



**BLACKFRIARS**  
PRIORY SCHOOL

# DISPUTE RESOLUTION GRIEVANCE POLICY

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## CONTENTS

Context	3
Purpose	3
Scope	4
Policy	4-7
Related Documents/Links	7
Policy Implementation	7
Policy Review	7
Approval Authority / Policy Owner	7

## CONTEXT

As the only school founded by the Dominican Friars in Australia, Blackfriars Priory School remains faithful to the search for Truth (Veritas) as lived and taught over the last 800 years by the Order of Preachers (Dominicans), and exemplified by Saint Dominic, our Founder, and Saint Albert the Great, our Patron.

Saint Dominic's commitment to study continued throughout his life. The pursuit of knowledge was not for its own sake but to better understand God's creation and its use in the works of the Order has continued through the centuries. Today, Dominicans can be found throughout the world.

An early member of the Dominicans was Saint Albert the Great. He became a lecturer, scientist, philosopher and Bishop. After his death he was recognised as a Doctor of the Church. The Doctor Universalis – The Universal Doctor, in recognition of his extraordinary genius and extensive knowledge, for he studied every branch of learning known at his time. His quest for knowledge saw him study everything he could find as it was through learning about creation, that he was able to know more about the creator, God, and then hand on that information to all he taught.

The lifelong commitment of Saint Dominic and Saint Albert to discovering and applying Truth to hand on to others remains at the core of the Blackfriars teaching pedagogy and its community. Blackfriars is built upon the Four Pillars of Dominican Life: Prayer, Study, Community Life and Service.

## PURPOSE

The School is committed to resolving grievances through effective, fair and impartial procedures. While teachers are professional educators whose aim it is to promote the learning and personal development of all students and help 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 policy provides a process by which grievances can be resolved. It is based on the principle and procedures of procedural fairness, which includes amongst other things:

- informing the School 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; and
- having in place a system of appeal.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all members of the Blackfriars Priory School community.

## POLICY

Underpinning this policy is a commitment by the School Community to the following key principles:

- all members of the School Community will be informed of the policy and its procedures
- the focus for resolution of a grievance will be upon an issue, 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 fear of retribution or victimisation
- all individuals will have a right to confidentiality
- all individuals will have a right to have a support person present at any meetings held to discuss a grievance
- grievance issues will be dealt with one at a time
- grievances are to be actioned 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/caregivers will be kept informed, where applicable, of matters pertaining to a grievance involving their child
- all individuals will have a right to formally escalate a grievance if the informal process outlined within this Policy does not result in resolution

The School understands that there may be circumstances where grievances arise between:

- the School and Staff
- Staff and other Staff
- the School and Parents
- the School and Students
- Staff and Students
- Students and Students

These may include grievances relating to a grade or consequence issued, conduct or behaviour, transfer or promotion, leave, remuneration, performance, or other School policies.

If a grievance or dispute arises between any of the above parties, the following general process should be followed.

## **Step 1 – Lodging a Complaint**

1. To lodge a complaint, complainants (i.e. students, parents/caregivers, teachers) should:
  - a. Contact the relevant person(s) (e.g. Teacher, Curriculum Leader) and outline (either in writing or verbally) their concerns.
    - i. Clarify the issue – be clear about the topic or issue.
    - ii. Include all the relevant facts relating to the circumstances of the topic or issue.
    - iii. Think about what would be an acceptable outcome.
  - b. Be prepared to speak further with the relevant person(s) to discuss the complaint in more detail, as required.
  - c. Allow the relevant person(s) sufficient time to take the steps required to resolve or address the concerns.

## **Step 2 – Receiving a Complaint**

2. Following receipt of a complaint, the Teacher, Curriculum Leader or other relevant person(s) will endeavour to:
  - a. Acknowledge the complaint in a timely way and make the complainant aware of the complaints response process (as outlined here) including how long the process is expected to take;
  - b. Assess the the complaint to determine the most appropriate course of action in responding to it;
  - c. Follow-up with the complainant for more information and to further discuss the issues and preferred outcome, as necessary;
  - d. As applicable, inform the relevant senior leader of the receipt of the complaint and provide them with the details and further assistance as required;
  - e. Advise the complainant if any delays occur in the timeline;
  - f. Inform the complainant when an outcome has occurred; and
  - g. Maintain adequate written records of the complaint and outcome, along with any supporting documentation, as applicable.
3. Following receipt of a complaint, the Teacher, Curriculum Leader or other relevant person(s) may seek further assistance or advice as necessary and explore appropriate options with the complainant.

In most cases, speaking with the relevant person(s) respectfully will resolve the issue. However, the School does recognize that, on some occasions, the subjectivity of the matter may inhibit resolution. Nonetheless, the School advocates respectful discussion between the two parties as the first step in the process of resolution.

This policy is based upon students, teachers and parents/caregivers 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.

## **Step 3 – Unresolved Complaints**

4. If the issue remains unresolved after discussions with the relevant person(s), discuss the concern with a senior leader (i.e. Head of House, relevant Curriculum Leader/Coordinator, Head of Primary, Deputy Principal (Secondary)).

5. **Note:** the senior leader may ask another suitable staff member to either represent her/him at the meeting, or attend the meeting with her/him.

In the case of a matter involving a complaint by a student about a grade they have received, the student should escalate the unresolved complaint to the Curriculum Leader and provide them with a copy of the assessed task. After discussing the matter with the student and the relevant Teacher(s), the Curriculum Leader may opt to have the task reassessed by himself/herself or appoint another person to assess the task.

#### **Step 4 – Complaint Escalation**

6. If the matter cannot be resolved at the local level, or if the complaint is about the Principal, complainants may contact the Director, Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Adelaide.

#### **Step 5 – Arbitration or Litigation**

7. Whilst the School encourages complainants to follow the above procedures to resolve complaints informally, the School acknowledges that at any stage the complainant may be entitled to pursue a formal complaint through a body such as the Fair Work Commission, Australian Human Rights Commission, or Equal Opportunity Commission. The School encourages any person considering this step to obtain independent legal advice.

#### **Responsibilities of parties**

##### **1. Complainant**

- a. Speak to others in a calm and respectful manner
- b. Specify the issue or enquiry in a calm way and within the specified time
- c. Not knowingly present an unjustified complaint
- d. Listen to advice and fair comment
- e. Have the right to choose the procedural course of action.

##### **2. Party receiving complaint**

- a. Listen to the grievance
- b. Be objective and fair in dealing with the matter
- c. Provide appropriate justification for the result/issue/consequence
- d. Re-assess the issue if deemed appropriate and fair
- e. Recommend to the complainant an appropriate pathway for proceeding if the matter remains unresolved.

##### **3. Executive Team/Positions of Responsibility**

- a. Listen to the grievance
- b. Speak with the relevant person(s) involved and consider their reasoning
- c. Re-assess or recommend re-assessment of issue, if required
- d. Call a meeting of the parties, if deemed suitable
- e. Make a decision on the issue and communicate this to the complainant and relevant person(s)
- f. Communicate information to any other relevant parties, where the need arises
- g. Refer the matter on to relevant coordinator(s) or the Deputy Principal (Secondary).

#### 4. Relevant Executive Team Member

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

### RELATED DOCUMENTS/LINKS

- 1. Department for Education South Australia – [www.education.sa.gov.au](http://www.education.sa.gov.au)

### POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Responsibility for implementation, monitoring and review of the policy is vested at the level of the following roles:

Principal

### POLICY REVIEW

Frequency: Every 2 years

Next review date: August 2022

### APPROVAL AUTHORITY / POLICY OWNER

Blackfriars Priory School