



## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

[PURPOSE](#)

[DEFINITION](#)

[SCOPE and GUIDELINES](#)

[COMPLAINANT](#)

[COMPLAINT HANDLING STAFF](#)

[COMPLAINT HANDLING TEAM](#)

[PROCEDURE](#)

[COMPLAINT HANDLING PHASES](#)

[POSSIBLE OUTCOMES](#)

[NOTIFYING THE COMPLAINANT OF THE DECISION](#)

[CONFIDENTIALITY](#)

[RECORD KEEPING](#)

## PURPOSE

We are committed to providing a safe and supportive work and learning environment for all employees and students. We acknowledge that an employee, student, parent or community member can have a complaint or concern about any decision, behaviour, act or omission (whether by the Principal, members of the leadership team or other staff/students) that they feel is unreasonable. We also want our students, parents, employees or community member supporting our school giving a chance to acknowledge our success.

This policy creates structured procedure to resolve the complaints, or to revise our operation based on concerns as well as to acknowledge the success of the school or employees. We will make sure five elements of effective complaint/concern handling as follow;

**Culture:** School staff and management must value complaints and concerns as a means of strengthening their administration and improving their relations with the public.

**Principles:** An effective complaint handling system is to be modelled on the principles of fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency and integration.

**People:** Complaint/concern handling staff will be skilled and professional.

**Process:** The five stages of complaint/concern handling—acknowledgment, assessment, investigation, decision and review, are to be clearly outlined.

**Analysis:** Information about complaints, concerns and compliments should be examined as part of a continuous process of organisational review and improvement.

## DEFINITION

- **'parent'**, in relation to a child, includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* of the Commonwealth and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.
- a **'concern'** is an issue of interest (because of its importance and effect) which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation.  
For example: I believe that the school's physical education policy and program is inadequate. I don't think that it caters for students who have well-developed skills and who need to be involved in competitive sport. I think the school should review its policy in this area.
- a **'complaint'** is an expression of grievance or resentment where the complainant is seeking redress or justice.  
For example: My daughter has been left out of the school's netball team for the third time in a row. She is an accomplished netballer and deserves to be part of the team. It is not fair that she is left out and I want you to do something about it!
- a **'compliment'** is an expression of admiration or respect when school operations or staff's doings satisfy the person or community member  
For example: My family had a tough time last few months, your staff was very understanding and supported my son emotionally and helped him his progress in learning. I am very thankful.

## SCOPE

Complaints handling is available for parents (guardians), students, all staff as well as community members (or future parents).

## IMPLEMENTATION

### COMPLAINANT

The school expects a person raising a concern or complaint to:

- do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue occurs
- provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
- acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner
- show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value difference, rather than judge and blame
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced.

## COMPLAINT HANDLING

Any member of staff can receive a complaint. All complaints are received in the following manner:

- being respectful and helpful
- giving the person your undivided attention
- not being defensive, apportioning blame
- remaining positive
- not perceiving anger as a personal attack.

When a staff member receives a verbal complaint, staff member should:

- listen carefully to the issues being raised
- summarise the issues to clarify and check that they understand what the complainant is telling
- empathise and acknowledge the complainant's feelings
- find out what the complainant wants to happen as a result of the complaint
- tell the complainant that they may use the support of a third party in progressing the complaint, if they feel this is needed
- resolve the complaint if possible, or assure the complainant that an appropriate staff member will address their complaint
- advise the complainant what will happen with their complaint
- thank them for their complaint.

## KEY ELEMENTS OF OUR COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

### Impartiality

If you make a complaint, it will be investigated in a fair and impartial manner. No judgements or assumptions will be made, and no action will be taken until the investigation is complete. If a complaint is made against you, your rights will be protected and you will be given an opportunity to tell your side of the story.

### Confidentiality

You can feel secure that if you do make a complaint under this procedure it will remain confidential. The only people who will have access to information about the complaint will be the person making the complaint, the person to whom the complaint is made, the person investigating the staff who may be involved. The person about whom the complaint is made also has a right to be informed.

### No victimisation

You can also rest assured that if you make a complaint you will not suffer in any way as a consequence. The Campus Principal will ensure that a person who makes a complaint is not victimised in any way.

### Timeliness

Each complaint will be finalised within as short a period of time as possible. Complainants will be advised if the matter cannot be finalised within one month.

## COMPLAINT HANDLING TEAM

**Teacher and home group teacher** is to resolve concerns and complaints relating to student learning and specific student incidents in the teacher's class or group.

**Year level coordinator** provides support when students from other classes are involved.

**Deputy Principal** (where applicable) is to resolve concerns and complaints relating to staff members or complex student issues.

**Counsellor** provides support when concerns and complaints are related to child protection/safety.

**Campus Principal** is to resolve concerns and complaints relating to school policy, school management, staff members, child safety/protection or complex student issues.

