

# Complaints Policy

This Policy forms part of Sheldon College's Child Safe Framework.

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## 1. Background

This policy forms part of Sheldon College's Child Safe Framework and outlines the process of managing complaints at Sheldon College. We are committed to fostering a safe, respectful and supportive learning environment and value feedback to improve our services.

The College acknowledges that many concerns can arise from miscommunication or misunderstandings and can be resolved informally, without the need to follow the formal complaints procedure.

### Relationship to the Staff Code of Conduct

This Complaints Policy operates in conjunction with the College's Staff Code of Conduct. Complaints relating to staff, contractors or volunteers may constitute breaches of the Staff Code of Conduct and will be assessed and managed in accordance with both this Policy and the Staff Code of Conduct.

## 2. Principles

The key principles for the handling of complaints are:

### Respect and Fairness:

- All parties are treated with dignity and respect and the College is open to receiving concerns.
- Complaints are received in a positive manner and will be taken seriously.

### Timeliness:

- Complaints will be acknowledged promptly and resolved as soon as practically possible.
- The College will provide updates throughout a longer investigation if necessary.

### Confidentiality:

- When concerns arise, the College will share information and address issues only with those who genuinely need to know.
- Information will be kept confidential, consistent with privacy obligations and procedural fairness.

### Communication with Families and Carers:

- The College will keep families and carers appropriately informed about the progress and outcome of complaints affecting them or their child, while maintaining confidentiality, privacy obligations and procedural fairness for all parties.

### No Detriment:

- Complaining will not affect the complainant's enrolment, employment or engagement.

### Accessibility and Availability

- This Complaints Policy is publicly available on the College website and is promoted to staff, students, parents, carers, volunteers and visitors. The College ensures information about how to make a complaint is accessible to all members of the College community, including children and young people.

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## 3. Definitions

### Definition

- Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction with a decision, action or omission by the College.
- Complainant: The person lodging the complaint.
- Respondent: The person or group the complaint is about.
- Breadth: A complaint may be made about the College as a whole, about a specific department in the College or about an individual member of staff.

## 4. Scope

This policy applies to employees, volunteers and visitors, parents/carers/students and members of the public, and describes the step-by-step procedures to follow upon receiving a complaint.

It applies to complaints relating to:

- Student learning and wellbeing
- Staff conduct
- School policies and decisions
- Facilities and services

### Important considerations:

- Any complaint that relates to child protection issues must be referred immediately to the Principal or delegate, if the Principal is not available.
- Any complaint regarding staff misconduct should be directed to the relevant line manager in the first instance.
- A complaint may be made in person, by telephone or in writing (email).
- Generally, anonymous complaints will not be acted upon.
- Most College complaints will be directed by the flow chart (Appendix A).
- Parents, students and staff are encouraged to initially raise the concern informally, with the relevant person, as a discussion and exchange of information may clarify concerns and answer questions satisfactorily. However, if the complaint is not resolved at this point, the matter may be escalated to the relevant line manager.
- If a parent is not sure who to contact, the Student Services office will generally be able to assist with directing the concern to the relevant person.
- If parents have concern about the actions of a student at the College that is not their own child, they should raise that concern with the Head of Year, Director of Wellbeing or Director of Primary. Under no circumstances should a parent contact the other student directly or the other student's parents.
- Students can raise their own concerns with any staff member who they feel comfortable with. It is the responsibility of the staff member to share this concern with the most appropriate staff member (as per Appendix A).
- Complaints by Children and Young People: The College recognises that children and young people may require additional support to raise concerns or complaints. Students may make a complaint verbally or in writing to any trusted staff member. Staff receiving a complaint from a student must listen respectfully, take the concern seriously, and assist the student to report the matter in accordance with this Policy.
- Information about how students can raise concerns is communicated in age-appropriate and child-friendly ways.
- All parties may seek support during the investigation and resolution process. Noting this includes the College Wellbeing Services and Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- All parties have the right to seek independent legal advice at any stage of the resolution process.
- Depending on the nature and complexity of the complaint, the time the process will take will vary.
- If the complaint relates to:



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- A key staff member, the complaint should be directed to the Deputy Principal or Principal.
- A member of the College Executive team, the complaint should be put in writing and provided to the Principal.
- The Principal, the complaint should be put in writing and forwarded to the Chair of the College Board. The email address of the College Chair will be provided by the College upon request.

## Child Safety and Reportable Conduct Complaints

Complaints may include concerns, suspicions, disclosures or allegations relating to harm to a child, inappropriate conduct toward a child, or breaches of professional boundaries. Any complaint involving child safety or wellbeing will be treated as a priority and managed in accordance with the College's Child Protection obligations and reporting requirements.

## 5. Process for Resolving Complaints

### Complaints About Workers

Where a complaint concerns the conduct of an employee, contractor or volunteer, the College will assess whether the matter involves misconduct, reportable conduct, or a potential breach of the Staff Code of Conduct. Appropriate risk management actions may be implemented during an investigation, including supervision adjustments, temporary reassignment of duties, or other protective measures to ensure student safety.

