

	<p>John McGivney Children's Centre School Authority Governance – Procedure</p>	<p>PR 1006</p>
	<p>Expressions of Concern</p>	

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidance, direction, and expectations regarding the appropriate response to expressions of concern raised by parents or members of the public.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Parents or members of the public will sometimes bring to the attention of the principal (either directly or indirectly, through other staff members) concerns about classroom-based or school-based matters that require a response. In addressing these concerns, the principal should adhere to the following principles:
  - a climate of respectful dialogue is maintained, with focus on mutually acceptable solutions
  - all parties involved have an adequate opportunity to express concerns, and to have their contributions to the discussion acknowledged
  - a concern is initially addressed at the level at which the concern is identified, except where circumstances warrant otherwise
  - the process for addressing a concern is fair and equitably applied
  - a written record of a concern is maintained, where necessary, for follow-up
  - appropriate procedures governed by legislation or Board policy are followed where a concern relates to such legislation or policy
2. All complaints should be received and handled with courtesy, diplomacy, promptness, and clear communications. However, in situations where the complainant is doing so in an excessively belligerent, angry, or threatening manner, staff will advise that the conversation must end until a calmer approach is possible.
3. It is the desire of the John McGivney Children's Centre School Authority that all complaints be addressed as quickly as possible. However, anonymous complaints are not addressed.
4. A key feature of the process is that the resolution should take place involving the right individual in the right role (i.e., as close to the issue itself as possible).

## DEFINITION

5. A complaint is defined as any oral or written communication expressing dissatisfaction with or criticism of the actions or methods of an employee of the school system or with policies, procedures, or programs of the school or Authority.

## PROCEDURES

6. When a staff person receives a complaint from a student, parent, or member of the general public:
  - a) if the staff person is a support staff, the complainant shall be referred to the appropriate teacher or to the principal
  - b) if a teacher receives a complaint but is not able to deal with the complaint (e.g., a teacher who receives a complaint about another teacher, about transportation or class composition) the complainant shall be referred to the appropriate teacher or to the principal
  - c) the person to whom the complaint has been made (or referred) will
    - notify the complainant that the concern has been received and will be addressed;
    - indicate when follow up can be expected;
    - address the concern in a timely manner and;
    - communicate the resolution of the issue.
7. Individuals have a right to be informed as soon as is reasonably possible when a written complaint has been made against them (unless such a notification would be contrary to legislation or other policies e.g., CAS)

### Concerns Brought to the attention of the Principal

8. If a parent or guardian brings a concern to the principal about a classroom-based matter, the principal will advise the parent or guardian to review of the issue with the child's teacher and resolve it at that level.
  - a) The parent/guardian should review a concern or issue with the classroom teacher at a mutually convenient time.
  - b) If the parent/guardian and the teacher are not able to resolve the issue, the parent/guardian may request that the matter be reviewed by the principal (or designate). The principal (or designate) will review the issues and work to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.
9. In addition, the principal may undertake one or more of the following actions depending on the nature of the concern and its circumstances:
  - discuss the concern with the teacher and offer advice to the teacher where

advice is required to resolve the concern, and inform the parent of the outcome.

- discuss the concern with the teacher and, where the concern proves to be unfounded, respond to the parent with an explanation.
  - meet jointly with the teacher and the parent to discuss the concern where the principal determines that such a meeting will facilitate the resolution of the concern.
  - consult with other board staff or agencies where appropriate, or request legal advice from the Board's general counsel, in order to assist in resolving the concern.
10. If after the steps outlined above have been conducted the principal anticipates that an issue has not been resolved and that there may be further contact on the part of the complainant, the principal will provide notification to the Chair of the Board.
11. The principal/designate will also inform the board if further contact is anticipated.
12. If a parent brings a concern about a school policy, procedure, activity or situation to the principal, the principal/designate will undertake one or more of the following actions depending on the nature of the concern and its circumstances:
- advise the parent to discuss the concern directly with the teacher and resolve it at that level.
  - contact the parent to discuss and resolve the concern.
  - consult with other board staff or agencies where appropriate, or request legal advice from the Board's general counsel in order to assist in resolving the concern.
  - refer the matter for school council discussion and advice where the concern relates to a matter appropriate for school council consideration.
  - refer the matter for Board discussion and advice where the concern relates to a matter appropriate for Board consideration
13. Consideration will be given to the notification of the entire Board (by the principal or designate) in the following situations:
- a) Prior to any school community letter addressing a significant concern/incident going to all homes.
  - b) Parental concerns or school council concerns not resolved at the school which could reasonably come to the attention of the trustees.
  - c) Incidents
    - i) Injuries – requiring Emergency Medical Services
    - ii) Safety Issues, i.e., bomb threats, health issues
    - iii) Passing of staff/student/parent
    - iv) other matters of a serious nature

