



INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL SUVA

World Class Citizens ~ Lifelong Learners

ISS Grievance Policy

Grievance

At International School Suva, we value all of our stakeholders, including students, parents and staff. The school values these people and believes that a process for the acceptance, monitoring and resolution of conflict, complaints and grievances is in the best interests of maintaining a harmonious, supportive and productive school community. This policy will provide a mechanism for resolving grievances in a simple, well defined manner in a supportive, cooperative environment with the utmost confidentiality and sensitivity.

Policy Category:			
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Key Words:	Grievance, student protection, harassment, bullying, behaviour management.		

1. Policy:

The school is open to receiving grievances and approaches them in a positive manner, committing to the fair resolution of all complaints at all levels. ISS has a commitment to transparency of process and impartiality in handling complaints and to ensure appropriate resources are in place to fully accommodate the procedure for handling complaints.

A ***grievance*** is any concern or complaint about any act, behaviour, omission, situation or decision that someone thinks is unfair or unjustified. The ***complainant*** is the person who has the grievance and may include any member of staff, employee, parent or student, the ***respondent*** is the person against whom the grievance is brought. ***Confidentiality*** of all complaints is taken seriously at all steps in the process of their resolution. Complainants and respondents have a duty to uphold strict confidentiality during the grievance procedure for the safety and consideration of others that may be involved. Any breach of this confidentiality is a serious issue worthy of disciplinary action if warranted. Although there is a commitment to confidentiality of all complaints, there may be situations where it is not possible to uphold a person's right to confidentiality. For e.g. a person's healthy and safety may be at risk, or the grievance may involve criminal activity. In these circumstances, the school will always prioritise the safety of the students, staff and wider community.

Grievances will always be resolved as quickly as possible; however the time frame for resolution will depend on the complexity, nature and scope of the grievance. All grievances must be heard within six months.

2. Procedure:

The procedure is a four step process of which the grievance may be resolved at any of these steps. (refer to Appendix A)

Steps 1 and 2 comprise the informal process as, at this stage, the outcome of the dispute is still within the hands of the parties. Steps 3 and 4 comprise the formal process as at this stage, the issue is determined by a third party.

At the informal stage, the student, parent and staff complainant must first contact the respondent in question. E.g. Student complainant to class teacher, parent complainant to class teacher and staff member to staff member/head of school.

3. Step 1 – Informal Discussions

Grievances are often simple misunderstandings that are easily resolved via effective communication. Every grievance must be addressed via informal discussion in the first instance and will not be able to progress to the

next step unless both parties have first attempted to discuss the issue. The complainant should approach the respondent and explain their grievance in a non threatening manner using effective communication.

4. Step 2 – Informal Mediation

If communication breakdown occurs at this first informal discussion, the complainant is encouraged to approach the next in line. E.g. Parent to class teacher; then parent approaches the head of school. Staff to head of school; then staff member approaches the principal etc. This is the utilization of a neutral third party to help resolve the grievance by isolating the main themes and problems and encouraging parties to create solutions, to clarify issues and sequences of events, to encourage parties to work together to reach a mutually acceptable solutions and to encourage both parties to think of solutions at an early stage.

At this step, the complainant should approach the contact officer next in line to put their concern in writing including dates, times and places of the grievance, perceived problem from the perspective of the complainant, a written account of the progress of the informal discussions that were held between the parties, suggestions to possible solutions and whether the problem is systemic or recurring. This is give to the Head of School/or Principal of who will then approach the respondent within two days to request they attend informal mediation to resolve the issue. The respondent will be shown the written complaint to allow the respondent to supply objections, their perceptions and their suggestions of possible solutions. The Head of School/or the Principal oversees the process and conducts the mediation. The respondent and complainant will be encouraged to explain to one another their perspective of the grievance and how it affected them. The two parties are then to suggest and agree on negotiated solutions and a plan of follow up (after a negotiated period of time), whilst the head of school/or principal remain neutral in their dealings before and during mediation.

5. Step 3 – Formal Resolution

If a resolution cannot be reached through the informal process of discussion and/or mediation or if one party is unhappy with the procedure so far, a formal resolution process will ensue. During the formal resolution process, the outcome of the matter is determined by someone other than the parties involved. The formal resolution team should consist of (and include no less than four people):

Student complainant: Head of School/Principal/others selected as below.

Parent complainant: Head of School/Principal/others selected as below.

Staff complainant: Head of School/Principal/others selected as below.

The team may include people such as area or year coordinators, classroom or pastoral teachers, the school counselor and/or elected staff representatives.

If the principal is the subject of the grievance, the investigating team will consist of a minimum of three members of the School Council.

If a member of the School Council is the subject of the grievance, the investigator will be the chairperson of school council or delegate.

In determining the substance of the grievance and recommending a course of action, the team must review the written complaint of the complainant, any written response by the respondent and any written records made previously in mediation. The team may also conduct interview with either party, speak to witnesses and/or peruse any further information that may be provided by complainant and respondent.

From here, the team may either uphold the grievance or dismiss the grievance if it considered that is without merit. The team can also make recommendations they consider appropriate in the circumstances including but not limited to:

- Discipline or reprimands
- Counseling
- A change in policy/procedure of the school

The team must fully document the actions they have decided and the reasons for it and provide to both complainant and respondent a copy of this information.

6. Step 4 – Appeals

Any appeals must be dealt with by a minimum of three members of the School Council. If the principal appeals then the entire school council becomes involved. In all cases the members of the appeals panel will not have heard the original grievance.

The function of the appeal is to determine whether the formal resolution team made a decision that was fair and reasonable in the circumstances based on the materials available to the team at the time of the investigation. The appeal team must consider the written complaint, the written response, records from mediation, written determination and reasons from investigation. The complainant or respondent may provide submissions outlining why the formal resolution team's decision is wrong. These submissions must also be considered in the appeals step. The appeal will either uphold the formal resolution team's decision or overturn the decision and make new recommendations with fully documented actions and the reasons for it. A copy will be provided to both the complainant and the respondent.

7. Policy Maintenance and Responsibility

The school principal and school council are responsible for gauging how well the grievance policy is working. The policy should be reviewed annually, including the collection of feedback from complainants and respondents during that 12 month period.

8. Reference:

2013 Responsible Behaviour Plan for ISS Primary

2013 Behaviour Management Plan for ISS Secondary

2013 ISS Staff Handbook

2013 ISS Sexual Harassment Policy

2008 National Policy on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

2010 Policy in Child Protection of the Ministry of Education and Fiji Schools

2011 Policy of Behaviour Management in Schools – Fiji Ministry of Education

Authority: School Council

Accountability: Principal

Step 1: Informal process

Complainant raises grievance with respondent

Successfully resolved

Informal discussion on 1:1 basis undertaken

Unsuccessful, go to step 2

Step 2: Informal Mediation

Complainant prepares a written account of the grievance and progress of informal discussions.

Successfully resolved

If grievance is against a staff member, report is to go to the relevant Head of School who starts mediation process

If mediation is unsuccessful, or the grievance is against a Head of School, the grievance is taken to the Principal

Successfully resolved

Principal starts mediation process

Unsuccessful, go to step 3

Step 3: Formal Resolution

Grievance upheld

Formal resolution team to hear grievance

Grievance not upheld, may go to step 4

Step 4: Appeal process

Grievance appeal upheld

School Council to hear appeal

Grievance appeal not upheld