



**SALESIAN  
COLLEGE**  
CHADSTONE EST. 1957

# COMPLAINTS POLICY

## Rationale

The College strives for communication that is clear, open, consultative, courteous and respectful. This approach extends to addressing any complaints promptly, with integrity and in partnership with its community members. The College recognises that clear, positive, fair and effective processes for resolving complaints assists the building of strong relationships and promotes a positive learning community. An effective process encourages the earliest possible resolution without avoidable escalation.

## Policy

The College encourages an openness to complaints and members of the school community can be assured that their complaints will be heard and that they will be treated with respect. Complaints will be acknowledged promptly (formally or informally) and clear timelines for investigating and responding to complaints will be established. The principles of procedural fairness will apply.

## What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expressed dissatisfaction about our services or operations (including complaints handling) where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected. A complaint could be about a staff member, student or a policy or procedure. Without limiting the subject matter, a complaint may involve student discipline, learning and teaching, educational adjustments, property damage or loss and bullying and harassment involving students. A dissatisfaction will usually arise from a perception that the school has done something wrong, failed to do something or acted unfairly or inappropriately.

## When and how to make a complaint?

The majority of issues can be satisfactorily resolved quickly and informally. For that reason, the College asks that matters be raised directly with the relevant staff member where appropriate.

Where it is felt that an issue has not been addressed satisfactorily or it is felt that contact with the relevant staff member is not appropriate, the matter can be reported to a member of the College's Leadership Team by any of the following options:

1. Calling 98072644
2. Emailing [complaints@salesian.vic.edu.au](mailto:complaints@salesian.vic.edu.au).
3. The Complaint Form provided in procedures can be completed and emailed or sent to the College at 10 Bosco Street Chadstone Vic 3148.

Note: If your complaint involves a member of the Leadership Team, please contact the College's Principal. If your complaint involves the College's Principal, it should be addressed to the Board Chair at the above address.

The College's ability to deal with an anonymous complaint will depend on its nature, circumstances and the level of detail provided. Accordingly, treatment of anonymous complaints will be at the discretion of the Principal and Leadership Team. Anonymous complaints from the public about student behaviour can be addressed on a general basis eg by clarifying expectations.

## Scope

This policy applies to all members of the wider College community including parents, contractors, suppliers, visitors and members of the public. Although this policy is accessible to students, complaints related to child protection will be addressed in accordance with child protection laws and reporting obligations (see PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to all Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools) at

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/identify.aspx>

Although within the scope of this policy, bullying and harassment complaints will also be addressed by reference to the College's Policy on Bullying and Harassment and Harassment Complaints Handling Procedures. Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) matters raised will be addressed by reference to the College's OHS policy and regulatory requirements.

## Complaint Procedures

**Internal Complaints** will guide the management of complaints involving only the College, staff and students.

**External Complaints** will guide the management of external complaints involving the College, staff or a student AND a parent, contractor, supplier, visitor or member of the public.

**General Guidance** will guide the handling of all complaints. An assurance checklist will be completed and updated to ensure processes are developed over time.

The principles of procedural fairness will apply and the College will:

- Respect the right of parties to be heard and treated fairly.
- Respond to complaints promptly and thoroughly.
- Make sure those involved understand this policy and processes.
- If the complaint is about a person, give that person the opportunity to respond to allegations.
- Conduct investigations impartially, verify facts and maintain appropriate records.
- Appropriately communicate the reason for any decision and any actions.
- Meet privacy and other legal obligations.
- Record complaints on a secure database with relevant security.

## Complaints that relate to minimum standards

In relation to complaints that relate to the minimum standards, the College must report to Catholic Education Melbourne the outcome of the investigation undertaken by the College, for the purposes of reporting to VRQA.

## Communication and implementation

The College will communicate this policy and related procedures via its website, newsletters and parent gatherings. Staff will receive training in this policy, procedures and processes. A summary of complaints and resolutions will be reported to the College's Board.

