



## **External Complaint Handling and Grievance Policy 2021**

### **Introduction and Key Principles**

This guideline sets out a broad framework for complaint and grievance management at the College.

- A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction with behaviour, services, facilities, guidelines or procedures. Complaints are to be addressed in terms of their potential seriousness. Students or community members should be treated on similar terms.
- Staff members handling complaints are to use professional judgement and a balanced consideration of the rights and needs of the parties involved.
- If a complaint or allegation is about a person's behaviour and concerns the protection of children and young people or any other behaviour which, if substantiated, could amount to a crime, then the Headmaster is to be notified immediately. Such matters are subject to guidelines and procedures other than this (refer to Child Protection Policy).
- All members of staff have responsibility for receiving complaints, treating them seriously and dealing with them promptly and courteously.
- In general, the Headmaster is ultimately responsible for resolving complaints, and may nominate another member of staff who has not been involved, to investigate, as appropriate, avoiding any potential conflicts of interest.
- Procedural Fairness is important when investigating a complaint. The respondent to a complaint should have the opportunity, where there may be detriment arising from the resolution of that complaint, to have their case heard by an impartial decision maker. Procedural Fairness should ensure that any conflict of interest amongst the parties managing the complaint is disclosed and alternative arrangements are made.
- A person who has a complaint is to be encouraged to approach the relevant member of staff to seek to address the concern promptly and directly. Attempts should be made to resolve complaints informally, between those immediately concerned. In most cases, negotiation will be the process used to address complaints. In context, negotiation refers to the process of developing a solution or agreement through discussion or correspondence with another person (usually the respondent) or by using a third person as a facilitator.
- Each party needs to be prepared to be conciliatory as resolution may require compromise on each side. It is recognised, however, that compromise will not always be possible, nor necessarily desirable.
- In cases where complaints are made, reasonable steps should be taken to protect the interests of both the complainant and any respondent (for example, a member of staff about whom a complaint is being made) by not disclosing their identity or the details of their information, except to those with a reasonable need to know. Both the person making the complaint or allegation and the respondent to a complaint have the opportunity, where they are not happy with the resolution of that complaint, to be heard by the Headmaster and to present evidence and submissions, as appropriate.

- The Headmaster and/or other appropriate delegate, should maintain a confidential records of significant complaints that are dealt with. The outcome of complaints dealt with may also be considered to contribute to the College's quality improvement processes.

### **Complaint Regarding a Member of Staff**

- Complaints related to a staff member should be raised with the person directly or directed to the relevant supervisor.
- If a parent/person is dissatisfied with the outcome of the above they should approach the Deputy Headmaster, Director or Pastoral Care T-12 Director of Teaching and Learning 7-12 or Director of Teaching and Learning T-6.
- If the complaint/allegation is about the Deputy Headmaster, Director of Pastoral Care T-12, Director of Teaching and Learning 7-12 or the Director of Teaching and Learning T-6 then the complaint/allegation should be made directly to the Headmaster.
- If a grievance is related to the Headmaster, or a member of the College Council, the issue should be directed to Chair of the College Council.

### **Complaint regarding a Child Protection Matter**

An allegation related to Child Protection should be directed to the Director of Pastoral Care T-12 or the Deputy Headmaster T-12 (Child Protection Officers) who will report it to the Headmaster. Alternatively the matter can be directed to the Headmaster.

### **Complaint regarding Staff Misconduct or Reportable Conduct**

An allegation of reportable conduct relating to a staff member should be directed to the Headmaster. Matters of reportable conduct will be investigated by a qualified staff member delegated by the Headmaster. A matter of reportable conduct is investigated with the support and guidance of the NSW Association of Independent Schools – Child Protection unit. Such matters are subject to guidelines and procedures other than this (refer to Child Protection Policy).

In cases where allegations are made, reasonable steps should be undertaken to protect the interests of both the complainant and any respondent (for example, a member of staff about whom a complaint is being made) by not disclosing their identity or the details of their information, except to those with a reasonable need to know.

### **Complaint regarding Transport**

All significant Transport Matters should be directed to the Director of Pastoral Care T-12. Less significant matters should be raised with T-4 Pastoral Co-ordinator, 5-8 Pastoral Co-ordinator or 9-12 Pastoral Co-ordinator.

### **Complaints regarding Teaching and Learning**

- Complaint should be raised specifically with the teacher.
- If a parent/person is dissatisfied with the outcome of the above they should approach the relevant Primary or Secondary Teaching and Learning Coordinator.
- If a parent /person is dissatisfied with the outcome of the above they should approach the Director of Teaching and Learning T-6 or the Director of Teaching Learning 7-12.

- If a parent /person is dissatisfied with the outcome of the above they should approach the Deputy Headmaster T-12.
- If a parent/person is dissatisfied with the outcome of the above they should approach the Headmaster.
- In serious matters where an outcome cannot be reached by the Headmaster the College may defer to external advice or consultants with expertise in the relevant area.

### **Complaints regarding Pastoral Care**

- Complaint should be raised with the teacher if appropriate.
- If a parent/person is dissatisfied with the outcome of the above they should approach the Junior T-4 Pastoral Co-ordinator in T-4, the Middle Pastoral Co-ordinator in Year 5-6 or Year Patron or Assistant Year Patron 7-12.
- If a parent/person is dissatisfied with the outcome of the above they should approach the Middle School Pastoral Co-ordinator 5-8, Senior School Pastoral Co-ordinator 9-12 OR Director of Pastoral Care T-12.
- If a parent/person is dissatisfied with the outcome of the above they should approach the Deputy Headmaster T-12.
- If a parent/person is dissatisfied with the outcome of the above they should approach the Headmaster.
- In serious matters where an outcome cannot be reached by the Headmaster the College may defer to external advice or consultants with expertise in the relevant area.

### **Student Complaints**

- Complaints should be raised with the teacher concerned.
- If a student feels they are unable to approach their teacher and the matter is related to a subject specific issue, then students should raise the matter with the respective Teaching and Learning Coordinator.
- If the matter is a Pastoral Care concern or the issue hasn't been successfully addressed in the steps above, the students can raise the matter with their Year Patron, Assistant Year Patron or the relevant Pastoral Care Coordinator.

### **Outcomes**

The outcome of a complaint will vary on a case to case basis depending on the circumstances surrounding the grievance.

However, outcomes could include:

- The Complainant understanding the situation and no longer feeling aggravated or upset
- The Complainant receiving a written response, and where appropriate an apology
- Where appropriate the respondent receiving disciplinary action where a College Policy or Code of Conduct has been breached.
- Where the complaint is regarding the actions of another parent, if appropriate a mediation process may be initiated by the College in an attempt to address the concerns,
- An acknowledgment that the College cannot enforce an outcome.

**Reviewed March 2021**