St Catherine's School
Sydney

G0V010 Complaints policy

1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale

St Catherine's School Sydney (the School) is committed to managing complaints respectfully, fairly, confidentially, sensitively and in a responsive and timely manner while ensuring the School complies with its policies and relevant legislation.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to how the School handles complaints made in respect of services provided by the School or against School staff, contractors and volunteers.

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

1.3. Whistleblowing Complaints

This policy does not extend to complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures. The procedure for processing whistleblowing complaints is detailed within the School's GEN003 Whistleblower policy.

In summary a whistleblowing disclosure is a disclosure which:

- is made by a board member, staff member, a person who supplies goods or services to the School, including a volunteer, an employer of a supplier or a relative of any of these people;
- involves alleged misconduct, an improper state of affairs or circumstances, or illegal activity, and
- is made to a senior staff member, or officer of the School, the School's auditor or a person who the School has authorised to collect such disclosures.

1.4 Definitions

- Complainant is any individual who has a concern or grievance.
- 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.
- Respondent is the School or any person against whom a complaint or grievance is brought.
- Staff includes casual, temporary and permanent staff of the School.

1.5 Confidentiality

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

1.6 Related Policies

Complaints about reportable conduct will be addressed in accordance with the School's STU004 Child Safety and Protection Policy.

Complaints regarding a grievance between students will be addressed in accordance with the School's STU014 Student quality behaviour and anti-bullying policy, and STU008 Discipline policy.

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Complaints regarding a grievance between staff members about work matters, including work relationships and decision made by other staff members which impact on their work, will be addressed in accordance with the School's HR001 Grievances and dispute resolution policy.

Complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying between staff are generally addressed in accordance with the School's HR003 Unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation policy, and HR004 Workplace bullying policy.

Complaints regarding teacher accreditation processes will be addressed in accordance with the School's EMP008 Achieving proficient teacher accreditation policy, and EMP009 Maintenance of teacher accreditation policy. Overseas students enrolled at the school on a study visa should also refer to STU025 Overseas student policy.

2. Policy

2.1 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 Raising a Complaint procedure (below).

If a complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed by the School's Child Safety and Protection Policy. A complaint about a reportable conduct matter may be current or historical. Timeframes for investigation of complaints relating to reportable conduct are dependent on the individual matter and may be over an extended period of time, particularly in the case of a historical allegation. The School is bound by privacy or other confidentiality requirements when conducting investigations of reportable conduct allegations, which may limit the information that can be shared with the complainant regarding the outcome of an investigation. Please refer to the School's Child Safety and Protection Policy for information about reportable conduct.

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.

3. Procedures

3.1 Raising a complaint

3.11 The Complainant

Complaints may be raised by a complainant directly with the person involved. 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 the Deputy Head via email deputy@stcatherines.nsw.edu.au. Any complaint about the conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the Headmistress in the first instance (headmistress@stcatherines.nsw.edu.au).

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Should the matter not be resolved between the parties directly in the first instance, the complainant may raise the matter with the school. A complaint can be made in writing to the Headmistress via email headmistress@stcatherines.nsw.edu.au.

An anonymous concern can be raised via a link on the School website under 'raising a concern'

Where a person wishes to make a complaint concerning the Headmistress, the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of Council via email chairofcouncil@stcatherines.nsw.edu.au. In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the Headmistress should be read as references to the Chair of the Council.

3.12 The School

The Headmistress or delegate will generally acknowledge receipt of a complaint raised with the School in writing as soon as practicable.

3.2 Handling complaints

3.21 Assessing a complaint

The Headmistress/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 in the Related Policies section.
- 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.

3.22 Managing a complaint

The Headmistress/Delegate generally will manage a 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 Headmistress 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 respondent 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.

3.3 Record Keeping

All complaints are documented and stored securely and confidentially. A central register of complaints is maintained by the EA to the Headmistress.

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Communicating this policy

AUDIENCE	COMMUNICATED BY	COMMUNICATION PATHWAY
All staff	Deputy Headmistress	Staff portal
Students/parents/guardians	Headmistress	Student/parent portal Website

Responsibilities

Chair of Council
Deputy Headmistress
Headmistress

Authorisation

20 Sept 25

Signature of Chair of Council

Date

Certified by

20/9/25

Signature of Policy Officer

Date

Policy number	GOV010	Version	0009
Written by	Chair of Council	Approved date	20 September 2025
Authorised by	Chair of Council	Scheduled review	20 September 2028
Certified by	Policy Officer		

Document tracking

Version	Date	Change
0007	26 May 2021	Role and responsibility changes.
0008	28 March 2024	Changed to new format in adherence with 2024 Style Guide and Grammar Guide. Title changes. Specifically include Holiday Care and Aquatic Centre operations in the policy as we have external parents/guardians for both.
0009	20 September 2025	Updated in line with AISNSW Complaints policy. Title updates. Procedure updates. Changed to a Governance policy.