#### Stage 1: Informal resolution

Appropriate concerns should be first raised directly with the relevant staff member. Many issues can be resolved through active listening, respectful dialogue and clear communication. Such concerns may be addressed through email exchange, phone conversations or a meeting onsite at the College. In many cases complaints can be resolved at this level. If they are not resolved, or if the complaint is serious in nature, then move to Stage 2.

*Note: If a staff member receives a complaint from a parent, they will respond promptly and honestly. If they feel they are unsure of the response or require support, they will consult with their line manager. Such a complaint might be in relation to a subject grade or perceived unfair treatment. If the complaint is about an area that lies outside the staff members' area of responsibility, they should report it to the relevant Director immediately.*

#### Stage 2:

If not resolved informally, a **written complaint should be submitted to the relevant College leader.**

The complaint should include:

- *Name and contact details*
- *Nature of the complaint*
- *Relevant facts, including dates and people involved*
- *The progress of discussion to date; and*
- *Suggestions for possible solutions*
  - The College will assign a lead investigator to manage and resolve the complaint.
  - The College will enact the internal investigation process that aligns with procedural fairness.
  - The College will gather and assess all relevant information.
  - The College will provide the respondent a right of reply (if applicable).
  - If appropriate the lead investigator may convene a meeting between the parties. The purpose of the meeting is to clarify issues and encourage parties to create solutions which are mutually acceptable. The solution may be verbal or written and signed by all parties.
  - Each party may be accompanied by a support person, who is not a spokesperson or active participant. Should a support person attend, the investigator should be notified prior so they can inform all attendees who will be present

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- at the meeting.
- If a resolution is not reached, or either party is unsatisfied with the response, they should escalate to the relevant person as outlined in Appendix A.

## Support for Complainants and Participants

The College will provide appropriate support to any person making or involved in a complaint. This may include access to wellbeing support services, Employee Assistance Program services, the opportunity to have a support person present, and assistance to understand the complaints process.

### Stage 3:

- At this stage, the purpose is to review the process, information documented and meet with the parties as appropriate in view of seeking a resolution.
- If a resolution has not been reached at Stage 3, or if either party is dissatisfied with the process, the matter will be referred to the Principal, or their nominee for further investigation and/or determination.

### Stage 4:

- The Principal or nominee will investigate the circumstances through perusal of the written documents, interviews with the parties and others whom they believe may be in possession of information relevant to the complaint and any other additional information provided by the parties. This may include witness material, accounts or any other evidence relevant to the issues that the parties wish to be considered in the process.
- The Principal or nominee will use the above process to determine the substance of the complaint and will recommend a course of action to the parties. If the investigation is conducted by a nominee, a recommendation will be provided to the Principal.
- In the event that the parties do not accept the recommendation, the Principal or nominee will determine how the College will manage the complaint and inform the parties in writing.
- If the parties are still not satisfied, they may refer the matter to the College Chair, who will review the circumstances of the complaint and advise the parties, including the Principal, whether the decision is to stand, or the matter is to be resolved in some other way.

## 6. Determinations

- The Chair of the Board and/or the Principal has the delegated responsibility to determine whether the College has followed due process.
- The Chair of the Board and/or the Principal may delegate to an external person or agency the authority to review a complaint and report the result of the review to the College Board and/or Principal as applicable.

## 7. Legislative and Regulatory Obligations

The College manages complaints in accordance with applicable legislation and regulatory requirements, including child protection, reportable conduct, privacy and work health and safety obligations.

Where required, complaints may be referred to relevant external authorities or regulators.

### Cooperation with External Authorities

All staff, contractors and volunteers are required to cooperate fully with external authorities investigating complaints or allegations, including Police, Child Safety authorities and relevant regulatory bodies.

The College will not impede, obstruct or delay any external investigation and will support lawful information sharing consistent with privacy legislation.

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## 8. Table of Review

Revision	Issue Date	Summary of Changes
1.0	30 Sep 11	Initial Release
1.0	31 Aug 12	Reviewed
1.0	31 Aug 13	Reviewed
1.0	29 Aug 14	Reviewed
1.0	31 Aug 15	Reviewed
1.0	31 Aug 16	Reviewed
1.0	31 Aug 17	Reviewed
1.0	31 Aug 18	Reviewed
1.0	31 Aug 19	Reviewed
1.0	31 Aug 20	Reviewed
1.0	31 Aug 21	Reviewed
1.0	31 Aug 22	Reviewed
1.0	31 Aug 23	Review and adjusted
1.0	30 Aug 24	Reviewed
1.0	30 Aug 25	Reviewed and adjusted
1.0	02 Mar 26	Review and adjusted to align to Child Safe Standards



# APPENDIX A

## COMPLAINTS PROCESS FLOWCHART

