

### 4.2.1 Feedback and Complaints - School

<b>Revision</b>	1.0		
<b>Issue Date</b>			
<b>Issue Date</b>	June 2024	<b>Review Date</b>	June 2025
<b>Responsible Position</b>	Principal	<b>Approval Authority</b>	Board
<b>Scope</b>	This policy applies to all staff of Warrah Specialist School		
<b>Related Documents and References</b>	<p><b>Code of Conduct for Care and Protection of Children</b> –Sets out information about the standards of behaviour expected of all.</p> <p><b>WHS Policy</b> – identifies the obligations imposed by Work Health and safety legislation on the School and staff members.</p>		

#### Introduction

This procedure covers the handling of complaints made about Warrah Specialist School. This may include services provided by the School, teachers, other Warrah employees, contractors and volunteers.

This procedure does not extend to personal grievances between parents, guardians or other members of the School community. See Related Policies for more information about this specific circumstance.

When a person wants to make a complaint or provide other feedback, Warrah Specialist School will ensure the person’s views are welcomed, acknowledged, respected and well-managed. The School will ensure the person is kept informed throughout the process and is given an opportunity to participate in the complaint resolution process.

Complaints and feedback help us to

- enhance participant satisfaction and the delivery of positive outcomes,
- improve relationships with students, families, carers and other stakeholders,
- improve service performance, planning and processes,
- ensure accountability, fairness and equity.

#### Commitment to handling complaints and feedback

We are committed to

- handling complaints and feedback in a fair and open way,
- ensuring that our systems follow principles of procedural fairness, natural justice and comply with NES standards,
- resolving issues quickly and to the satisfaction of everyone involved.

When a complaint is made, or feedback given, the person raising an issue can expect

- to be treated with respect and supported throughout the process,
- to be kept fully informed about what to expect while their issue is being resolved,
- that the process is fair and transparent,
- to be provided with the reason for any final decisions,
- to have their privacy respected,
- to be provided with information and support that takes into consideration the person’s individual and cultural needs.

## Procedures

### Feedback

Feedback can be any suggestion or recommendation for changes or improvements to the School. Feedback may also be in the form of compliment about a person or the way the School is operated.

Feedback is not a complaint or negative response to a service the School provides, Feedback is handled through various channel and policies within the organisation and can include

- special recognition of staff who have been complimented,
- use of Warrah’s continuous improvement processes to incorporate a suggestion.

### Whistleblowing

This procedure does not extend to complaints that are whistleblowing disclosures. The procedure for processing whistleblowing complaints is dealt with in Warrah Specialist School’s whistleblowing policy.

A whistleblowing disclosure is one that

- involves alleged misconduct, an improper state of affairs or circumstance, or illegal activity,
- is made to a senior staff member, an officer of the School, the School’s auditor or a person who the School has authorised to collect such disclosures.

#### Related Policies

Complaints about reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with the School’s Child Protection Policy.

Complaints regarding a grievance between staff members about work matters, including work relationships and decisions made by other staff members that impact on their work, are addressed in accordance with the School’s Staff Grievance Policy.

Complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying between staff are addressed in accordance with the School’s Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Statement.

### Confidentiality

All parties involved in complaints handling are required to maintain appropriate confidentiality, including in relation to handling and storing records.

- The Principal will regard all complaints and any subsequent information or action as private and confidential and relevant policies and procedures will apply.
- The number of people required to reach a satisfactory resolution will be kept to a minimum.
- A person making a complaint or raising an issue may object at any time to specific individuals who may be a part of the resolution process.

### Complaints

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the School about an educational or operational matter including personal misconduct, relating to services provided by the School or the behaviour or decisions of a staff member, contractor or volunteer.

If a person has a concern about the conduct of a staff member they should raise the issue immediately to a representative of the School. If a complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed in accordance with the School’s Child Protection Policy. Complainants are not required to assess whether their concern meets the threshold of reportable conduct before making a complaint. Any concern about a child’s wellbeing may be reported under this policy.

The School will seek to resolve complaints informally where possible, but acknowledges that in some cases

a person may wish to make a formal complaint. Regardless of the severity of the complaint or feedback, all issues are taken seriously and are recognised an opportunity to improve.