**Executive Principal** is to resolve any matters relating to the decisions made for complaints and concerns but disputed for further resolution.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT

### Approach the person involved

In many situations, the most appropriate thing to do first is to tell the person who is the cause of the complaint how you feel. If the complaint is about their behaviour, tell them that it is offensive/hurtful/not acceptable. If it is about a work decision, tell them why you think it is discriminatory or harassment or so unreasonable. Telling the person will give them a chance to stop or change what they are doing or explain what they had decided and why.

### Submit Complaint/Concern Form Online/Workflow Application

Where you feel you cannot approach the person directly or you are not happy with their response or reaction, then you can submit formal complaint/concern to explain the problem to the school. You will be advised as to the person designated to deal with the nature of the complaint. The designated persons will advise you about what your options are and what will happen with your formal complaint.

### What happens next?

The designated person will then interview you or organise another appropriate person to interview you. During this interview a number of things will be explained to you, such as what will happen if the complaint is found to be supported by the evidence, or if it is found to be not supported by the evidence.

The designated person will then speak to the person about whom the complaint is made to hear their side of the story. Any witnesses will also be interviewed. These interviews will be conducted separately and impartially. Written reports about the complaint may be requested. The importance of confidentiality will be stressed to all parties and they will be warned of the consequences if there is a breach of confidentiality (e.g. possible defamation action, initiation of a complaint for harassment).

The designated person will then tell you what the other people said and discuss what should be done to sort out the problem. You should tell the person what action you would like taken, e.g. a written apology from the person, a written warning, etc. This allows the designated person to understand, from your perspective, what you believe you need from the process. It will not dictate the remedy that might ultimately apply.

## PROCEDURE

### COMPLAINT HANDLING PHASES

There are four key phases in handling a complaint, with the option of a fifth phase for review of a complaint outcome:

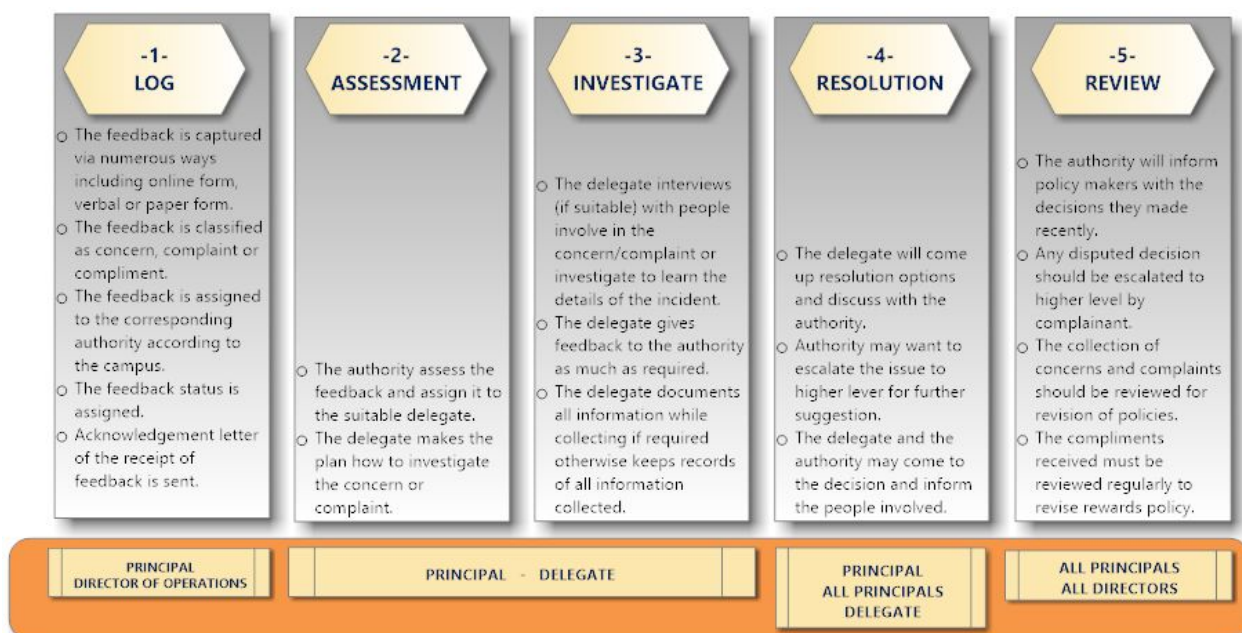
**Phase 1.** Receiving and acknowledgement of the complaint

**Phase 2.** Assessment of the complaint and assignment priority

**Phase 3.** Investigation about the complaint

**Phase 4.** Making a decision about the complaint

**Phase 5.** Review



# [Feedback Management Policy]

## **Phase 1 - Receiving and acknowledgement of the feedback**

- The feedback is captured via numerous ways including online form, verbal or paper form.
- The feedback is classified as concern, complaint or compliment.
- The feedback is assigned to the corresponding authority according to the campus.
- The feedback status is assigned.
- Acknowledgement letter of the receipt of feedback is sent.

