

*Complaints Management
Policy for
Parents and Volunteers*



ST ANDREWS
CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

INSPIRED BY
FAITH

DISTINGUISHED BY
CHARACTER

LEADERS BY
INFLUENCE



Complaints Management Policy for Parents and Volunteers

PREAMBLE

All policy, protocols and procedures flow from the St Andrews Christian College Mission Statement:

“To educate our students so that they are well skilled, understand life on the basis of biblical truth, and are motivated to walk with God and serve Him in their lives, so that they will be a positive Christian influence in the world.”

POLICY DOCUMENT INFORMATION

TITLE:	Complaints Management Policy for Parents
AUTHOR:	S. Leslie
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:	isConnect Complaints Model Policy (ISV)
PURPOSE:	To provide policy and direction for all the College Community.
RELATED DOCUMENTS:	This Policy and Procedure applies to complaints and allegations arising from students, parents, staff or the public. See Working Together: Parent Code of Conduct; Reportable Conduct (Whistleblower) Policy; Staff Grievance Policy; Child Protection Policy

KEY DATES

ISSUE DATE:	September 2021
REVIEW DATE:	2023

1. RATIONALE

St Andrews Christian College acknowledges that, as we are all flawed human beings, from time to time grievances may arise within the College community and that these need to be dealt with in a proper and Christ-like manner. We place a high value on nurturing and sustaining positive relationships within the College community that are based on biblical principles of compassion, honesty, trust and forgiveness. From time to time dissatisfaction, misunderstanding or concerns ('complaint') about the impact of a decision or practice on a student need to be aired, heard, understood and clarified or dealt with in a timely and appropriate way, so that we can move forward in a positive manner, with restored trust and respect.

This Policy seeks to provide parents and members of the public with clear information about dealing with concerns and allegations that may arise. Most commonly this will be between parents and a teacher or the College administration.

This document sets out the principles, guidelines and procedures governing the College's resolution of complaints. It also provides procedures for the effective capture, reporting and management of a complaint. It outlines both informal and formal complaint management processes. It is in line with international complaints handling standards (ISO 10002:2004 Quality Management - Customer satisfaction - Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations)

2. PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 The College is committed to developing and maintaining trusting, cooperative relationships between parents, students and all members of the College community, to ensure the best educational opportunities are provided for every student.
- 2.2 The College assures all members of the College community that complaints will not give rise to victimisation or reprisal, and seeks such an assurance from any person making a complaint.
- 2.3 The College chooses to view complaints as a form of feedback which can inform future improvements. As such, all complaints will be managed and responded to fairly and confidentially, seeking resolution and the restoration of trust and respect in the relationship.
- 2.4 The College will seek to identify concerns and complaints that can be identified and resolved quickly and informally. A more formal process and investigation may be required to properly resolve a serious, difficult or complex issue.
- 2.5 The College is committed to child safety and has zero tolerance for abuse of any kind, especially for the more vulnerable children in our care.¹
- 2.6 It is not possible to respond to or communicate with an anonymous complainant. However, the College will always act if a concern about child safety is raised, and investigate any legitimate allegation.

¹ Vulnerable children include those with disability, or those with cultural or language differences, including children of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage.



- 2.7 This Complaints Policy and accompanying Procedures are intended to be conciliatory, non-adversarial and non-legal, except where criminal behaviour is alleged.
- 2.8 The College is committed to natural justice and Christian consideration, ensuring that all those involved in the process will be able to express their concerns and views respectfully and to be treated with dignity and respect.
- 2.9 Complaints and any actions, determinations and outcomes will be recorded and kept on file, in line with Privacy law and obligations. The complainant will receive a copy of the final decisions.

3. SCOPE

Issues that might be considered under the Complaints Management Policy could include, for example:

- 3.1 A breach of the obligations by the College in relation to the democratic principles as set out in the Education and Reform Regulations (2017)².
- 3.2 Availability of information about the College's performance.
- 3.3 The right of a parent or student to access information about their student's achievement.
- 3.4 Decisions, actions, or activities for which the school is responsible and which are thought to go against the spirit of the College's Mission and Values or which are alleged to be inequitable or procedurally unfair.
- 3.5 Perceived personal concerns that impact school-related interpersonal relationships.
- 3.6 This Complaints Policy **does not apply** to concerns that staff may have in relation to the terms and conditions of employment. These are covered in the Staff Grievance Policy.
- 3.7 This Policy **does not apply** to students. The College has created an *internal student-friendly process* for students to use when something goes wrong or is difficult for them.

4. THE STAGES OF COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT

4.1 Informal Complaints:

Where possible, the College encourages concerns to be identified and resolved speedily and informally with *the member of staff most directly involved* e.g. classroom teacher/Head of School/the Deputy Principal. Informal discussions can be conducted by telephone, email or in person.

In contacting the person, it would be helpful to:

- identify the conduct or issue that concerns you
- identify the impact of the conduct or issue on you or your child, and
- outline, where possible, how you would like the matter to be resolved.

² This, together with 5.2 and 5.3, are requirements as set out in the VRQA *Guidelines to the Minimum Standards* (January, 2019) page 6.



4.2 Formal Complaints:

Where the concern has not been resolved to the satisfaction of those concerned, a formal complaint in writing under the auspices of this policy may be made to the Head of School or the Deputy Principal. Vexatious or frivolous complaints will be treated as outside this policy.

