

Concerns, Complaints & Disputes Management Policy

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Introduction

At Hensman Street Elementary, the School Board, staff and volunteers (**HSE Staff**) believe that a child's enjoyment of learning is based on a culturally safe partnership between parents, students and the School. Hensman Street Elementary welcomes suggestions and comments from parents and takes complaints and concerns raised, seriously. The School strives to ensure parents understand -

- how to make a complaint;
- that complaints will be responded to promptly and thoroughly; and
- that action will be taken when appropriate.

What is a concern, complaint and dispute?

A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the school about its services, decisions, actions or those of its staff, or about the complaint management process itself.

It may also be raised as a "I am concerned..." Irrespective of the nature of the '**concern**' raised, it should be treated with the same respect and attention as for a matter that is described as a 'complaint'.

A complaint may be made about the school as a whole, a specific area in the school (e.g. administration, teaching) or about an individual member of staff.

A **dispute** is a pursued unresolved complaint that has been escalated, either internally and/or externally to the school.

How do I make a complaint?

For adults:

Firstly, the School recommends you make an appointment with your child's teacher. If the complaint is regarding an area of the school such as administration or the school as a whole, the School recommends you make an appointment with the Principal. Should the issue be about a member of staff, please contact the Principal. Should the issue be about the Principal please contact the President of the School Board (as this role is voluntary, the school recommends sending an email to president@hensmanstreet.wa.edu.au, to ensure a timely response).

Be as clear as possible about the primary purpose of the meeting. At the meeting, discuss your issue/area of concern. Please note these meetings are completely confidential and any complaint will be treated with respect, in a confidential manner.

Upon receipt of a complaint (verbal or written), HSE Staff must add the complaint to the Complaints Register with any accompanying notes (including notes from verbal conversations) and confidentially inform the Principal. This includes details of any anonymous complaint received. Please note records concerning students need to be kept for seven years after the student reaches eighteen years of age.

If the complaint or concern relates to child abuse prevention, you should follow the for immediate response contact the Police if the child is in danger, or follow mandatory reporting guidelines and contact the Department of Child Protection and Family Services (DCPFS), details staff making these reports shall be able to maintain their privacy and confidentiality.

For Children:

If a complaint is made to a member of HSE Staff by a child, the parent or guardian must attend the meeting, and the Principal must ensure it is a safe and secure environment for the child, which must include using

language that the child understands and is culturally safe.

All complaints will be handled confidentially and in a timely manner.

What will happen next?

In most cases, an issue or concern which is raised, should be resolved at the meeting immediately and to your satisfaction. The resolution could be;

- Knowing that changes have been made, and that matters will be different in the future
- Knowing that the School is now aware of an issue/concern
- Feeling that your concern has been considered seriously
- An outcome which may be different from the one you sought, but which you perceive to be well-considered
- A considered letter
- An apology

Upon resolution of a complaint, the complaint will be analysed to identify causes and systematic failures to ensure continuous improvement. If this resolved complaint results in improvements or changes within the School or its policies, will be communicated to the School community via Educa.

All complaints will be in a timely manner with the resolution being followed up. All complaints lodged stored on the complaints register located in the secure file on the schools data management system. Once a resolved these details will be kept for 7 years after the child finishes schooling, unless advised to be released by the Director General.

What if I am not satisfied with the outcome?

The School's primary aim is that you will feel satisfied with the outcome, or at least that your concerns have been fully and fairly considered. Please see below for a flow chart of the full Complaints Management Process.

Hensman Street Elementary recognises and acknowledges your entitlement to make a complaint. Through communication and cooperation, the School Board and staff are dedicated to working together successfully for your child and their best interests.

Standard 9 of the Registration Standards for Non-Government Schools sets out an appropriate complaint handling system and requires the school's compliance with these standards. This is monitored by the Director General who has authority to respond to instances of non-compliance.

The Director General of the Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that the school observes the registration standards, including the standard about its complaints handling system. Any student, parent or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how the school has dealt with a complaint. Information is available on the Department of Education website. While the Director General may consider whether the school has breached the registration standards they do not have power to intervene in a complaint or override the school's decision.

In rare circumstances, the School may be required to refer a complaint to relevant authorities, and the complainant must cooperate with the School and any authority. In relation to an unresolved complaint against a member of staff, the Principal may take action in accordance with employment law.

Complaints Management Process

For adults:

Talk to the teacher.

- Chat after class
- Meeting
- Telephone Call

Most issues should be resolved at this stage

If the issue is not resolved

Address an email or letter to Principal – tsteers@hensmanstreet.wa.edu.au

Information should include

- The issue
- Possible solutions

The Principal will meet with the teacher concerned, review all documentation and attempt to reach a solution

- You will then be asked to attend the meeting with the Teacher and Principal to discuss the issue and solutions. You may bring a supportive friend if needed.

If the issue is still not resolved

Address an email or letter to board@hensmanstreet.wa.edu.au & President-
president@hensmanstreet.wa.edu.au

Information should include

- The issue
- What has been done to try and resolve the issue
- Why you feel the issue hasn't been resolved
- Possible solutions

The Board will call an emergency meeting with the appropriate staff members and complainant, discuss the issue and possible solutions. They will look at all reports/ communication that have taken place and work towards a solution/action. Relevant details will be put in writing.

If the issue is still not resolved it becomes an official 'Dispute'

Hensman Street Elementary recommends referring the issue to an independent arbiter (Henderson Power and Associates – 7/3 Ednah Street Como WA 6152 phone 9474 5777). Issues unresolved at Board of Director level can be referred to a mutually agreed arbitrator with assurance both parties will accept the arbiter's final decision.

Further action

At all stages of the resolution procedure, the complainant should be reminded that they can seek legal advice if they wish, especially at the point where the school has done all it can to reach a resolution.

If as the complainant, you believe the schools complaint process has not followed the relevant standard (Section 9 of the Registration Standards for Non-Government Schools), as determined by the Minister for Education, you may raise your issue with the Director General by contacting them directly on lisa.rodgers@education.wa.edu.au.

For Children:

