



Star of the Sea College

Grievance Policy & Procedure

Star of the Sea College is a Catholic Independent Girls' school, founded by the Presentation Sisters in 1883. Since 2014, Star of the Sea has operated under the auspices of Kildare Ministries.

RATIONALE

Staff and parents of Star of the Sea College are partners in the education and wellbeing of Star students. Effective communications play a vital role in this partnership, as does a shared commitment to addressing issues of concern in ways that are constructive, open and respectful.

The College acknowledges that parents and staff can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at the College. Every member of our school community has a right to have their grievance or complaint addressed, and we will work positively and resolutely to achieve a satisfactory outcome for the people involved.

This policy outlines our principles and procedures for **receiving and resolving complaints from parents**, either on a specific parent-school concern or on behalf of their daughter.

Procedures for receiving and responding to staff complaints are addressed separately in related policies – *Equal Opportunity Policy* and *Workplace Anti Bullying Policy*.

Definition

A complaint or a grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived threat at our College where a response or a resolution is expected.¹

The dissatisfaction will usually arise from a perception that the College has done something wrong, failed to do something it should have or acted unfairly or inappropriately.

The complaint may be about a staff member, a student or a policy or procedure.

PRINCIPLES

In receiving and responding to complaints, the following guiding principles will direct and shape the College's actions:

- We will work with you with respect, courtesy and openness and with a genuine desire to achieve a fair and reasonable outcome.
- The complaint will be resolved as quickly as possible.
- The person(s) facing the complaint will be provided with detailed information about the substance of the complaint and will have the opportunity to respond.
- Personal information disclosed will be treated as confidential.
- The resolution process will be grounded in sound and fair procedures for information sharing, conciliation, investigation and decision making.

¹ Definition is derived from the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd's "Complaints Management Practical Guide for Schools" dated June 2017



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- If a satisfactory outcome cannot be achieved, the College will provide you with options for having the outcome reviewed or mediated via an external authority.
- The communal needs of the school community will in most instances exceed the needs of any individual.

College Expectations of People Making a Complaint

In making a complaint, the College requests and expects that the complainant will:

- Raise the concern or complaint as soon as possible after the issue has arisen
- Communicate and respond in ways that are constructive, fair and respectful
- Provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- Observe confidentiality and a respect for sensitive issues
- Act in good faith to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- Have realistic and reasonable expectations about possible outcomes/remedies.

If the concern/complaint relates to their daughter's treatment by another student or students while at school, the College expects that the complaint will be referred directly to the College, via their daughter's Mentor Teacher or Pastoral Leader. Under no circumstances should a parent approach another student whilst she is in the care of the College to confront the issue. Direct contact with parents to resolve the matter is also discouraged where the complaint or concern pertains to issues or incidents that have arisen at the school.

PROCEDURES

Key Referral People

Parents are encouraged to make contact with members of the College staff who are most closely connected with their daughter and/or with the specific complaint. In most instances this will be one or more of the following people:

- The Mentor Teacher
- The Subject Teacher(s)
- The Pastoral Leader
- A Deputy Principal – Learning and Teaching /Students/Staff
- Head of Mission and Identity
- The Principal
- The Business Manager
- The College Counsellor



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If there is any uncertainty about the most appropriate person to address a concern or complaint, parents are encouraged to contact the College on its direct line and speak to the Principal's Personal Assistant who will refer the parent to the appropriate person.

Email Communications

Due to teachers' classroom and supervision duties, the first contact is best made by email, with an appointment request for either a phone conference or face-to-face meeting. The email should outline concerns or issues (eg academic performance, discipline, student/peer incidents) so that the staff member can constructively prepare for the meeting/phone conference. Teachers are expected to respond in a timely manner (within 24 hours where practicable), and to do so by phone.

Confidential, Contentious and/or Sensitive Matters

Parents and staff are strongly discouraged from sending or discussing confidential, contentious and/or emotional information via email. These matters are best discussed face to face or over the phone. The College email systems are monitored and should not be considered private.

Informal and Formal Resolution Processes

If initial communication between the parties does not resolve the complaint (an 'informal' resolution process), then the complainant should:

- Contact the Principal or a senior member of staff to make an appointment for either a phone conference or a face-to-face meeting
- Outline the nature of the complaint, either verbally or in writing, and the steps taken to resolve it.

In moving to a more formal process, the Principal or a senior member of staff will:

- Organise a meeting/phone conference
- Fully document the complaint
- Further and fully investigate the matter
- Ensure that no one is victimised as a result of a complaint being made
- Enable the person against whom the complaint has been made to respond, and to be accompanied to any meeting by another person of his/her choice as a support person
- Organise a process of mediation if a complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the College.

Serious or Repeated Complaints or Allegations of Misconduct –child protection procedures

Where a complaint relates to an allegation of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, or when complaints are sufficiently serious or repeated, the Principal is under a legal obligation to report the matter to the appropriate authorities, ensure a comprehensive investigation, and work with all parties to facilitate a resolution.



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If, in the course of carrying out their duties, a mandatory reporter forms a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection from physical or sexual abuse, and that the child's parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child, they must report that belief to the Department of Health and Human Services/Child Protection and/or Victoria Police as described in the joint Protocol: **PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools.**

Depending on the nature of the complaint, Catholic Education Melbourne may be a point of reference in responding to and resolving the matter.

Avenues of Appeal

If a complaint remains unresolved or if you are dissatisfied with the outcomes, the complainant has the right to seek other avenues of appeal by contacting the Chair of the Board or through authorities such as Catholic Education Melbourne.



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Responsible Officer	Deputy Principal- Students
Approved By	Principal
Approved & Commenced	2017
Review By	November 2020
Relevant Legislation	<p>Child, Wellbeing and Safety Act(2005)(Vic.)</p> <p>Children Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2017</p> <p>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)</p> <p>Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)</p> <p>Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic.)</p> <p>Ministerial Order No 870 - <i>Child Safe Standards: Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools</i></p> <p>Privacy and Data Protection Bill 2014 (Vic)</p> <p>Working with Children Act 2005</p>
Related Policies & Procedures	<p>CEM Policy 2.26</p> <p>CEVN "Complaints Management: Practical Guide for Schools" June 2017</p> <p>Child Safety Policy</p> <p>Child Safety Code of Conduct</p> <p>Student Behaviour Management Policy</p> <p>Pastoral Care Policy</p> <p>Privacy Policy</p> <p>Fees Policy</p> <p>Enrolment Policy</p> <p>ICT student policy</p> <p>Respectful Relationships Policy</p> <p>Visitors to the School Policy</p> <p>Visitors and Volunteers Protocols</p>
Version	3
Amendments to version	<p>Updated policy reference list</p> <p>Third person language</p>