## Confidentiality

Staff involved in investigation of a complaint will not discuss the matter with any others where they are not relevant to the matter. The College will treat complaints with respect, sensitivity and discretion. However, it may not be possible that all communications and documents will be kept confidential and we reserve the right to disclose details of the matter to other persons who, in our opinion, need to be informed in order to facilitate a resolution.

## Version control

|                        |                                  |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Prepared by            | Salesian College Chadstone       |
| Approved by            | Salesian College Chadstone Board |
| Approval date          | January 2021                     |
| Next review            | February 2022                    |
| <b>Version control</b> |                                  |
| Date                   | Comment                          |
| To December 2020       | Grievance Procedures             |
|                        |                                  |

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES – GENERAL GUIDANCE

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) (June 2017) “Complaints Management: Practical Guide for Schools (Guide)” flowchart (provided below) should be considered in planning to manage a complaint. Approaches for resolving a complaint include:

- Informal (that may prevent the escalation of a minor dispute) including self-resolution (between the parties), supported self-resolution and facilitated mediation.
- Formal options (where informal resolution can't be reached or the matter is serious) including intervention (eg. by the Principal) or investigation (eg for accusations of serious breaches).

Resolutions may include an understanding that the complaint has been heard, that the College has been alerted to an issue, that the outcome has been well considered, an apology has been provided or changes to policy, procedures or practices will be considered or implemented.

**Responding to complaints** - Complaints should be acknowledged promptly (refer to example below) and clear timelines established and communicated for investigating and responding. Efforts should be made to ensure the complainant has access to the policy and procedures. Less serious complaints can be acknowledged verbally and resolved without a formal investigation or written response.

**Procedural fairness** - All parties must be heard and treated fairly and the subject of a complaint provided with an opportunity to respond. The investigation should be impartial, facts substantiated and appropriate records maintained. The rationale for decisions should be communicated and privacy and legal obligations met.

**Confidentiality** - What is and isn't 'in confidence' must be made clear. Confidentiality should be maintained to the extent that is reasonable ('need to know') but information disclosed to refer management of the complaint, provide advice / support and review / decide actions / outcomes. Note that it may not always be possible to provide assurances eg; a complaint about a staff member may result in unfairness to the staff member if they are not provided an opportunity to respond.

**Recording complaints** - Even minor complaints should be recorded.

**Dealing with difficult and unreasonable behaviour** - Staff should treat complaints seriously and focus on the issue at hand rather than emotions or behaviour, listen attentively, take notes, confirm accuracy of record, communicate clearly and avoid being defensive. If poor behaviour escalates, the safety and wellbeing of staff and students should be ensured, warnings given that repetition will lead to the termination of the conversation, termination of conversation if necessary and consultation with the Principal (or delegate).

