



**THE GLENLEIGHDEN
SCHOOL**

Addressing Parent Concerns Policy

2005

NB If parent concerns relate to allegations of student harm, please refer to the
Child Protection Policy



CHI.L.D./Glenleighden

ADDRESSING PARENT CONCERNS



DEFINITIONS

A *child* is a person under 18 years of age.

A *student* is any person regardless of age who is enrolled at The Glenleighden School and/or attending The Glenleighden School as a CHI.L.D. Outreach Program client.

GUIDELINES

In complying with these policies and procedures, CHI.L.D. Association/The Glenleighden School will be guided by the following.

Natural Justice

The principles of natural justice will apply to decisions to be made under this Policy. The two fundamental principles of natural justice are:

- That those making a decision are not biased.
- That nobody should be condemned unless they are given prior notice of the allegations against them and they have a fair opportunity to be heard.

Process

It is important to make the lodging of a complaint easy.

Confidentiality

Each person who has access to information regarding complaints or concerns has an obligation to observe appropriate confidentiality. The Glenleighden School is unable to promise absolute confidentiality since its policies will require disclosing, internally and externally, certain details involved in responding to any complaint.

Criminal Law

Where there are allegations of criminal misconduct, the allegations should be referred to the police. The Principal must refer all allegations of paedophilia to the police, including those from the past, except where the alleged perpetrator is deceased. (Please see Child Protection Policy)

Promptness

All steps under the Policy should be carried out promptly. The Glenleighden School will keep the victim and the alleged perpetrator informed of progress.

Interviews

There will be two representatives of the School present at interviews, where practical.

PARENT ATTENDANCE IN THE SCHOOL PROGRAM

Direct involvement of parents in the school program, as parent-therapists, classroom assistants or volunteers, continues to be a practice at The Glenleighden School, and has been since the school was founded. The nature and extent of this involvement is professionally determined on the needs of individual students as well as the total group of students. Where regular or periodic attendance is determined to be necessary and appropriate, the objectives of attendance will be for:

1. parents to acquire a better understanding of their child's strengths and weaknesses and how these need to be developed;
2. parents to be supported in developing better skills in everyday management of their child through training and observation of school practices;
3. assistance to staff members in order to enhance the implementation of school programs;
4. enriching the program offerings to students through the contribution of a parent's expertise under the request and guidance of the program coordinator.

If regular or periodic attendance is requested by the school, parents are expected to become part of the school team and to function as active contributors, conducting themselves as they would in a professional work environment, and complying with the Association's Code of Conduct, Privacy Policy, WH&S policies and observing confidentiality. At all times, parent-therapists, parent-assistants or parent-volunteers will be guided and supervised by an appropriate staff member.

In the majority of cases, parent attendance on a regular or periodic basis will only be desirable for parents of very young children or children newly enrolled in the school. As children grow older, there is an increasing aim to develop independence in learning and social functioning, and parents are encouraged to support these aims.

The right of parents to be informed about and consulted regarding their child's programs is respected and accommodated through the provision of Parent Information Days, Communication Books and the opportunity for appointments to meet with staff or observe specific sessions. Urgent communications should be directed through Administration, with parents signing in as a visitor and the relevant staff member being contacted by reception.

PROCEDURES FOR ADDRESSING ISSUES OF CONCERN

Parents and guardians are encouraged to have questions relating to their child's program or management. Normally these questions can be addressed through the arrangements in place for parent-staff communication, liaison and consultation.

From time to time, there may be concerns which parents feel cannot be or have not been addressed through these arrangements. The following procedures exist as school policy to ensure that such issues are dealt with appropriately and in the interests of all parties. It is expected, as condition of enrolment, that parents or guardians will observe these procedures.

Grievance Procedures

It is imperative that any issues of concern are addressed promptly. To the fullest extent possible, the issues will be addressed first through the normal arrangements for parent-staff communication which involve:

- direct communication of the concern to the staff member(s) involved in the child's program if the concern relates to a specific program area issue;

- direct communication of the concern to the relevant Level Coordinator if the concern relates to a wider school program or management issue;
- direct communication of the concern to the Principal if the concern relates to a whole school program or management issue or it is felt that a satisfactory outcome has not been achieved through the above procedures.

Staff (including the Principal) to whom the concern is communicated are obligated to:

- record the information conveyed by parents/guardians, including their names and others present at the meeting, the name of the student identified in the statements of concern;
- refer this information, as appropriate, to the Level Coordinator and/or Principal;
- undertake investigations as required and subject to the approval of the Principal;
- report the findings of the investigation to the Principal and to the parents/guardians, recording the outcome, recommended action and the response of the parents/guardians.

If it is still felt, having followed the above procedures, that a satisfactory outcome has not been achieved, then parents/guardians have the option of detailing their concerns, in writing, to the Executive Committee through the CHI.L.D. Association Secretary. It is the policy of the Executive Committee that any approaches to individual Committee members, orally or in writing, will be redirected to the Secretary for the attention of the full Committee. A written statement will be requested before the matter can be considered by the Executive.

All grievances will be investigated by the Executive Committee and, where appropriate procedures have not been followed, the matter will be referred to the Principal for investigation and reporting. The Executive Committee will respond in writing to the parents/guardians with regards to the findings of any investigations.

The Executive Committee and the management of the school are, in the interest of Natural Justice and correct investigation procedures, legally obligated to communicate to any staff member identified that they have been identified, the substance of the grievance and the identity of the persons stating the grievance.

PREVENTING BULLYING

The Glenleighden School has a responsibility to ensure that the rights of its staff and students are safeguarded. These include the right to a teaching and learning environment free from discrimination and harassment.

All schools must take reasonable steps to ensure that all school community members interact in a safe, supportive and caring environment without fear of being bullied, discriminated against or harassed.

By definition bullying is repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person or group by a more powerful person or group of persons. It may be manifested in many ways e.g. harassment (verbal, sexual or psychological), victimisation, alienation, coercion, intimidation, exclusion, ostracism, discrimination.

In any form, bullying is not acceptable behaviour and results in hurt, fear, loss of self-esteem and decreased social effectiveness for the victim. Within the context of The Glenleighden School, bullying is entirely contrary to the ideals of the school.

(Please see Child Protection Policy for further information and procedures with regards to bullying of students).

(Please see Anti-Bullying Policy for further information and procedures with regards to bullying or harassment of any member of the CHI.L.D. Association community, including staff and parents).