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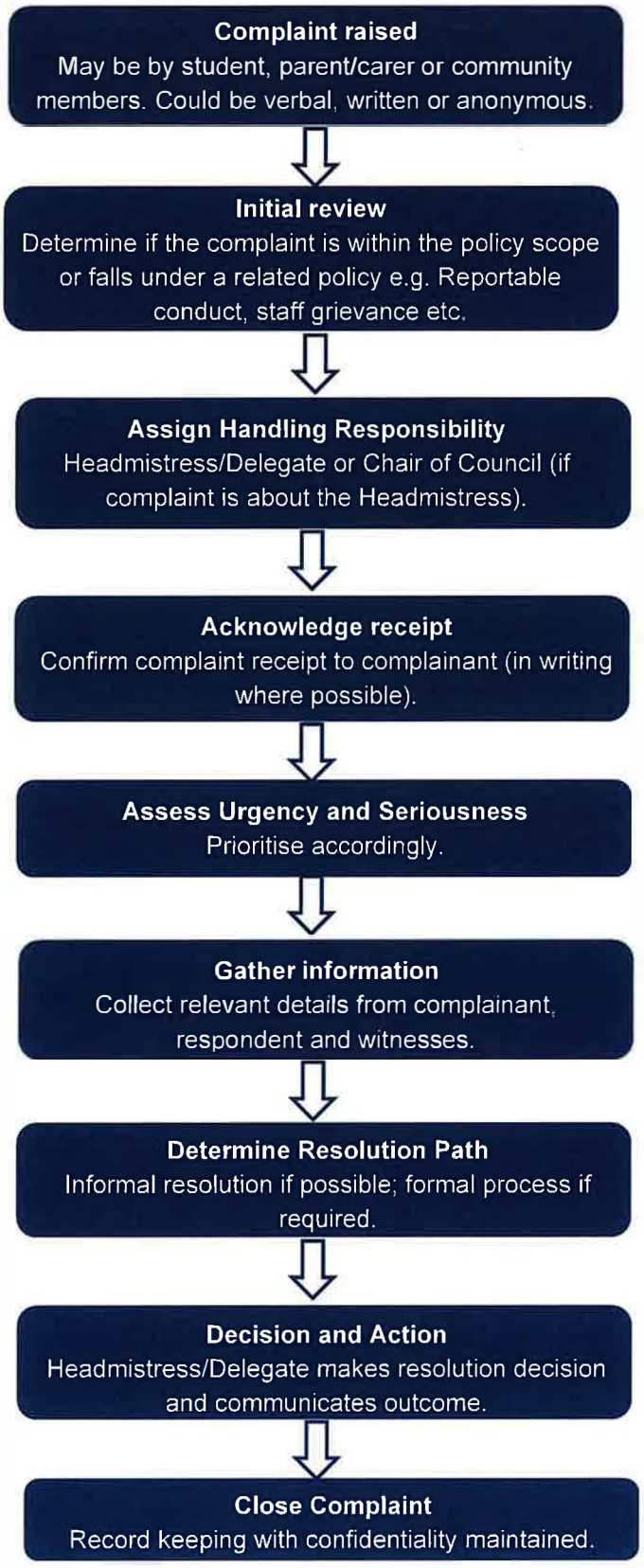
Steps for Responding to a Complaint

Appendix A

The following steps represents the process outlined in the St Catherine's School Sydney Complaints Policy (STU005), guiding the steps from the raising of a complaint through to resolution.



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Acknowledging a complaint **Appendix B**

Subject: Acknowledgement of Your Complaint – [Reference Number / Date]

Dear [Complainant's Name],

Thank you for your email dated [Date] regarding [brief description of complaint]. We acknowledge receipt of your complaint and appreciate you bringing this matter to our attention.

In line with St Catherine's School's Complaints Policy, your concern will be reviewed by [Headmistress/Delegate Name], who will assess the matter and determine the appropriate next steps. We will aim to provide you with an update on the progress of your complaint by [date or timeframe, e.g., within 10 working days].

Please note that all complaints are handled respectfully, fairly, and confidentially. If we require additional information to assist with our review, we will contact you directly.

If you have any questions in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact [Contact Name] at [Contact Email] or [Phone Number].

Kind regards,

[Your Name]
[Your Position]
St Catherine's School Sydney

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Procedural Fairness Checklist **Appendix C**

This checklist ensures that all complaint handling is conducted in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness (also known as natural justice). It can be used by staff to ensure compliance with St Catherine's School Sydney's Complaints Policy.

1. Before Commencing the Process

☐ Confirm the complaint is within the scope of the Complaints Policy.

☐ Identify if the matter should be referred under a related policy (e.g., Child Safety and Protection, Workplace Bullying).

☐ Assign an appropriate decision-maker who is impartial and has no conflict of interest.

☐ Ensure both parties understand their rights and responsibilities during the process.

2. Notification

☐ Provide the respondent with clear details of the complaint, including the specific allegations.

☐ Inform the complainant about the process, anticipated timeframes, and confidentiality requirements.

☐ Advise both parties of their right to a support person (subject to appropriateness).

3. Opportunity to Respond

☐ Give the respondent adequate time to respond to the allegations.

☐ Allow the complainant to clarify or expand on their concerns if needed.

☐ Ensure all parties have the opportunity to present relevant evidence.

4. Evidence Gathering

☐ Collect information from all relevant sources (witness statements, documents, emails, records).

☐ Maintain impartiality when gathering evidence—avoid leading questions or bias.

☐ Keep accurate and confidential records of all interviews and communications.

5. Decision-Making

☐ Base the decision on the facts and evidence presented, not assumptions or personal opinion.

☐ Consider all relevant information and disregard irrelevant factors.

☐ Apply policy, legal obligations, and precedents consistently.

☐ Document the reasoning behind the decision.

6. Communicating the Outcome

☐ Inform both the complainant and respondent of the decision in writing.

☐ Provide reasons for the decision in clear, respectful language (while respecting confidentiality).

☐ Advise of any actions or remedies to be implemented.

☐ Outline any right of review or appeal, including the process and timeframe.

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7. After the Process

☐ Ensure all records are securely stored according to privacy requirements.

☐ Monitor implementation of any agreed actions or remedies.

☐ Reflect on the process for improvements in future complaint handling.

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