### Sample complaint acknowledgment letter

*I refer to information provided by .....regarding the attached complaint.*

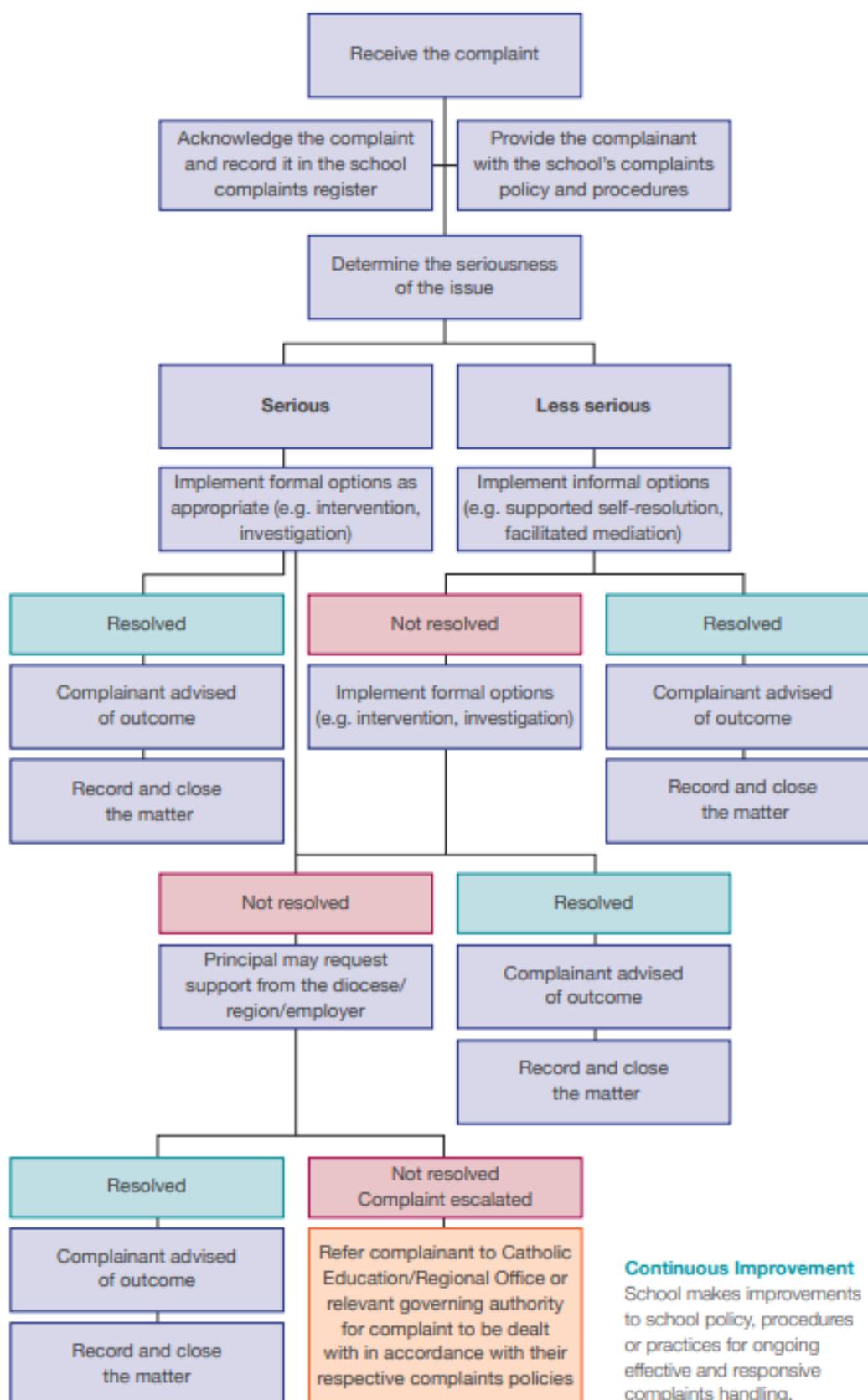
*The matter has been referred to me and I propose dealing with it by:*

*(process).*

*Please let me know if you have any comments or requests about the process of resolving the complaint. You will be contacted at various stages of the process regarding progress of the complaint.*

*If you require any information, please contact me on (telephone number).*

## Complaints Management: flowchart



Source - Complaints Management: Practical Guide for Schools (Guide), Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV), June 2017.

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES - FOR INTERNAL COMPLAINTS

Note – this section will not be published on the College's website.

On receipt, a complaint will be acknowledged as soon as practicable and the complainant will be provided with expected timelines and, if not already accessed, a copy of the Complaints Policy and relevant procedures.

Every attempt should be made in the first instance to resolve an internal grievance at the lowest possible local level.

### Step One:

- Where a member or members of staff have a grievance with either the Principal or a senior member of staff, the person or persons should, in the first instance, attempt to resolve the matter by direct approach to the Principal or senior staff member.
- Where a member or members of staff have a grievance with another member or members of staff, he/she/they should first endeavour to resolve the matter by direct approach to the staff member(s) involved.
- Where a member of staff requests a personal interview with the Principal or a member of staff, it should be granted within five working days of the request being made.
- All parties involved in a meeting or personal interview may choose to have a support person with them. The role of the support person is to support rather than an advocate for the person they are supporting.
- At all times during this phase, either party has the right to seek advice from the relevant union or employer body or Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM).
- It is vital that the issue or challenges are dealt with and that personal attacks are not made during this meeting.

