

The BUSY School Ltd

Complaints Handling Procedure

Purpose: The purpose of this procedure is to outline the ways in which The BUSY Schools (TBS) will handle complaints in accordance with TBS Complaints Handling policy to ensure that as far as is reasonably practicable, student, parent, guardian, carer and employee complaints and disputes are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, effective and fair way.

Scope: Students, parents, guardians, carers and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements.

Status: Approved **Supersedes:** VV3/1 August 2022

Authorised by: Board Chair **Date of Authorisation:** V2 25/08/2023

References:

- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations 2019 (Cth)
- Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017
- Australian Education Regulations 2013
- Fair Work Act 2009
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)
- Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)
- The BUSY School (TBS) Work Health and Safety Policy
- TBS Disability Discrimination Policy
- TBS Anti-Discrimination Inclusion Policy
- TBS Privacy Policy

Review Date: Annually **Next Review Date:** 25/08/2024

Policy owner: The BUSY School Ltd - Board of Directors

Submitting feedback

The BUSY School Ltd (TBS) encourages feedback in all forms from members of the school community. Students and parents, guardians and carers are encouraged, wherever possible to discuss and resolve concerns directly with the related person(s). There are various employees including the Campus Principal, Youth Worker and Teachers available to assist resolving issues at an informal level.

A formal complaint must be lodged in writing or via email and can be discussed by contacting the school and arranging an appointment with the Campus Principal. All feedback, in particular formal complaints/grievances, should include a detailed breakdown of the issues and include any supporting materials or evidence that is relevant to the matter. Detailed information relating to the complaint will be sought so that further investigation can be carried out. Information requested may include, names, times, location, people involved, specific concerns and also how the complaint may be resolved.

TBS website has a specific feedback page to provide written feedback or complaint (www.busyschools.qld.edu.au/busy-schools-feedback/). Additionally, feedback can be provided in writing to any employee of the campus, mailed or emailed to the relevant campus address (<https://www.busyschools.qld.edu.au/contacts/>).

Anonymous complaints

Anonymous complaints may be received with no indication of either name or address, or where the complainants say that they do not wish to be identified. These will still be recorded and reported as per the process below.

Members of the school community will be encouraged to provide their names when providing feedback or complaint and will be given reassurance on the issue of confidentiality. If they persist in wishing to remain anonymous, it is at the Campus Principal's discretion as to what action, if any, should be taken, depending on the nature of the complaint.

Complaints from the public about the behaviour of a group of students will be dealt with on a general basis, with reminders to all students about the school's expectations. Depending on the nature of the complaint and if the students can be correctly identified, the Campus Principal will follow up the matter under the TBS Code of Conduct.

Anonymous allegations about child safety should be dealt with as outlined in TBS Child Protection Policy.

Complaint referral

The first point of contact for complaints handling will be the Campus Principal, after which the complaint will be relayed to the appropriate staff to be investigated and addressed.

If the complaint relates to one of the above parties, it will be discussed in the initial contact and the complaint will then be addressed by the next relevant senior officer not involved in the complaint, typically the Executive Principal or CEO.

Acknowledgement of receipt

Upon lodgement of a complaint, the submitter will receive acknowledgement of receipt either in writing or verbally by TBS as soon as possible. Wherever possible, TBS will provide the outcomes of the complaint either in writing or verbally, and/or in the form of a meeting, to the related parties.

In some instances, the matter may be complex and require investigation. During these processes, parties will be kept informed about the progress of their case, and, if a delay to an outcome is expected the related parties will be informed by what date an outcome is expected to be provided. The issue should be dealt with as quickly as possible whilst ensuring that all complaints are treated seriously.

Recording

Upon receipt of a written feedback or complaint, TBS will update the campus register and a file created on a secure server for all relevant material in the case. Accurate records are required because:

- the case may become the cause of legal action in the future
- patterns in records may indicate a need for school improvement, and
- the Campus Principal reports regularly to the Executive Principal and CEO, who will in turn report incidences to the Board of Directors.

The campus register of the complaint should contain the following information:

- date when the issue was raised
- name of parent /carer
- name of student
- brief statement of issue
- filepath of detailed file
- member of staff handling the issue
- statement of outcome reached and the reasons for any decisions.

These files are treated as confidential in accordance with TBS Privacy Policy and can only be accessed by employees in the presence of the Campus Principal, Executive Principal or CEO. The files will contain simple but clear notes of all conversations with parties related to the complaint and a clear statement about the source of dissatisfaction. This applies to conversations, as misunderstandings may arise.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important issue for students, parents/carers and employees. It is essential that any complaint is treated in a confidential manner, with respect and in accordance with TBS Privacy Policy. Parents/ carers may

seek an assurance of confidentiality before expressing their concerns if, for example, they wish to discuss a particular employee but fear their young person may suffer in some way because they have complained.

It will be made clear to all concerned that complaints made by parents/ carers will not reflect adversely on their young person and similarly that complaints raised by students will not rebound on them or on other students.

Any concerns of confidentiality will be discussed sensitively and on an individual basis with the parents/ carers and TBS Complaints Handling Policy will be explained.

It may be possible to deal with a complaint or grievance without naming individuals. However, even if no names are provided, the source of the complaint may be obvious. Depending on the nature of the complaint and on the circumstances, it may be impractical to investigate without identifying the employee or the student. In these circumstances, individuals will be consulted prior to action being taken to ensure they are aware.

Employees may be concerned about complaints that might be damaging to their reputations. Complaints of a sensitive nature will be treated with additional confidentiality and caution and where possible, be known only to themselves and to those who need to be consulted. TBS will provide support for staff against whom a complaint is made, during the investigation period. Following the outcome, staff will be consulted on additional support or development needed.

If there is a situation involving the police, the Campus Principal will take operational responsibility for action at the time and the CEO and Board Chairperson will be informed as soon as possible.

Outcomes/Resolution

Parents/ carers, students, employees and community members may be satisfied a complaint has been resolved by:

- attending a meeting with a relevant member of the school leadership
- receipt of a written response
- feeling their concern has been considered seriously
- knowing that systematic changes have been made at the school
- knowing the school is now alert to a possible concern
- an outcome which may be different from the one they sought, but which they perceive to be well considered
- an apology.

Escalation/Referral

In more serious cases or if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their initial complaint, it can be referred to the Executive Principal or CEO. The complainant/s will be informed of this escalation.

Referral to the Executive Principal or CEO may also occur where the complainant's issue is regarding the conduct of the Campus Principal or where they feel the Campus Principal is not impartial or has not handled their complaint in accordance with TBS Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure. In these incidences the complainant can submit their complaint direct to the Executive Principal or CEO, preferably in writing via the TBS general enquiries email: admin@busyschools.com.au

The principals and processes of TBS Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure will apply to the Executive Principal and/or CEO's handling of the complaint/appeal. This includes the processes of recording the details, requesting additional information, undertaking investigation, keeping confidentiality and informing the complainant of the outcome/resolution. The Executive Principal and/or CEO may:

- decide to uphold the initial recommendations from the first stage of the complaint
- seek agreement on an alternative set of recommendations for resolution
- provide details on how to appeal the CEO's decision.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may make a written request to the Chair of the Board of Directors that they wish the matter be dealt with through an external dispute resolution process. An external mediation and dispute resolution process will be subject to the Chair of the Board of Directors and if agreed, the nominated organisation will appoint a suitably qualified mediator and make arrangements for a mediation to be held between TBS and the complainant as soon as practicably possible after receiving notification from TBS.