



SPARK Schools Policy for the Resolution of Grievances Between Parents (Guardians) and School Staff Members

Introduction

The SPARK Schools Policy for the Resolution of Grievances Between Parents (Guardians) and School Staff Members was developed based on the recommendations within “Building and Protecting Relationships with Parents: A Guide for Heads of Independent Schools” provided by the Independent Schools Association of South Africa.

We affirm that “a quality education benefits enormously from the establishment of a constructive relationship between parents, learners and educators” and commit to applying principals of good practice, policy, and procedure in building and maintaining relationships with the parents of our students.

This policy informs the formal and informal procedures in place to address issues that may arise relating to the function of the school.

Informal Resolution

Where issues, such as miscommunication or minor irritations, have been raised and require a solution but do not appear to have potentially serious consequences, informal resolution is recommended:

1. All parties involved should speak to one another with the purpose of finding an amicable, mutually acceptable solution to the problem.
2. Detailed notes should be made during meetings or phone calls, and parents should be written to following a meeting or phone call to confirm the outcome of the meeting and any agreed-upon next steps.

Where issues cannot be solved informally, formal resolution involving the school's Principal or School Operations Manager, depending on the nature of the issue, should take place.

Formal Resolution: Conciliation

Where issues cannot be solved by means of the informal resolution process, a formal resolution through conciliation is recommended:

1. The complaint should be submitted via e-mail to the staff member in question and the Principal or School Operations Manager, depending on the nature of the complaint, of the school. This complaint should include the date of the



- occurrence, the people involved, the issue, as well as a statement of action taken to resolve the grievance informally previously.
2. The Principal or School Operations Manager should investigate the complaint, including interviewing the parent and the involved staff. In the case that the Principal or School Operations Manager is the subject of the complaint, a fellow school leader should lead the investigation.
 3. A meeting should be convened by the investigator with the complaining party to communicate the outcome of the investigation and any agreed-upon next steps.
 4. Detailed notes should be made during the meeting, and parents should be written to following a meeting to confirm the outcome of the meeting and any agreed-upon next steps.

Where issues cannot be solved through conciliation, a formal hearing should take place.

Formal Resolution: Hearing

Where issues cannot be solved by means of the conciliation process, a formal resolution through a hearing is recommended:

1. Evidence of previous attempts to informally resolve or resolve via conciliation must be documented before a hearing can be called.
2. The hearing will be conducted including an impartial chair, who may be appointed from outside SPARK Schools, as well as the complainant, accused member of staff, and any relevant witnesses. The chair cannot have been involved with previous attempts to resolve this grievance.
3. Any person called to the hearing is guaranteed a fair hearing and protected according to the Bill of Rights, and is thus entitled to question witnesses or statements made at the hearing. In the case of a minor, a parent or other nominated adult should be present.
4. Legal representation of SPARK Schools or the parent should not be present in this hearing. However, both parties can consult with their advisors before and after any meeting or hearing.

The decision to resolve via a hearing is very significant and may result in severe consequences for the staff members involved. This process should therefore be approached with caution and avoided whenever informal resolution or conciliation can be used.

Cautionary Procedure for Parents

Where a parent's behavior "negatively affects your Child's or other children's progress at the School, the well-being of School Staff, or brings the School into





disrepute" (SPARK Schools Parent Contract, Section 9.5), the following is recommended:

1. A meeting between the Principal, School Operations Manager, and the parent in question to discuss the issue and an informal resolution to the issue.
2. A written warning via formal letter to the parent, which includes a description of the behavior that has not been resolved via informal resolution, reference to the relevant contract clauses, and a statement that the negative behavior should cease immediately to avoid cancellation of enrolment.
3. A formal hearing, if the written warning is unsuccessful to bring about cessation of the negative behavior, similar to that described in the section above.
4. Cancellation of the parent contract and the enrollment of the parent's child at SPARK Schools.

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the Academic Team, the School Operations Team, and the Human Resource department of SPARK Schools Support.