### Step Two:

- When a complaint is not resolved by step one, either party may call upon their respective associations to become more formally involved.
- The Principal, in consultation where appropriate with his/her representatives, should seek to settle the problem.
- A meeting for this purpose should be set up within five working days and each party if they wish, is entitled to submit written documentation.
- All parties to the dispute may be accompanied by a nominee or an official representative of their union or association. Either party may ask for any further relevant documentation.
- As part of a willingness to facilitate resolution at a local level, the Principal, if approached, can meet with an officer or officers of the union. If such a meeting is called, the Principal is entitled to have his representative present. This meeting should occur within five working days at a mutually convenient time.

### Step Three:

- If after following steps one and two there is no resolution to the problem, either party may refer the dispute to the Industrial Commission of Victoria – Procedures for allegations of misconduct against lay employees. The school will adopt the Catholic Education Office Melbourne Policy No. 2.20 – Procedures for the Management of Allegations of Misconduct Against Lay Employees in Catholic Schools and Catholic Education Offices.

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES - FOR EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS

These procedures cover complaints involving the College, staff or student(s), and a parent, contractor, supplier, visitor or member of the public. On receipt, a complaint will be acknowledged as soon as practicable and the complainant will be provided with expected timelines and, if not already accessed, a copy of the Complaints Policy and relevant procedures.

### Step One:

- A person with a complaint about the College or a member of staff should, in the first instance and if appropriate, make direct contact with the member of staff in an attempt to resolve the matter.
- A person who does not know the appropriate person to contact should, in the first instance, contact the College Office (telephone: 03-9807-2644 or email [welcome@salesian.vic.edu.au](mailto:welcome@salesian.vic.edu.au)) and the complaint will be directed to the appropriate person.
- In a situation where the complaint is about the College or there is uncertainty about the most appropriate person to contact, the complaint should be forwarded [complaints@salesian.vic.edu.au](mailto:complaints@salesian.vic.edu.au) and will be dealt with by the Principal or assigned to a member of the Leadership Team.
- Where a person requests an interview with a member of staff in an attempt to resolve the complaint, the interview should be granted within five working days of the request being made.
- It is incumbent upon all parties to deal with grievances with confidentiality and in accordance with the Complaints Policy.

### Step Two:

- If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of contact or the meeting with the appropriate member of staff, the matter will be referred to Leadership Team member nominated by the Principal.
- The Leadership Team member will meet with the complainant within five working days of the complaint being referred. It is hoped that there will be a mutually agreeable resolution to the issue as a result of this and subsequent meetings.

### Step Three:

- If the complainant(s) is (are) not satisfied after speaking and/or meeting with the College representative on one or more occasions that the issue has been satisfactorily resolved, he/she/they may request that the Principal deal with the matter.
- The Principal will meet with the complainant(s) within five working days of the complaint being referred. It is hoped that there will be a mutually agreeable resolution to the issue as a result of this and subsequent meetings.

### Step Four:

- If the complainant is not satisfied that the grievance has been satisfactorily addressed by the Principal, the matter may be referred to the Board of the College, addressing it to be the Board Chair.
- If the complainant is not satisfied that the grievance has been satisfactorily addressed by the College, the matter may be referred to Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM).
- The Principal will provide the complainant with contact details of an appropriate person at CEM.

## **Professional reputation of staff**

The College has a responsibility to maintain a safe workplace for employees that includes protecting teachers from personal attack and abuse. While teachers are responsible for maintaining professional standards, they are also subject to the same rights as any citizen in respect of a personal attacks on their professional reputation. Where a teacher's professional standards are the subject of serious concern, the matter will be referred to the Victorian Institute of Teaching, an independent representative professional body established to recognise, promote and regulate the profession of teaching. Within its charter, this body investigates and makes findings on instances of serious misconduct to protect the integrity of the profession. Where there is evidence of defamatory statements made against any member of staff, the College will refer the matter to be fully investigated by CEM. Individual staff also have the option to seek legal advice and action through the Independent Education Union Victoria and Tasmania (IEUVICTAS) (for members) and/or a private advisor.

