

# POL06 Complaints Policy

## Purpose of this Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that student, parent and employee complaints and disputes are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, effective and fair way.

## Scope

Students, parents 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.

## Relevant legislation

[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 \(Cth\)](#)

[Racial Discrimination Act 1975 \(Cth\)](#)

## Definitions

- **The School** – Brisbane Independent School Inc.
- **The Management Committee** – The Board of the Brisbane Independent School Inc.
- **Lodgement** – submitting an application or form for consideration
- **Confirmation** – written verification that the relevant step in the process is conclude



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## Change Register and Review Schedule

As a Policy this document is owned by the Principal of Brisbane Independent School Inc. Any changes to this document must be authorised by a Management Committee Meeting or as delegated by the Management Committee.

**Note:** this document has been delegated to the Principal for approval.

Document control is maintained by ensuring that Versions are saved by each person who has changed the document using the format - Author, yyyyymmdd, description of the change

- Annual
- Next Date: March 2024
- Review responsibility sits with: The Management Committee

Change Register			
Document Version	Change Description	Authorised By	Date Implemented
1.0	Policy Development	Management Committee Lachlyn Bowie	19/05/2022, 1:46 PM
1.1	F04 converted from Google Form to Google Document (pdf for public).	Lachlyn Bowie & Angus Scown	2022/08/29

## Rationale

As BIS is working within an Integral Philosophical perspective a quadrant analysis is used to highlight the relevant perspectives on this topic.

<p><b>Upper Left - Individual's Experience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different people have varying experiences of conflict, not everyone feels able to talk about things</li> <li>• Memories of prior experiences can cloud judgment or impact on resolution</li> <li>• People often come with an assumption that BIS doesn't want feedback, as that has been their prior institutional experience</li> </ul>	<p><b>Upper Right - Individual Behaviour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People may avoid coming onsite in tense situations</li> <li>• Staff may not join in with staff discussions</li> <li>• People may keep their head down</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lower Left - Community Experience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BIS often believes that everyone thinks the same thing but really there are lots of different perspectives</li> <li>• The BIS Values highlight the core principles for us to follow</li> <li>• BIS has a history of disruptions when the center of belief in the school changes from one to another; keep an eye out for this</li> <li>• The school survey provides a longitudinal view as do the life members</li> </ul>	<p><b>Lower Right - Community Behaviour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only including certain people in conversations and in positions of power can reduce feedback</li> <li>• Timely reporting of the Annual survey</li> <li>• Management Committee presence at WCMs to allow members to talk directly with the Board members</li> <li>• Refusing to hear complaints can make it easier to pretend that everything is fine; search them out.</li> <li>• Read <a href="#">"How the way we talk can change the way we work"</a> - complaints tell you what matters to people</li> </ul>

BIS is committed to providing high quality education and the wellbeing of its students, staff and the broader BIS community is central to ensuring that outcome. Adherence to wellbeing guidelines in addition to legislative reporting requirements helps to ensure the best support is provided to individuals and the ongoing health of the BIS community.



Brisbane Independent School has a strong set of Values that underpins all that we do and provides some core values in relation to how to handle challenges to the balance of individual freedom versus the needs of the wider society. A key test to always ask ourselves is to follow the Values Progression that moves from the Individual to the Community to the Wider Society:

- Has the decision erred on the side of Courageous Learning?
- Has the decision balanced both Freedom and Responsibility?
- Has the decision considered the impact on the individuals involved and their needs?
- Has the decision considered the impact on the needs of our community?
- Has the decision considered the needs of the external laws and values that guide our society, with the safety of the school at the center of the discussion - we must follow the law.

## Policy

Brisbane Independent School is committed to ensuring that student, parent and employee complaints are dealt with in a responsive, efficient, and effective and fair way.

The School views complaints as part of an important feedback and accountability process.

The School acknowledges the right of students, parents and employees to complain when dissatisfied with an action, inaction or decision of the school and the school encourages constructive criticism and complaints.

The School recognises that time spent on handling complaints can be an investment in better service to students, parents and employees.

## Complaints that may be Resolved under this Policy

Brisbane Independent School encourages students, parents and employees to lodge promptly any concerns regarding sexual harassment, child protection, discrimination, workplace bullying and privacy breaches as well as more general complaints that include areas such as:

- the school, its Management Committee, its employees or students having done something wrong;
- the school, its Management Committee, its employees or students having failed to do something they should have done;
- the school, its Management Committee, its employees or students having acted unfairly or impolitely;
- issues of Management Committee or employee behaviour that are contrary to their relevant code of conduct;
- issues related to learning programs, assessment and reporting of student learning;
- issues related to communication with students or parents or between employees;
- issues related to school fees and payments; or
- general administrative issues.

Student complaints may be brought by students or by parents on behalf of their children, as appropriate in the circumstances.