## **Phase 2 - Assessment of the complaint/concern and assignment priority**

When a staff member receives a complaint, they:

- begin the process of making an assessment about a feedback from the moment the feedback is received
- make an assessment in the first instance about whether the issue can be dealt with as a concern or a complaint or a compliment
- refer the complainant or the complaint to the principal for addressing
- The principal assesses the feedback and assigns it to the suitable delegate with a specific priority
- The delegate makes the plan how to investigate the concern or complaint.

## **Phase 3 - Investigation about the complaint/concern**

The principal or delegate gathers all the necessary facts about the complaint while keeping in mind the principles of natural justice of all parties concerned. The principal or delegate investigates complaints by:

- collecting and analysing information relevant to the matter
- working collaboratively with all people involved
- finding the facts relating to the matter
- identifying any contributing factors to the matter
- giving information about the investigation as much as required
- documenting the investigation report or outcome

## **Phase 4 - Making a decision about the complaint/concern**

Based on the facts gathered in Phase 3 about the complaint, the principal or the delegate

- will come up resolution options and discuss with the principal.
- may want to escalate the issue to higher lever for further suggestion.
- may come to a decision and inform the people involved.
- may consult with school lawyer for legal advice in relation to a possible decision.
- may also consult with school risk manager for the impact of a decision on the school's reputation and operation.

## **Phase 5 Review Phase**

- The principal will inform policy makers with the decisions they made recently.
- Any disputed decision should be escalated to higher level by complainant.
- The collection of concerns and complaints should be reviewed for revision of policies.
- The compliments received must be reviewed regularly to revise rewards policy.

## **POSSIBLE OUTCOMES**

### **Complaint resolved**

A complaint is considered to be resolved when the complainant and the school agrees on an appropriate response or remedy. Remedies should be implemented as soon as possible. Possible responses and remedies include:

- an explanation
- an acknowledgement of each other's perspective and agreement on ways to manage differences
- an apology or expression of regret (verbal or written)
- an admission of fault
- a change of decision
- a change of policy, procedure or practice
- agreement on what constitutes acceptable behaviour
- an undertaking that unacceptable behaviour will change
- the waiving of debt related to school fees or payments
- a refund of school fees or payments
- the provision of counselling or other support.

## **Complaint dismissed**

A complaint can only be dismissed:

- after it has been investigated
- If an investigation has determined that the complaint cannot be substantiated.

## **Complaint unresolved**

- Take no further action
- Refer the complaint to the relevant internal or external agency if required.

## **NOTIFYING THE COMPLAINANT OF THE DECISION**

Within 28 days of the receipt of the complaint, the principal provides the complainant with either:

- a written response, including reasons for the decision, or
- a written notification that their complaint has been referred to an internal or external agency.

## **APPEALS**

There are two avenues of appeal if you feel that the complaints procedure has not been followed properly, or that the outcome is unacceptable to you.

### **Appeals at school level**

- To the Principal if the Principal has not been involved in investigating or examining the complaints, or is not the person named as the source of the grievance
- To the Executive Principal

The appeal will consider:

- The way the complaint was handled and examines the outcome
- If the principal believes it was handled properly and that the outcome was appropriate; no further action will be taken
- If the principal thinks that the complaint was not handled properly, or that the outcome was inappropriate, the principal will organise for the complaint to be looked at again.

### **To an external agency**

If you are not happy with the way your complaint has been dealt with by the school, you may wish to go to an external agency for further advice and assistance. You may take your complaint to the external agency at any stage in the procedure if you are unhappy with progress in dealing with your complaint. The agencies that would most likely have jurisdiction are:

- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (Federal)
- VIC Anti Discrimination Board

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

SIRIUS College requires all complaints to be investigated and to be resolved. However, we recognise that our staff might not be able to fully investigate a complaint if they cannot effectively liaise with the complainant. Furthermore, anonymous complaints raise natural justice issues for respondents who have a right to know the particulars of the allegations made against them. Therefore, if anonymous complaints or concerns are of a serious nature and make almost impossible to resolve the issue without identifying the complainant, then the complaints or concerns will be dismissed.

To be reasonable and maintain confidentiality all participants in the process should restrict the information about the complaint to those who need to know of the complaint in order to:

- a. refer the complaint
- b. manage the complaint
- c. provide advice and support in the process
- d. review and decide upon appropriate complaint mechanisms
- e. manage the workplace
- f. apply the process

## **RECORD KEEPING**

The principal ensures that records of a complaint and any referral of a complaint are kept for either internal or external review. Complaint records will be filed and stored appropriately.