

Complaints Resolution Policy

Rationale

At Sacred Heart College, we are committed to building a school culture that features positive and respectful relationships. As a Catholic school in the Mercy tradition, these relationships are grounded in the values of the gospel, in particular, the Mercy values of love, mutual respect, justice, hope and service. In keeping with Catholic social teaching, a respect for the innate dignity of each person will shape all our relationships.

In building and nurturing this culture, we acknowledge that students, 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. The College 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 son or daughter.

Procedures for receiving and responding directly to student complaints about a teacher, another student(s) or a College operational matter are outlined separately in Sacred Heart College policies that include the *Justice Policy*, the *Students on Review Policy* and the *Student Anti Bullying Policy*.

Procedures for receiving and responding to staff complaints are also addressed separately in related SHC policies, including the *Workplace Equal Opportunity Policy* and the *Workplace Anti Bullying Policy*. Staff may also choose to have a grievance pertaining to employment conditions addressed through processes outlined in the Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement (VCEMEA) 2013 (section, 22:1–4, Disputes).

Principles

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

- We will work with the complainant with respect, courtesy and openness and with a genuine desire to achieve fair and reasonable decisions.
- The complaint will be resolved as quickly as possible.
- Confidentiality, impartiality and the principles of natural justice will form the basis of our complaints resolution process.
- 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.
- Our resolution process will be grounded in sound and fair procedures for information sharing, conciliation, investigation and decision making.
- If a satisfactory outcome cannot be achieved, the College will provide the complainant with options for having the decision reviewed or mediated via an external authority.

- The communal needs of the school community will in most instances exceed the needs of any individual.

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 as a complainant you are a parent, and your concern/complaint relates to your son or daughter's treatment by another student(s) while at College, we expect that you will refer your complaint directly to the College, via her/his homeroom teacher or year level coordinator. Under no circumstances should you approach another student whilst in the care of the College to discuss the issue or chastise him or her. Direct contact with parents to resolve the matter is also discouraged if the complaint pertains to issues or incidents that have arisen at the College.

Procedures

Key Referral People

Complainants are encouraged to make contact with members of staff who are most closely connected with the complaint/concern. For parents, this will be your son or daughter's class teacher, homeroom or year level coordinator. If there is any uncertainty about the most appropriate person to address a concern or complaint, you are encouraged to contact the school. Reception staff will refer you to the appropriate person.

Email Communications and Teaching Staff

Due to teachers' classroom and supervision duties, a complainant's first contact is best made by email, with an appointment request for either a phone conference or face-to-face meeting. Complainants are asked to outline concerns or issues (e.g. learning program, discipline, student/peer incidents) so that the staff member can prepare for the meeting/phone conference. Complainants 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.

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, any actions taken to resolve it and outcomes of those actions
- further and fully investigate the matter
- endeavour to ensure that no one is victimised as a result of a complaint being made

- if necessary, enable a complainant to be accompanied by another person of his/her choice as a support person
- 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

Where a complaint relates to an allegation of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, or when complaints are sufficiently serious or repeated, the Principal will take action to report the matter to the appropriate authorities, ensure a comprehensive investigation, and work with all parties to facilitate a resolution. These authorities may include:

