

## **WRITE ON SCHOOL FOR YOUNG WRITERS CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY**

### **Purpose of the policy:**

This policy provides staff members, parents/caregivers, participating schools or organisations, and the wider school community of the Write On School for Young Writers' with clear guidelines for raising and resolving concerns and complaints. We will follow current employment legislation and best practice for employers.

### **Policy Scope:**

This policy covers all operations of Write On School for Young Writers

### **Notes:**

We encourage open communication and prefer that you come to us to talk through any issues rather than discussing them in the community.

We have procedures in place to ensure that complaints and concerns are handled appropriately. Our procedures enable us to:

- maintain a safe environment for our students and staff
- treat all people fairly, transparently, and with dignity and respect
- resolve matters of concern early, if possible
- respond to feedback and concerns constructively
- deal with complaints fairly, effectively, and in a timely manner
- take into account individual circumstances
- maintain confidentiality
- preserve and enhance school and community relationships
- monitor and record complaints and concerns about student safety and wellbeing.

Most concerns can be resolved informally through discussions with the people concerned. See **Guidelines for Raising Concerns** (below).

Write On School for Young Writers also has a **Procedure for making a Formal Complaint** (below) if informal discussion doesn't resolve the issue.

We will be able to manage your concerns and complaints more effectively if you raise them with us promptly.

Complaints about events that occurred more than three months earlier, do not involve you or your children, or which have been made anonymously, will not usually be formally investigated.

## Guidelines for Raising Concerns

Our primary goal is to create the best learning environment for the students of Write On School for Young Writers. We encourage open communication and prefer that you come to us to talk through any concerns rather than discussing them in the community.

1. Discuss the issue with the right person.
  - If you have a **general concern about the school or its programmes**, discuss it with a member of the executive committee or the director.
  - If you have a **particular concern about a tutor or a school activity**, contact a member of the executive committee or the director to discuss the matter privately. We ask that you make this direct approach as soon as possible. Be prepared to make a time to discuss your concern if the person involved is unable to talk with you straight away. The member of the executive committee or the director may communicate with the person involved. Be open to listening to the other side of the story to avoid communication breakdowns.
  - If you have a **concern about your own child or one of our other students**, contact the director to discuss the matter. If your concern relates to another student, you must not approach that student directly.
  - If you have a concern about another **parent, caregiver, or member of the school community** on a school related matter, raise this with the director.
  - If the matter concerns the **director** and you have not first resolved it by discussion, or you feel uncomfortable directly approaching the director, contact a member of the executive committee who may communicate with the person involved.
  - If the matter concerns an executive **committee member**, contact the director.
2. If you approach an executive committee member with your concerns you will be asked to follow the guidelines above, and the committee member will inform the director.
3. Work towards a resolution.
  - In most cases, constructive discussion will resolve your concerns.
4. If you are unhappy with the outcome of your initial meeting, contact the director, or a member of the executive committee, to discuss further resolution.

If this process does not resolve your concern, you can make a **formal complaint**.

## **Procedure for making a Formal Complaint**

If your concerns have not been resolved, or for more serious matters, you can make a formal complaint.

Formal complaints may be about an employee of Write On School for Young Writers, a parent or caregiver, a student, or any matter within the school's responsibility.

In the interests of fairness, any formal complaint or serious allegation must be made in writing and resolved as quickly as possible given the details and the steps that need to be considered.

All parties should respect confidentiality, including avoiding the use of social media to promote a point of view.

### **To make a complaint:**

Put your specific complaint(s) in writing with as many facts and details as possible, including the names of people involved and dates of events, together with any steps you have taken to resolve the matter and your preferred contact details.

The letter or email should be marked "confidential" and sent to:

- the director, if the complaint is about a staff member, student, parent or caregiver, or other member of the school community
- the executive committee, if it is about the director

Contact details for the director : [schoolforyoungwriters@gmail.com](mailto:schoolforyoungwriters@gmail.com)

Contact details for the chairperson of the executive committee: [writeonchair@gmail.com](mailto:writeonchair@gmail.com)

### **When your complaint is received:**

The director or executive committee member will check that your complaint has come to the correct person and then send you an acknowledgement of receipt, usually within a week. You may be asked for further details about your complaint, to assist in determining the appropriate investigation process.