4.2.1 The process for managing formal complaints is shown in graphic form in Appendix 1. The following describes this process:

- Step 1.** When a complaint (concern / allegation) is received it will be logged and recorded securely in our system. concerns@standrews.vic.edu.au
- Step 2.** A written communication, either email or letter, will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise of the process and time estimate for investigating and making a decision regarding the complaint. It is our policy to attempt to resolve issues within 14 days.
- Step 3.** After review by an executive staff member, the complaint will be allocated to the person most qualified and informed to manage the process. NB, if the complaint alleges criminal behaviour, it will be reported to Victoria Police or DHHS.
- Step 4.** After full, fair, impartial and timely investigation, the executive staff member will make a determination and communicate this to the complainant in writing. The matter will be closed if this response is accepted.
- Step 5.** If the response is unacceptable, it can be appealed, and this will involve an internal review by the Principal or delegate, who may seek additional information or submissions from the relevant parties. A written response will be made within 14 days, and if accepted, the matter will be closed. If it is not accepted, the complainant should direct their complaint to the Chair of the College Board.
- Step 6.** If the response from the College Board is unacceptable the complainant may pursue external resolution alternatives.

4.2.2 If the complaint concerns the decisions, actions or activities of the Principal, a formal complaint should be made to the Chair of the College Board.

4.2.3 Any appeals process for a complaint against the Principal should be addressed to the Chair of the College Board and will be handled by a sub-committee of the College Board.

5. LEGAL AND REGULATORY BASIS FOR COMPLIANCE

- 5.1 Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
- 5.2 Education and Training Reform Regulations (2017)
- 5.3 Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Minimum Standards
- 5.4 Child Safe Standards Ministerial Order 870
- 5.5 Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)



6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1 The **College Board** is responsible for:
- determining this policy and reviewing it on a regular basis
 - responding to any formal complaint raised that relates to the Principal
 - responding to an appeal if that is lodged in relation to an unresolved formal complaint
- 6.2 The **Principal** (or delegate) is responsible for:
- determining the complaints procedures and ensuring that they are implemented in a way that is consistent with this policy
 - ensuring the complaints policy is communicated to parents and the wider school community and external community via the website with copies also available from the school office
 - responding to a formal complaint brought under this policy
 - retaining a register of formal complaints (listing the date, subject and resolution) for reporting to the **College Board on an annual basis and to be available to the VRQA as required.**
- 6.3 **Members of staff** are responsible for:
- responding to and resolving concerns and complaints raised informally
 - responding to concerns raised by students.

7. BREACH OF POLICY OR PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

- 7.1 Any breach of College policy by a parent will be considered under this policy by the Principal and will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.
- 7.2 The Principal may take appropriate action in response to a breach of the policy, including:
- The provision of a verbal or a written warning
 - Withdrawal of certain privileges or opportunities
 - Exclusion from future College events or functions (School Community Safety Order) see Appendix 1
 - Exclusion from the College grounds and facilities (School Community Safety Order)
 - Revocation of their child's enrolment.

8. POLICY REVIEW

The College Board will review this policy and monitor its implementation, including the register of complaints, on an annual basis.

APPENDIX 1 —

Protection of School Communities – Orders That Respond to Risks of Occupational Violence and Aggression

The *Education and Training Reform Amendment (Protection of School Communities) Act 2021* (Vic) empowers authorised persons (Principals) to ban aggressive and violent parents from entering school grounds. Under the legislation, authorised persons (including Principals) have the power to:

- direct a person to leave and remain off school grounds, or other places related to the school (**an immediate school community Safety Order**); or
- prohibit a person from entering or remaining on school grounds or other places related to the school, or from engaging in certain types of inappropriate conduct (**an ongoing school community Safety Order**).

Immediate School Community Safety Order

An immediate school community Safety Order can be made if the authorised person reasonably believes an order is necessary because the person poses an unacceptable and imminent risk of:

1. causing harm to a member of the school community; or
2. causing significant disruption to the school; or
3. interfering with the wellbeing, safety or educational opportunities of students enrolled at the school.

An immediate school community Safety Order is appropriate where an imminent risk of harm may occur. This will require immediate and urgent preventive and protective action. Such an order will only remain in effect for up to 14 days or until the process for the making an ongoing school community Safety Order can be undertaken.

As soon as practicable after an immediate school community Safety Order is made, the authorised person must review the order and either make an ongoing school community Safety Order or revoke the immediate school community Safety Order.

Ongoing School Community Safety Order

An ongoing school community Safety Order can be made if the authorised person reasonably believes that the person:

1. poses an unacceptable risk of harm to a member of the school community;
2. poses an unacceptable risk of causing significant disruption to the school;
3. poses an unacceptable risk of interfering with the wellbeing, safety or educational opportunities of students enrolled at the school;
4. has behaved and is likely to behave in a disorderly, offensive, intimidating or threatening manner to a member of the school community; or
5. has engaged and is likely to engage in vexatious communications with, or regarding, a staff member at the school.

Ongoing school community Safety Orders can last for a maximum of 12 months and require a Principal to undertake additional procedural fairness requirements.

Those who are banned from school grounds will still be able to communicate with the school and can seek an external review at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.