



# STUDENT GRIEVANCE POLICY

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## INTRODUCTION

St Paul's College is committed to resolving all grievances through effective, fair and impartial procedures. While members of staff are professional educators, whose aim it is to promote the learning and personal development of all students and help them achieve their personal best, it is acknowledged that there may be occasions when a student perceives that:

- he has received an unfair or inappropriate response to a behavioural issue; or
- an academic result does not correspond to the level of learning put into a task.

In cases such as these, the need to have in place a set of procedures by which a student may seek review of that matter is essential. One of the key aims of this Policy is to maintain good pastoral relations between all parties.

This Grievance Policy provides a process by which grievances can be resolved. It is based on the principle and procedures of *Due Process*, which include among other things:

- informing the community about the working of the Policy
- providing all parties with a fair and complete hearing
- enacting consequences which are consistent, fair and commensurate with the seriousness of the matter
- having in place a system of appeal.

## PRINCIPLES

Underpinning the Grievance Policy lies a commitment on the part of the school community to the following key principles, that:

- All members of the school community will be informed of the Grievance Policy and its procedures.
- The focus for resolution of a grievance will be upon an issues, not an individual.
- All individuals will be ensured fairness and impartiality.
- All individuals will have a right to present their case fully and openly, and without fare of retribution.
- All individuals will have a right to confidentiality.
- Grievance issues will be dealt with one at a time.

- Grievances are to be lodged within a period of five days from formal notification of an academic result or a consequence.
- Resolution of any grievance will be achieved as quickly as possible.
- Parents / Guardians will be kept informed, where applicable, of matters pertaining to the grievance.
- Grievance resolution will involve the minimum number of people.
- Parties will be encouraged to resolve the matter together in the first instance.

## **ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE**

### **Process**

#### **Stage 1**

On receiving a grade or mark that a student believes, in all honesty, fails to recognise the level of learning that he put into a task, the student can choose from the following 3 options:

- Speak with the teacher who assessed the piece of work.
- Seek advice from his Pastoral Care Teacher, parents, Youth Worker, etc.
- Take no action.

In most cases, speaking with the teacher about the reasons why a mark / grade was given will mutually resolve the issue for both parties. The school does recognise that, on some occasions, the subjectivity of the matter may inhibit resolution.

The school advocates discussion between the two parties as the first step in the process of resolution.

*This Grievance Policy is based upon students, who believe that they have a legitimate grievance, making a reasonable attempt, in good faith, to resolve the issue on an informal basis by discussion with the other party to the grievance in the first instance.*

#### **Stage 2**

If the issue remains unresolved, the student has 2 further options:

- Take no further action.
- Speak with the relevant Curriculum Coordinator.

In the case of an academic matter, the student should bring the assessed task with him to the Curriculum Coordinator. The Curriculum Coordinator will discuss the matter with the student and determine whether the grievance may be valid and whether or not the appropriate steps have been taken to resolve the matter.

It is the responsibility of the Curriculum Coordinator to notify the relevant teacher(s) of the matter at the earliest possible time – after taking into account matters of confidentiality, etc.

The Curriculum Coordinator, after negotiation with the subject teacher, may opt to have the task re-assessed by him / herself or appoint another person to assess the communication regarding the outcome of the review. Once the task has been re-assessed, liaison between the Curriculum Coordinator and the teacher will occur before the decision is communicated to the student. In normal circumstances, the issue will be resolved at this stage.

### **Stage 3**

The Curriculum Coordinator may elect at Stage 2 to involve the Head of Curriculum who will make a decision on the matter. The decision will be based on an impartial / dispassionate, responsive and equitable handling of the issue.

## **BEHAVIOURAL GRIEVANCE**

### **Process**

#### **Stage 1**

On receiving a consequence to a matter of behaviour that a student believes to be unreasonable, the student can choose from the following 3 options:

- Speak with the teacher who issued the consequence (behaviour).
- Seek advice from his Pastoral Care Teacher, parents, Youth Worker, etc.
- Take no action.

The school advocates discussion between the two parties as the first step in the process of resolution.

*This Grievance Policy is based upon students, who believe that they have a legitimate grievance, making a reasonable attempt, in good faith, to resolve the issue on an informal basis by discussion with the other party to the grievance in the first instance.*

#### **Stage 2**

If the issue remains unresolved, the student has 2 further options:

- Take no further action.
- Speak with the Teams Coordinator (Middle School), House Leader (Senior School).

Where the matter concerns a behavioural / pastoral issue, the student should bring a written statement of his perceived recollection of the matter with him to the Teams Coordinator / House Leader.

The Teams Coordinator / House Leader will speak with the student, at which point the student may choose to proceed no further. The issue will be deemed to have been resolved.

The Teams Coordinator / House Leader may wish to mediate a conference between the teacher and student. Where a consequence for behaviour is amended, the Teams Coordinator / House Leader would speak in the first instance to the issuing teacher.

It is the responsibility of the Teams Coordinator / House Leader to notify the relevant teacher(s) of the matter at the earliest possible time – after taking into account matters of confidentiality, etc.

It is the responsibility of both the Curriculum Coordinator and Teams Coordinator / House Leader to monitor student grievances and keep relevant teachers informed of developments in matters that pertain to them. On occasions, there may be need for a Curriculum Coordinator or Teams Coordinator / House Leader to speak among themselves on matters relating to a student grievance. This may be done either before or after the grievance is resolved, depending on circumstances.

### **Stage 3**

If the issue still remains unresolved, the student has a further 2 options:

- Take no further action.
- Speak with the Head of Middle School / Head of Senior School.

After any investigation, the Head of Middle School / Head of Senior School will make a decision on the issue. The decision will be based on an impartial / dispassionate, responsive and equitable handling of all issues.

In some extenuating circumstances, there may be a need to seek advice or clarification from an external agency in relation to a particular matter.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTIES IN GRIEVANCE ISSUES**

St Paul's College Grievance Policy documents the responsibilities of the major parties in the grievance process as:

#### **Student**

- Speak to others in a calm and respectful manner
- Specify the issue or enquiry in a calm way and within the specified time
- Not knowingly present an unjustified complaint

- Listen to advice and fair comment
- Have the right to choose the procedural course of action.

#### **Teacher**

- Listen to the student's grievance
- Be objective and fair in dealing with the matter
- Provide appropriate justification for the result / issue / consequence
- Re-assess issue if deemed appropriate and fair
- Recommend to the student an appropriate pathway for proceeding if the matter still remains unresolved.

#### **Curriculum Coordinator / Teams Coordinator (Middle School) / House Leader (Senior School)**

- Listen to the student's grievance
- Speak with the subject / consequence-issuing teacher and listen to the teacher's reasoning
- Re-assess or recommend re-assessment of issue, if required
- Call a meeting of the parties, if deemed suitable
- Make decision on the issue and communicate this to the student and the teacher
- Communicate information to any other relevant parties, where the need arises
- Refer the matter on to the Head of Middle School / Head of Senior School / Head of Curriculum.

#### **Head of Middle School / Head of Senior School / Head of Curriculum**

- Listen to the concerns of all parties on any issue
- Collect all necessary information relating to the grievance
- Review all steps taken
- Interview necessary parties
- Make a final decision in relation to the matter
- Recommend the decision to the Principal, in serious matters
- Recommend final decision to external agency, where appropriate.