

# Resolution of Complaints Policy



OUR LADY OF MERCY COLLEGE PARRAMATTA

## Policy Statement

The College is required to have in place policies and procedures in relation to complaints and grievances, with specific reference to processes for raising and responding to matters of concern raised by students and/or parents. These policies and procedures will ensure that complaints are managed with procedural fairness.

Parents and students may raise a concern or complaint about something that is happening at the College which appears to be unsatisfactory or unreasonable. This may include a decision, behaviour, policy, procedure or omission. Complaints received by the College may be oral or written and written complaints include those sent by letter, fax, email or other forms of electronic communication. This policy and procedure provides a guide to the management of general complaints from students, parents or the broader OLMC community.

Please note that specific complaint procedures are in place for matters concerning child protection, workplace bullying, harassment, enrolment and employment relations and complaints regarding these matters will be dealt with as per the relevant College policies and procedures and related legislation.

Parents and students are encouraged to raise issues of concern directly with the appropriate member of College staff as most issues can be readily resolved through this direct contact. A guide to the most relevant staff member for the initial contact for a range of concerns is included in this document as well as the student diary.

Complaints will be responded to in a courteous, respectful and timely manner and staff will work together with parents and students to resolve the complaint. It is expected that parents and students will be both realistic and reasonable about the action required to resolve their complaint.

Complaints will be resolved at the lowest level of management necessary for their appropriate resolution with an assumption that complaints are made in good faith with an intention for resolution.

## Guiding Principles

- Right to be heard – input valued and respected
- Respect and courtesy
- Timely resolution – complaints should be dealt with in a timely manner and all parties should be advised if a delay occurs
- Future respectful relationships
- Complaints are responded to in a professional manner
- Impartiality
- Confidentiality
- Procedural fairness – clear process, free from ambiguity and bias, allowing each party to present their case fairly
- All reasonable evidence considered prior to decision-making
- Staff members have a right to be informed of formal complaints that are made relating to them
- College policies are used when appropriate to resolve complaints
- The complainant and the respondent may access support

- Expectation that differences are resolved amicably.
- Resolution can require compromise from all parties

Complaints found to be vexatious will not be investigated. There is an underlying assumption that complaints are made in good faith, with honest goodwill and intention for resolution.

## Procedure

The following procedure outlines the steps that will be followed by the College in handling complaints.

## Raising the Complaint

Parents or students wishing to make a complaint or raise an issue should in the first instance, contact the appropriate person as per the schedule below:

For a complaint/concern regarding:	
A student having problems with a particular subject or cocurricular activity	The teacher for that subject or cocurricular activity
A particular assessment task	The relevant Leader of Learning or the Deputy Principal
A student's work progress over a number of subjects, her lack of focus or motivation, peer relationships etc.	The relevant Pastoral Leader
Fee charges	Director of Business Services
Train or bus travel incidents	Pastoral Care Assistant Coordinator
A teacher's performance	Relevant Leader of Learning or Director of Teaching and Learning

*(Please note that parents or students may contact the Principal with regard to a complaint if they feel that they cannot approach the relevant staff member directly or if the complaint is serious).*

Line managers have responsibility for managing and resolving minor complaints but all parties have a responsibility to resolve the problem and seek and accept realistic outcomes.

It will be necessary to find an appropriate time to talk to the designated staff member to discuss the complaint or concern. Teaching staff will respond to parent complaints as soon as they are available to do so but they may not be immediately available due to reasons such as professional development, illness, school camps or excursions. Reception staff will be able to direct a complaint to the next most appropriate staff member if the requested staff member is unavailable.

The person making the complaint (the complainant) should explain what behaviour, decision, policy or action caused concern and why.

In the case of a verbal complaint (via phone or face to face) or if the complainant is unable to document the complaint in writing, the staff member receiving the complaint will record the complaint on the College's Intake Form for Complaints. A record of the complaint will be retained and treated as a confidential document. It is important to determine the outcome that the complainant is seeking as a result of lodging their complaint.

When an anonymous complaint is received, the complainant is told of the possible limitations associated with making an anonymous complaint.

When either an oral or a written complaint is received, it is forwarded to the relevant staff member for their consideration.

## Managing Complaints

There are separate policies and procedures in place to manage any complaints regarding issues concerning child protection, workplace bullying, harassment, enrolment or employment relations.

Many other complaints are resolved at the first point of contact with information or an explanation. Through discussion, the issue may become clear and the problem may be successfully addressed by providing an opportunity for the concern to be stopped, changed or for actions to be explained. It may also be appropriate for an apology to be offered and/or recognition of the effect the situation has had on the person concerned.

If the complaint cannot be resolved at this point, it will be necessary to decide how to manage the complaint. If the matter needs to be referred to another staff member for further investigation or consultation needs to take place, the staff member will explain why and to whom and outline the possible outcomes. A realistic timeframe for dealing with the matter will be communicated to the complainant.

If appropriate, an investigation process may need to be planned and implemented.

During the managing of the complaints, consideration should be given to:

- the well-being of all parties involved or affected by the complaint
- all parties having a right to be heard
- the resolution possibly requiring compromise from all parties
- if a complaint is against a staff member, they should be given the opportunity to respond prior to any action being taken in response to the complaint. The exception to this would be if the complaint related to child protection issues or other legislative areas where the Principal would follow the processes outlined in the relevant policies such as the Child Protection Policy
- if a meeting is required, the staff member concerned must be told in advance the purpose of the meeting and who will be attending the meeting
- complaints should be dealt with in a timely manner and all parties should be advised if a delay occurs
- procedural fairness – clear process, free from ambiguity and bias, allowing each party to present their case fairly and in a confidential manner

- all reasonable evidence considered prior to decision-making
- College policies being used when appropriate to resolve complaints
- the complainant and the respondent being able to access support if they wish
- an expectation that differences are resolved amicably.
- a resolution can require compromise from all parties

## Resolution of Complaints

The staff member managing the complaint should communicate the results of their investigation and any relevant outcomes in the most appropriate manner and to all parties concerned as soon as possible.

If this process does not resolve the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction, then the complainant should meet with the Principal. Those attending this meeting should include the Principal, the complainant and the staff member concerned and a support person for the staff member. The decision of this meeting should be communicated in writing to all parties and the Principal will make a decision based on the issues raised in the complaint, all relevant information, policy and legislative requirements. The Principal will then follow-up to ensure that the decision has been implemented effectively.

Staff who are managing a complaint must retain written records of the complaint resolution process and its outcomes. These written records must be filed and stored appropriately.

## Staff Training

Staff will be trained in the implementation and any relevant updates of this policy via the induction process, email, staff meetings and professional learning sessions.