

Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures

Policy Number	AS08
Policy Owner	Principal
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Purpose and Scope

This policy and procedure applies to Meriden School ('the School') in handling complaints made in respect of services provided by the School or against staff members, which includes employees, contractors and volunteers.

This policy and procedures does not extend to personal grievances between parents, guardians or other members of the School community.

Whistleblowing complaints

This procedure does not extend to complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures. The procedure for processing whistleblowing complaints are dealt with in the School's Whistleblower Policy and Procedures (AS37) which is publicly available on the School's website.

In summary, a whistleblowing disclosure is a disclosure which:

- is made by a School Council member, employee, a person who supplies goods or services to the School (paid or unpaid), including a volunteer, an employer of a supplier, an individual who is an associate of the School (as defined by the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) or a relative or dependent (or dependents of a spouse) of any of these people,
- involves alleged misconduct, an improper state of affairs or circumstances, illegal activity or conduct that represents a danger to the public or financial system, and
- is made to a School Council member, Principal or Head, an auditor, member of an audit team or actuary of the School or related company, or the Director of Compliance.

Related policies

Reportable Conduct

Complaints about reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with the School's Child Protection Policy and Procedures (AS33), a copy of which is publicly available on the School's website.

Student grievances

Complaints regarding a grievance between students will be addressed in accordance with the School's relevant discipline, behaviour management/student conduct and anti-bullying policies.

Staff grievances

Complaints regarding a grievance between staff members about work matters, including work relationships and decisions made by other staff members which impact on their work, will be addressed in accordance with the

School's Grievance Procedure – Staff (AS07). A copy is available to staff on eCentral or upon request to the School's Grievance Officer (Dean of Staff (Senior School)) or the Director of HR.

Staff – Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying

Complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying between staff will be addressed in accordance with the School's Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Statement (AS04). A copy is available to staff on eCentral or upon request to the Director of HR.

Teacher Accreditation

Complaints regarding teacher accreditation processes will be addressed in accordance with the School's Teacher Accreditation Procedures (AS46). A copy is available to staff on eCentral or upon request to a Dean of Staff or the Director of Compliance.

International students

Complaints regarding international students are addressed in accordance with the School's International Students Complaints Handling Policy, a copy of which is publicly available on the School's website.

Policy

Confidentiality

All parties involved in complaints handling are required to maintain appropriate confidentiality, including in relation to handling and storing records.

Complaints

A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the School about an educational and/or operational matter relating to services provided by the School or the behaviour or decisions of a staff member, contractor or volunteer, including misconduct.

If a parent/carer or student has a concern about the conduct of a staff member, they should raise their concern with the School in accordance with the procedures below.

If a complaint that concerns a behaviour of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed in accordance with the school's Child Protection Policy and Procedures (AS33). Please refer to the School's Child Protection Policy for information about reportable conduct. A copy is publicly available on the School's website.

Complainants are not required to assess whether their concern meets the threshold of reportable conduct before making a complaint. Any concern about a child's wellbeing or the conduct of an employee, volunteer, contractor or member of the School community may be reported under this policy.

Complaints may be made by a student or parent/carer or any member of the School community.

The School will seek to resolve complaints informally where possible but acknowledges that in some cases a person may wish to make a formal complaint.

Procedures

Raising a complaint

The complainant

Informal complaints may be raised by a complainant directly with the person involved or the person listed as immediately responsible in the communication channels found in the Student Planner, issued annually to all students in both the Junior and Senior Schools. However, if the complainant does not feel comfortable doing so, or the matter is one where it may not be appropriate to do so, a complaint can be made to a Head or Principal.

Any complaint about the conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the Principal in the first instance.

Should the matter not be resolved between the parties through informal processes in the first instance, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the School. A formal complaint can be made in writing to the Principal via email: principalea@meriden.nsw.edu.au.

Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the Principal, the complaint should be made in writing to the Chairman of School Council c/- 3 Margaret Street, Strathfield, NSW, 2193. In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the Principal should be read as references to the Chairman of School Council.

The School

The Principal will generally acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint raised with the school in writing as soon as practicable.

Handling complaints

Assessing the complaint

The Principal or her delegate generally will assess the complaint and determine:

- whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this policy or is a staff grievance or reportable conduct matter, or another matter identified above and are dealt with by other relevant policies (see above), and
- the priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised and
- whether the School may be required to report the matter to the Office of the Children's Guardian, Police, Department of Communities and Justice or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.

Managing a formal complaint

The Principal or her delegate will generally manage a formal complaint by:

- a) advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the School in relation to the complaint
- b) if appropriate, advising the relevant parties of the complaint at the relevant time and providing them with an opportunity to respond
- c) collecting any additional information the School considers necessary to assess the complaint
- d) making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved ("resolution decision") and
- e) if appropriate, advising the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision of the Principal and, if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken.

There may be circumstances where some of the steps outlined above are not appropriate and the School will determine, on a case-by-case basis, the most appropriate method of handling the complaint.

A complainant and the relevant parties that the complaint is about may choose to have an appropriate support person present at any meeting with representatives of the School about the complaint. However, the School maintains the right to determine whether the person's preferred support person is appropriate and may not approve the attendance of a support person where they are determined by the School to be inappropriate.

Records

Any records in relation to the receipt, assessment and management of a formal complaint in accordance with this policy will be maintained by the Principal or her delegate in a confidential secure electronic folder on the School's I:drive or in a hard copy folder in a secure cupboard in the Principal's office. The records are to be confidential and access to them is only available to the Principal or other staff only with the Principal's express authority.

Contact

If you have any queries about this procedure, you should contact the School's Director of Compliance for advice.

Implementation, communication and accessibility

This policy and procedures are implemented and communicated to parents, students and staff by a combination of:

- publication of the full text of this document on the School's website and the School's eVe page (parent section)
- publication of the full text of this document to all staff on the School's intranet/eCentral
- monitoring of the effectiveness of the policy
- reviewing and evaluating the policy and the School's responses to complaints and grievances.

Related documents

Anti-Bullying Policy and Procedures (SS10)
Child Protection Policy and Procedures (AS33)
Discipline and Behaviour Management Policy and Procedures (JS10)
Discipline Policy (SS01)
Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Statement (AS04)
Grievance Procedures – Staff (AS07)
International Students Complaints Handling Policy
Staff Code of Conduct (AS14)
Student Behaviour Management Plan (SS02)
Student Code of Behaviour Policy (SS03)
Whistleblower Policy and Procedures (AS37)