**The director** (if the complaint is about a staff member, student, parent or caregiver, or other member of the school community) will:

- inform the executive committee of any complaints about staff members, students, parents or caregivers, or other members of the school community
- take steps to resolve the complaint in accordance with their delegated authority and the relevant school policies, including undertaking a preliminary assessment of the complaint:
  - More general complaints or those which are unlikely to lead to disciplinary action against a staff member will be resolved informally.

- Any employee (or a person being complained about) will be allowed to have a support person of their own choosing present at any meeting to discuss a complaint.
- Potentially sensitive matters or more serious complaints which could lead to disciplinary action against a staff member may be referred for consideration in-committee, with a view to determining the required action.
- follow the general guidelines for **Investigate a Formal Complaint or Serious Allegation**
- take appropriate advice from advisors such as employment lawyers
- report to the executive committee in accordance with school policy.

**The executive committee** (if the complaint is about the director) will:

- undertake a preliminary assessment of any complaints about the director
  - More general complaints or those which are unlikely to lead to the executive committee taking action against the director will be promptly discussed with the director at an informal meeting, usually held within a week of receipt of the complaint, where the potential resolution can be considered.
  - The process for managing complaints which appear more serious and could lead to the executive committee taking action against the director will be determined at an in-committee meeting usually held within a week of receipt of the complaint. The complaint will then be promptly disclosed to the director together with an indication of the proposed process for managing the complaint.
  - Any employee (or a person being complained about) will be allowed to have a support person of their own choosing present at any meeting to discuss a complaint.
- follow the general guidelines for **Investigate a Formal Complaint or Serious Allegation**
- take appropriate advice from advisors such as employment lawyers.

Subject to the privacy of the person or people concerned, we will keep you informed about the process and the expected timeframe for any investigation, and will provide you with written confirmation when the matter is concluded.

Relevant employment agreement provisions for dealing with complaints about staff members must be observed, including protecting the staff member's dignity and mana, advising them of their right to seek support and representation before responding to complaints, and giving them a reasonable opportunity to take that advice.

### **Investigation process**

Your views are important to us, and all complaints are taken seriously. However not all complaints will require a formal investigation. In determining whether a formal investigation may be required, the director and executive committee members may consider any preliminary response from the person the complaint is about, and any action the school has taken previously, including meetings and correspondence. There may be other processes

which can more constructively address general concerns, opinions, and views about the school.

**See Investigate a Formal Complaint or Serious Allegation.**

A full documentary record of any formal complaint is completed and stored confidentially in a secure location.

**Investigate a Formal Complaint or Serious Allegation**

The director and or executive committee members will check that your complaint has come to the correct person and then send you an acknowledgement of receipt, usually within a week. You may be asked for further details about your complaint, to assist in determining the appropriate investigation process.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, the preliminary steps may include:

- asking you for more details about your concerns so that they can be properly investigated
- referring you back to the person or people you have complained about to explore options for informal resolution
- referring the matter to the executive committee for consideration at an in-committee meeting, so that the director can determine the next steps
- taking appropriate advice from advisors such as employment lawyers.

Not all complaints require an investigation but all written complaints will be disclosed to the person concerned at the earliest opportunity, either as part of a preliminary or informal process or together with an explanation of the process for investigation and resolution of the complaint.

- If your formal complaint **does not** justify a formal investigation, the director and executive committee members will consider the issues raised and all of the relevant information, and provide you with a written response.
- If your formal complaint **does** justify a formal investigation, then subject to the privacy of the person or people concerned, we will keep you informed about the investigation process and the expected timeframes, and will provide you with written confirmation when the matter is concluded.

Relevant employment agreement provisions for dealing with complaints about staff members must be observed, including protecting the staff member's dignity and mana, advising them of their right to seek support and representation before responding to complaints, and giving them a reasonable opportunity to take that advice.

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**Chairperson: Margaret Wilosn Boyle 4.02.2021**