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES – ASSURANCE CHEKLIST

This checklist should be revisited as required and at least annually.

| ELEMENTS                                       | CHECKLIST FOR DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY AND PROCEDURES   |
|--|---|
| Planning for complaints management             | The school has consulted with staff and the Board for input and support in planning and developing the policy and process.  |
| Developing policy – the policy:                | Defines the nature and scope of a complaint.  |
|  | Indicates all complaints will be treated seriously, addressed professionally, competently and in a timely manner and apply principles of procedural fairness and confidentiality  |
|  | Sets out the expectations of how all parties will conduct themselves, such as in a respectful and courteous manner  |
|  | Outlines an informal process and a formal process for resolving complaints, encouraging complainants to resolve their grievances initially in an informal manner.   |
|  | Sets timelines for complaint management.  |
|  | Describes the process for making a complaint and specifies who complainants should contact in the first instance.   |
|  | Provides flexibility in methods of making a complaint - verbal / written, dedicated email, phone or a form on the website (see complaint form).   |
| Accessibility - the policy and procedures are: | Describes possible outcomes including what to do if the matter is not initially settled to the complainant's satisfaction.  |
|  | Communicated through a range of means such as newsletters, the school website and through enrolment procedures.   |
|  | Readily accessible and clearly positioned on the College's website.   |
| Acknowledging complaints                       | Available in different languages and formats where relevant.  |
|  | There is a process for acknowledging the complaint either verbally or in writing.   |
| Recording complaints. The school has:          | The policy and procedures are provided when a grievance or complaint is made.   |
|  | Established a process for recording and tracking complaints and outcomes in a complaints' register.   |
|  | Ensured that complaints are recorded including contact details, date, way communicated (eg in person, phone call, email, letter), nature of complaint, requested resolution, responsible member, actions and time taken, minutes, communications, statement of the outcome (including closure date and the date of advising the complainant). |
| Training Staff                                 | Securely and confidentially stored all information in accordance with the privacy policy.   |
|  | Staff have received training on how to identify a complaint, when a complaint can be managed informally and when it should be referred.   |
| Continuous improvement                         | Leaders responsible for managing, investigating and dealing with escalated, serious or difficult complaints have received training.   |
|  | The College regularly reviews its process for continual improvement.  |
| Last reviewed by: _____ Date: / / .            |   |

## COMPLAINT PROCEDURES - FORM

|          |   |  |
|----------|---|--|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Your details</b>   |  |
|          | Family name   |  |
|          | Given name(s)   |  |
|          | Address   |  |
|          | Contact no.   |  |
|          | Email   |  |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Your relationship to College (eg. student, parent, member of public)</b>               |  |
|          |   |  |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Subject of the complaint (eg College, staff member, student, policy, procedure)</b>    |  |
|          |   |  |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Details of the complaint</b>   |  |
|          |   |  |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Details of the outcome you are seeking</b>   |  |
|          |   |  |
| <b>6</b> | <b>If you have you previously raised this concern with the College or member of staff</b> |  |
|          | Who dealt with matter?  |  |
|          | What was the outcome?   |  |
| <b>7</b> | <b>Signed</b>   |  |
|          | Signature   |  |
|          | Date  |  |
| <b>8</b> | <b>Outcomes (College use)</b>   |  |
|          | Resolution options  |  |
|          | Actions   |  |
|          | Outcome   |  |
|          | Date finalised  |  |
|          | Signature & position  |  |
|          | Date  |  |
|          | When matter referred  |  |
|          | Referred to   |  |
|          | Referred date   |  |
|          | Outcome   |  |
|          | Signature & position  |  |
|          | Date  |  |

You may attach additional documents