## Issues Outside this Policy

The following matters are outside the scope of this policy and should be managed as follows:

- Child protection concerns or risks of harm to children should be dealt with in accordance with the law and the school's POL20 Child Protection Policy.
- Student bullying complaints should be dealt with under the POL03 Behaviour Management.
- Student discipline matters, including matters involving suspension or expulsion, should be dealt with under the POL03 Behaviour Management.
- Employee complaints related to their employment should be directed to their supervisor.
- Student or employee violence or criminal matters should be directed to the Principal who will involve the Police as appropriate.
- Matters relating to Public Interest Disclosures pertinent to POL32 Whistleblower
- Formal legal proceedings.

## Complaints Handling Principles

Brisbane Independent School is committed to managing complaints according to the following principles:

- The complaint will be handled from a BIS Values perspective ( refer to rationale )
- complaints will be resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible;
- complaints will be taken seriously;
- anonymous complaints will be treated on their merits complaints will be dealt with fairly and objectively and in a timely manner;
- The School will determine the appropriate person to deal with the complaint in the first instance however if required to be escalated, should follow PRO06 Complaints Handling Procedure;
- Complaints should be resolved with as little formality and disputation as possible;
- mediation, negotiation and informal resolution are optional alternatives;
- procedural fairness will be ensured wherever practicable, including the right of interested parties to the complaint to be heard;
- confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible;
- all parties to the complaints will be appropriately supported ;
- The School will give reasonable progress updates;
- appropriate remedies will be offered and implemented;
- provide a review pathway for parties to the complaint if warranted;
- complainants, respondents and people associated with them will not be victimised as a result of lodging the complaints and they will not suffer any other reprisals;
- the school will keep records of complaints; and
- the school's insurer will be informed if a complaint could be connected to an insured risk.

## Responsibilities

### School

The school has the following role and responsibilities:

- develop, implement, promote and act in accordance with the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures;
- appropriately communicate the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures to students, parents and employees;
- ensure that the Complaints Handling procedures are readily accessible by staff, students and parents;
- upon receipt of a complaint, manage the complaint in accordance with PRO06 Complaints Handling Procedure;
- ensure that appropriate support is provided to all parties to a complaint;
- take appropriate action to prevent victimisation or action in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them;
- appropriately implement remedies;
- appropriately train relevant employees;
- keep records;
- conduct a review/audit of the **Complaints Register** from time to time;
- monitor and report to the governing body on complaints;
- report to the school's insurer when that is relevant; and
- refer to the school's governing body immediately any claim for legal redress.

### All Parties to a Dispute

The complainant and respondent both have the following role and responsibilities:

- apply and comply with the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures;
- lodge the complaint as soon as possible after the issue arises ;
- expect that the complaint will be dealt with
  - fairly and objectively;
  - in a timely manner;
  - with procedural fairness wherever practicable; and
  - that confidentiality and privacy will be maintained as much as possible
- provide complete and factual information in a timely manner;
- not provide deliberately false or misleading information;
- not make frivolous or vexatious complaints;
- act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner;
- act in a non-threatening manner;
- to be appropriately supported;
- acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced;

- maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties; and
- not victimise or act in reprisal against any party to the dispute or any person associated with them.

### Employees Receiving Complaints

Employees receiving complaints have the following role and responsibilities:

- act in accordance with the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures;
- inform the party lodging the complaint of how complaints can be lodged, when they should be lodged and what information is required;
- provide the complainant with information about any support or assistance available to assist them in lodging their complaint;
- provide the complainant with a copy of the school's Complaints Handling Policy and procedures;
- maintain confidentiality;
- keep appropriate records;
- to forward complaints to more senior employees, including the Principal, as appropriate and in accordance with [PRO06 Complaints Handling Procedure](#); and
- not victimise or act in reprisal against the complainant, respondent or any person associated with them.

### Implementation

The School is committed to raising awareness of the process for resolving complaints at the school, including by the development and implementation of this policy and related procedures, and via the clear support and promotion of the policy and procedures.

The School is also committed to appropriately training relevant employees (especially senior staff and Management Committee members) on how to resolve complaints in line with this policy and the related procedures.

The School will keep appropriate records of complaints, will monitor complaints and their resolution and will report on a high-level basis to the school Management Committee on complaint handling at the school.

The School will act to encourage students, parents and employees to contribute to a healthy school culture where complaints are resolved with as little formality and disruption as possible.



## Documents that inform this Policy

POL01 Anti Discrimination Policy

POL03 Behaviour Management Policy

POL14 Privacy Policy

POL16 Sexual Harrasment Policy

POL18 Workplace Bullying Policy

POL19 Workplace Health and Safety Policy

POL20 Child Protection Policy

POL28 Disability Discrimination Policy

M05 Current Parent Handbook

M07 Volunteers Handbook

HB02 Executive Handbook

GL07 BIS Board Conflict of Interest

GL11 Child Safety Risk Management Guidelines

GL12 Bullying Response Guidelines

GL17 Whole School Rules Guidelines

PRO05 Bullying Response

PRO06 Complaints Handling Procedure

F04 Complaint Form: Resolution Request

F05 Complaints Handling Tracking Form

F17 Bullying Report

F18 Behaviour Incident Form