### **What can a complaint be about?**

Complaints may be about anything that is unsatisfactory in the mind of the person making the complaint. This can include

- when a person indicates they have an issue with the quality or delivery of their services or supports and are seeking resolution.
- a problem or concern about something that is worrying to a person or something a person is unhappy about.
- any aspect of the School.
- anything any person feels is unsatisfactory, unfair or unreasonable.

### **Who may make a complaint?**

Anyone, whether they have a direct relationship to the School or not, may make a complaint or provide feedback. If they wish, their feedback will be treated anonymously. However, persons making a complaint or providing feedback will be encouraged to provide full contact details so they can be included in the resolution process.

### **Raising a complaint**

Minor issues may be raised directly with the person involved. However, if a person does not feel comfortable doing so, or the matter is one where it may not be appropriate to do so, a complaint may be made to the Principal of the School. Any complaint about the conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the Principal in the first instance.

Should the matter not be resolved through informal processes, a person may raise the matter formally with the School. A formal complaint may be made in writing to the *Principal*, via the School's website at <https://warrahspecialistschool.nsw.edu.au/contact-us/> .

The following information will be required to property investigate and resolve the issue:

- date of incident,
- time of incident,
- location of incident
- any witnesses present to the incident,
- a full description of what and who was involved,
- any photos or evidence,
- full contact details if possible.

The Principal or the Assistant Principal will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing as soon as practicable.

Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the Principal, the complaint should be made in writing via email to the Chair of the Board at [smalin@warrah.org](mailto:smalin@warrah.org). In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the *Principal* should be read as referring to the Chair of Board.

### **Handling complaints**

#### Assessing a complaint

The Principal will assess the complaint and determine

- whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this policy, or is a staff grievance or

reportable conduct matter which are dealt with by the relevant policies (Section 2, Related Policies,

- the priority of the complaint is based on the urgency or seriousness of the matter raised,
- whether the School may be required to report the matter to the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG), Police, Department of Communities & Justice (DCJ) or other relevant authorities should the issue relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.

#### Managing a Formal Complaint

The Principal will manage a formal complaint by

- advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the School in relation to the complaint,
- if appropriate, advising the relevant parties of the complaint and providing them with an opportunity to respond,
- collecting any additional information the School considers necessary to assess the complaint,
- making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved,
- advising the complainant, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, in writing of the resolution decision of the Principal and if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken.

There may be circumstances where some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate and the Principal will determine, on a case-by-case basis, the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.

A complainant, or the relevant parties that the complaint is about, may choose to have an appropriate support person present at any meeting with representatives of the School about the complaint.

However, the School maintains sole discretion over the suitability of any support person and may determine that a support person is not suitable as part of the resolution process.

#### Recording and Reviewing a Complaint

All complaints will be recorded in the Complaints Register and all relevant correspondence retained. Accurate written records must be kept of all communication related to the complaint process. This includes notes taken of conversations between the parties that relate to management of the complaint and all agreed actions and decisions made in relation to the complaint. All records must be marked "Confidential".

Documentation of the complaint must regard the following:

- Only people who are directly involved in the complaint, or in helping to resolve it, are to have access to information about the complaint.
- All documentation of complaints will be held by the Principal and Quality Manager.
- Complaint documentation is to be kept separate from client or staff files.
- The privacy and confidentiality of parties will be respected to the extent practicable and appropriate; accurate records will be kept by each staff member dealing with the complaint, including recording of reasons for all significant decisions.
- The Principal will complete a Complaint Record upon receiving the complaint.
- Once the complaint is finalised the Principal will forward a copy of the complaint record to the Quality Manager who will ensure the complaint has been finalised and recorded appropriately.
- All details, actions, agreements and resolutions relating to the complaint will be recorded on the Complaint Record, signed by those involved and kept securely in the Complaints Register.

- The Quality Manager will ensure the complaint is logged in the Complaints Register.
- The Complaints Register will be reviewed bi-monthly. This review will be undertaken by the Quality Manager for the purpose of improving quality of service. This review will be tabled at each Board Meeting.

**Contact**

Any questions or concerns about this procedure should be directed to the Principal.