Suneden Special School
Parent Grievance Policy

Suneden is committed to providing a clear, and responsive complaints process in order to assist parents and/or students to make a complaint when they are dissatisfied with the quality of educational services provided by the school. Complaints from parents or students will be resolved following the guidelines as outlined in this policy.

This policy does not apply to matters where there are legislated requirements such as Child Protection Responsibilities.

A complaint may be made by a parent or student if they think that the school
- has done something wrong
- has failed to do something it should have
- have acted unfairly or inappropriately

The concern may be about
- the type, level or quality of services
- the behaviour and decisions of staff
- a policy, procedure or practice

Guiding Principles

- Suneden values feedback from parents and students, and therefore all complaints are received in a positive manner.
- Parents making a complaint have the right to be treated with respect, courtesy, and consideration.
- Parents making a complaint have the right to have their complaints listened to, taken seriously, and resolved fairly, reasonably and promptly.
- Parents should have access to appropriate and easily understandable information regarding the complaints process. The Parent Grievance Policy will therefore be available on the school website to help clarify the process for parents.
- Parents have the right to involve a support person in meetings about the complaint
- Complaints received by parents will be fully and objectively evaluated based on the facts or evidence provided in support of a complaint.
- Complainants will not victimised or suffer negative treatment because they have made a complaint
- Complaints will be resolved at the school level wherever possible.
Making a Complaint

1. Parents are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their child’s teacher first and foremost. Many concerns may be due to a misunderstanding and/or issues relating to communication. In the majority of cases, these can be resolved informally and quickly with a conversation. It is important to maintain positive relationships between parents and staff.

2. If the complaint is not resolved in this way, or if the complaint is of a more serious nature, parents should make a time to discuss their concerns with the Principal.

3. If the complaint is about the Principal, parents may choose to put their complaint in writing to the Chairperson, Suneden Special School Board of Management.

As an independent school, neither the Minister for Education and Child Development nor the Department for Education and Child Development has any power to directly intervene in any complaints relating to the operations of Suneden.

A Complaints Meeting gives parents the opportunity to:

- State the cause of their concern
- Provide complete and factual information about their concern or complaint
- Clarify events
- Be listened to
- Ask for assistance or further information as needed

A Complaints meeting gives staff the opportunity to:

- Consider the other person’s point of view
- Explain their point of view
- Apologise for any behaviour that may have distressed the other party
- Recognise that this is an opportunity to change behaviour that is perceived as unsuitable, or is hurtful to another
- Have realistic and reasonable expectations about possible outcomes/remedies

All attendees at a complaints meeting are expected to treat one another with respect and courtesy. Meetings may be terminated if complainants become angry or aggressive.

Record Keeping

A record of the complaint should include the following details:

- Date when issue was first raised
- Name of parent(s)
- Name of student(s)
• Identity of person(s) involved
• Name of staff member(s) handling complaint
• Detailed statement of concern/complaint
• Date and time of the issue
• The way the complaint was communicated to the school (i.e. verbally, over the phone, email, letter etc)
• The requested solution for the complaint
• Statement of outcomes / procedures applied
• Time frame for reporting on the outcomes of any investigation
• Recommendations for improvements to school policy, procedures or practices that would resolve the parent’s complaint and prevent a reoccurrence of similar complaints
• Location of files established as part of office records management

The record should contain clear and accurate notes of conversations with parents, students and staff as documents created during the course of an investigation may need to be produced if the matter is investigated by an external body.

In instances when the complaint is easily resolved over the phone or by front line staff then recording of the issue may not be required. Staff may wish to record a brief note of these issues and the resolution in order to monitor all parent concerns and complaints to identify common or reoccurring issues requiring attention.

**Possible Outcomes**

It is important that possible outcomes are both realistic and reasonable. Depending on the nature of the complaint, there are a range of outcomes which may be considered to resolve the complaint. These include:

• Providing parents with explanations and reasons
• Reaching a compromise solution
• Giving an apology
• Providing a service not previously provided
• Dismissing the complaint if it is in line with workplace policy or government policy
• Reviewing the class program
• Policy development, change or review
• Expert assistance/ Referral to external agencies
• Staff development, training or performance improvement
• Other action to ensure the matter is handled appropriately in the future
Where an issue has been resolved by the school, however the complainant remains dissatisfied, and continues to seek redress, Suneden may:

- discuss the matter with the Board and identify additional strategies to resolve the issue
- advise that no further discussion will be held on the particular issue
- seek the involvement of an external mediator
- seek advice from AISSA
- seek legal advice

Handling of Complaints

Suneden will endeavour to ensure complaints are handled with appropriate discretion and sensitivity, however the school reserves the right to disclose details of a complaint to other persons who in the school’s opinion need to know, in order to facilitate the resolution of the complaint.

This may include:

- People dealing with the complaint
- People advising how the complaint should be handled
- People providing information such as witness statements

Statements provided by those who have witnessed an event and the identity of that person, cannot be guaranteed to be kept confidential as they may need to be disclosed if the matter is taken further.

The exception to this, is where the school agrees either expressly or by implication from the school’s statements and conduct, to receive information and documents in confidence. In such a case, the school has a legal obligation to maintain confidentiality.

It may not always be possible for Suneden to deal with a complaint where a parent wishes to remain anonymous. Parents, however will be assured that the fact of making a complaint will not result in adverse treatment of the complainant or of their child.

Time frame

Suneden will aim to resolve all complaints in an efficient and timely manner. It is important to understand that the time taken to review a complaint will depend on the complexity of the complaint, the need for further enquiries, and the number of people involved.

If the concern or complaint requires a longer amount of time to be resolved, then parents will be kept up to date with the progress.
**Staff Training**

The Principal and other key personnel who are responsible for handling complaints/grievances will be appropriately trained in this area. This includes training on active listening, questioning and negotiation skills, mediation, observation, recording and reporting skills.

The Principal and other key personnel may also need to provide support to staff when complaints have been made against them.

Policy updated September 2015                                      Review date: September 2018

*Associated Documents:*

- Handling Complaints (AISSA 2015)