staff member
- Take it to the principal – inform parents
- Take it to the school council
- Take it to outside bodies
 - Lutheran Education Office
 - AISSA
 - Government Body, FACS etc

As a general rule, these steps will be sequential and will only (should only) progress to the 'next level' if one party is dissatisfied with the outcome or processes that have occurred at that particular level.

Bases of discretion

1. Where possible complaints/grievances will be dealt with informally and pastorally. At Immanuel Gawler we believe that in many instances students are not equipped to solve their own problems and so need adult help and intervention.
2. Immanuel Gawler employs the practices of restorative justice in that, where possible, all parties involved will meet to resolve a conflict mutually.
3. The principal (or their delegate) will decide on the timing and nature of notification of the issue to parent/caregivers.
4. Early in the process it should be clearly established if the issue is raising a concern or lodging a formal grievance. In all cases a determination should be made as to whether or not the child protection policy needs to be enacted.