



# Complaints Resolution Policy

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| <b>Policy Number:</b>    | 203   |   |
| <b>Status:</b>           | Approved  |   |
| <b>Applies to:</b>       | All stakeholders  |   |
| <b>Supersedes:</b>       | Grievance Policy (staff); Complaints Policy (Parents and Students) Nov 2012 |   |
| <b>Authorised by:</b>    | Board   | <b>Date of Authorisation:</b> 20 <sup>th</sup> April 2017 |
| <b>Review:</b>           | Annually  | <b>Next Review Date:</b> May 2020                         |
| <b>Policy Custodian:</b> | Board   |   |

Please do not retain hard copies of policies for a length of time; the latest version will be available on line.

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## PURPOSE

This policy aims to ensure that Samford Valley Steiner School has robust systems and processes to manage complaints and grievances and deal with them in a way that is responsive, efficient, effective, ethical, fair and economical.

This policy affirms and supports the right of stakeholders to provide feedback and to have complaints heard and actioned where appropriate. It recognises that feedback, both positive and negative, is a key driver for school improvement.

## DEFINITIONS

SVSS: Samford Valley Steiner School  
 CRS: Complaints Resolution System  
 EA: Education Administrator  
 EDM: Economic Development Manager

## WHEN IT APPLIES

This policy applies to all staff, students, parents and community members when a conflict or complaints situation has arisen that cannot be resolved immediately by direct dialogue between involved parties.

## PRINCIPLES

SVSS acknowledges that complaints:

- are inevitable and must be managed effectively
- are about accountability
- can lead to growth and improvement

SVSS:

- acknowledges the right of individual stakeholders, parents, students, staff and community members, to make complaint when dissatisfied with a service or event
- supports staff to be 'feedback friendly' and not defensive or negative about feedback and complaints
- recognises that properly handled and analysed, complaints and feedback help the school to improve processes and can lead to individual and institutional growth and development

**POLICY****Complaints Resolution System**

SVSS has a tiered Complaints Resolution System and processes for handling complaints at different levels; frontline and formal grievance. All complaints are to be handled with the model indicated in Appendix A: SVSS Complaints Resolution System and Procedures, and not otherwise unless special circumstances exist that prevent the management system being enacted.

**Visibility and Access**

The CRS includes a proactive approach and provides appropriate mechanisms and strategies for ensuring that all stakeholders can readily determine the following:

- where to make complaint
- how to make complaint
- what information is required when making a complaint
- what assistance is available to people who wish to make a complaint
- how a stakeholder can expect their complaint to be managed; including time frames, progress reports and final advice
- where complainants can access this written complaints management policy and procedures.

**Responsiveness**

All staff are to be made aware of the content of the policy and procedures and these shall be made available on the school's intranet.

All complaints should be dealt with in a timely manner according to the time frames laid down in the CRS procedures document; timeframes for resolution are to be monitored and complainants are entitled to reasonable progress reports.

All complaints are to be tracked, recorded in writing and filed in the format and location set out in the CRS procedures document.

**Assessment and Action**

Complaints are to be dealt with fairly and objectively.

Natural justice is to be observed wherever practicable.

Complaints should be resolved with as little formality and disputation as possible.

Mediation, negotiation and informal resolution are optional alternatives to investigation.

Privacy and confidentiality are to be observed as far as possibly.

Senior staff reviewing a complaints decision will have the authority to re-make decisions or provide another appropriate remedy according to and within the bounds of the CRS.

Although harder to resolve, anonymous complaints will be treated on their merits like any other.

**Remedies**

Appropriate remedies are to be offered that are fair to all stakeholders and restoration of relationship should be a priority where possible.

Remedies should aim to restore the complainant to the position they would have been in had the complaint not been necessary; a stakeholder should suffer no adverse treatment as a result of making a complaint.

The remedy sought by the complainant is always to be considered as a first option

Informal resolution and compromise are to be attempted wherever possible

Similar remedies are to be offered to all persons in the same situation.

### **Feedback**

Complainants will be advised of outcomes as soon as possible after a decision is made.

Complainants will be given reasons for negative decisions and advised of any available internal review options if appropriate.

Any internal problem revealed by a complaint will be communicated to the area/persons responsible for possible systemic improvement and the appropriate Senior Management person will be responsible for following this up.

### **Monitoring Effectiveness**

The CRS will have mechanisms to identify complaint trends and outcomes.

The CRS will have mechanisms to monitor the time taken to resolve complaints.

The CRS will be reviewed annually for effectiveness by the Director.

## **REVIEW OF POLICY**

A review of this policy will be carried out on a periodic basis (eg. annually). The criteria against which evaluation will be based may include:

- Percentage of positive vs negative complaints resolutions
- Employee and community perceptions of the policy.

## **CHECKLIST**

### **All Employees**

- Ensure that they are familiar with this policy and associated procedure documents.
- Ensure that they respond to complaints in accordance with this policy and associated procedures
- Seek help from Management if unsure of how to manage a complaint received

### **EA and EDM**

- Support staff in managing complaints in accordance with this policy and procedures
- Alert the Director if a complaint has arisen that has been escalated to EA or EDM level and update accordingly

### **Director**

- Support staff in managing complaints in accordance with this policy and procedures
- Oversee the resolution of complaints that are not resolved at teacher or supervisor level
- Advise Board if complaint is unresolved after 28 days

**ADMINISTRATIVE  
ISSUES**

All written complaints should be filed in the appropriate location on the server as specified in the procedures document

Comprehensive notes should be taken and kept in relation to all complaints received and filed in the appropriate location on the server as specified in the procedures document

**CONTACTS**

The Director is the appropriate person to direct questions regarding this policy to.

**REFERENCES**

The Ombudsman’s Guide to Developing an Effective Complaints Management System

The Ombudsman’s Complaints Management Fact Sheets

The Ombudsman’s Checklist

**LINKED POLICIES OR  
DOCUMENTS**

Samford Valley Steiner School Complaints Resolution System and Procedures

Samford Valley Steiner School Complaints Resolution Referral Form