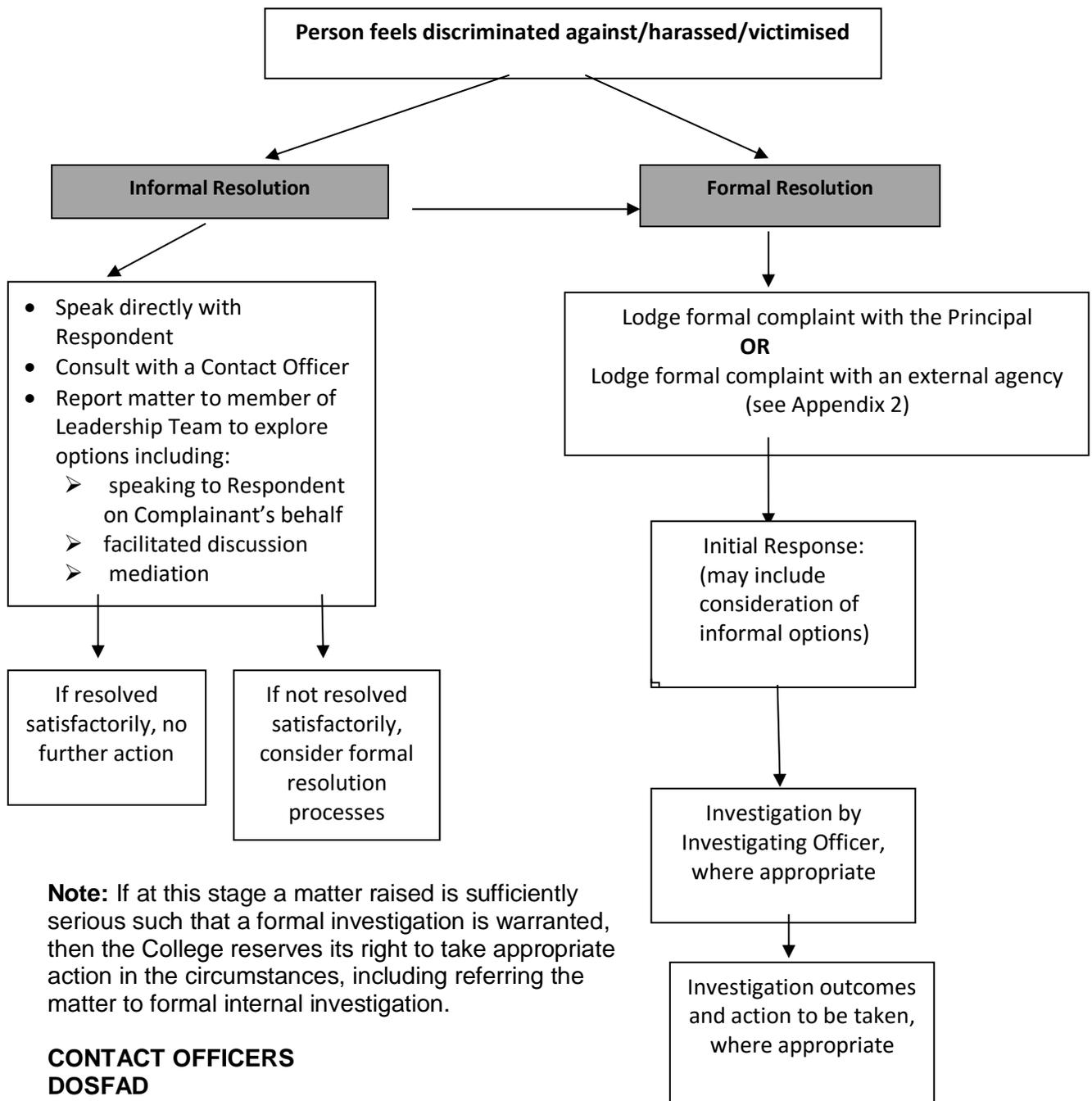
- The Professional Standards Unit of the Catholic Education Melbourne
- Victoria Police.

Avenues of Appeal

If a complaint remains unresolved, or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcomes, the complainant has the right to seek other avenues of appeal through authorities such as:

- the Catholic Education Melbourne
- Mercy Education Limited.

Complaints Procedure Flowchart



Note: If at this stage a matter raised is sufficiently serious such that a formal investigation is warranted, then the College reserves its right to take appropriate action in the circumstances, including referring the matter to formal internal investigation.

CONTACT OFFICERS
DOSFAD
Business Manager

Note: ACCESS Counselling Service is available to Sacred Heart College Kyneton staff and family members involved.
 Contact: 1800 818 728

Related Policies

SHC Kyneton Justice Policy
SHC Kyneton Students on Review Policy
SHC Kyneton Student Anti Bullying Policy
SHC Kyneton Workplace Equal Opportunity Policy
SHC Kyneton Workplace Anti Bullying Policy

RESPONSIBILITY:	Principal
DATE DEVELOPED:	2011
DATE UPDATED:	February 2015
REVIEW DATE:	February 2016 (Annual Review)