## **Complaints/Concerns brought to the attention of a trustee**

14. The John McGivney Children's Centre School Authority recognizes that, on occasion, oral or written expressions of concern involving students, staff, policies, or procedures may be received by individual trustees.

Trustees will facilitate the communication process between the parent/guardian and the appropriate staff. Trustees shall direct the parent or guardian to the process which should be followed in resolving any concerns or to the appropriate person or step in the process (dependent on the steps the parents/guardians have already undertaken to resolve the concerns at the time the trustee is contacted) but shall not act as a representative of the parents or guardians.

15. It is very important, at the initial contact, to gather the information in an open and non-judgmental manner and to avoid making commitments regarding the eventual resolution. The trustee who receives this complaint should respond by:
  - a) apprising the student/parent/guardian that their concern will be addressed while also asking if the staff member or principal are aware of the concern;
  - b) apprising the student/parent/guardian of the steps taken to address the concern;
  - c) following the recommended process (as outlined in below in bullets 16, 17 and 18);
  - d) informing the principal that this concern has been expressed.
16. When a trustee receives a complaint or expression of concern from the parents/guardians of a student about any academic problem the suggestion will be made that the parents/guardians contact the teacher of the student. If the complainant is not satisfied, the parents/guardians should then approach the principal of the school.
17. When a trustee receives a complaint or expression of concern from the parents/guardians of a student about any problems which are not strictly academic the parent should be directed to the principal.
18. If the trustee has ongoing concerns, these should be discussed with the principal.

## **Additional Guidelines**

19. A complaint about a trustee will be referred directly to the Chair of the Board and heard in the In-Camera Meeting of the Board.
20. From time to time the parent/guardian may believe or feel that they need support in order that they can adequately address their child's interests. This support may be

necessary while parents/guardians are attending meetings with staff employed by the board.

a) Parents/guardians have the right to have a representative of their choosing in attendance at meetings with staff, subject to any limitations established by the principal. Any cost/expenses associated with such a representative are the responsibility of the parents/guardians.

b) The principal and staff will be notified in advance of a meeting as to who is anticipated to be in attendance.

c) A representative supporting parents/guardians must agree, at the outset of or in advance of the meeting to respect and maintain confidentiality of any matter discussed at a meeting between parents/guardians and staff.

21. School council are established to advise principals on matters such the implementation of school programs, the school improvement plan and code of student behaviour. They are not forums to discuss individual parent/guardian-teacher-student issues or concerns regarding School Authority staff, volunteers, students, or their parents/guardians. Any of these matters brought to a school council member or any school council meeting will be referred immediately to the principal.

22. Although the subject matter of meetings between parents/guardians and staff (including meetings at which a representative or a parent/guardian is present) may be broad, these meetings will generally relate to the education of the parents'/guardians' students(s). However, there are certain matters that staff are unable to discuss with parents or guardians.

a) Matters that cannot be discussed include, for example, personal details or disciplinary measures concerning other student(s), and personal details related to staff or performance issues related to staff.

b) In the event that discussion cannot be limited to the subject matter that led to the meeting (generally the education of the parents'/guardians' student(s) at the school, as necessary, staff will bring closure to any meeting which becomes a discussion of personal details concerning other students or personal details about staff or issues relating to staff performance.

23. Employee complaints related to working conditions and Collective Agreement items will be investigated as provided in the respective Collective Agreements.

## RESOURCES

Document	Title
<a href="#">Mission and Vision</a>	JMSA Mission and Vision
<a href="#">P 1006</a>	Expressions of Concern Policy

PROCEDURE: GOVERNANCE: PR 1006

EFFECTIVE: 2023

AMENDED:

REPEALED:

REVIEW DATE: 2028