

Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and scope

This procedure applies to St Mary and St Mina's Coptic Orthodox College in handling complaints made in respect of services provided by the School or against staff members, which includes employees, contractors and volunteers.

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

1.2 Whistleblowing complaints

This procedure does not extend to complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures. The procedure for processing whistleblowing complaints are outlined in the School's *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.

1.3 Related policies

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

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, are addressed in accordance with the School's *Staff Grievance Policy*.

1.4 Confidentiality

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

2. Complaints

2.1 General information

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.

Constructive feedback is the core of professional growth, and we are committed to growing as a school, as individual faculties and as individual teachers. The School would like to have an opportunity to work through any concerns you may have.

Complaints may be made by a student or parent/carer.

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.

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 section 3. If a complaint that concerns the behaviour of a staff member may constitute reportable conduct, the matter will be addressed in accordance with the School's *Child Protection Policy*. 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 may be reported under this policy.

2.2 Reportable conduct

Reportable conduct means:

- any sexual offence or sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child (including a child pornography offence or an offence involving child abuse material);
- any assault, ill-treatment or neglect of a child; and
- any behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child whether or not, in any case, with the consent of the child.

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Reportable conduct does not extend to:

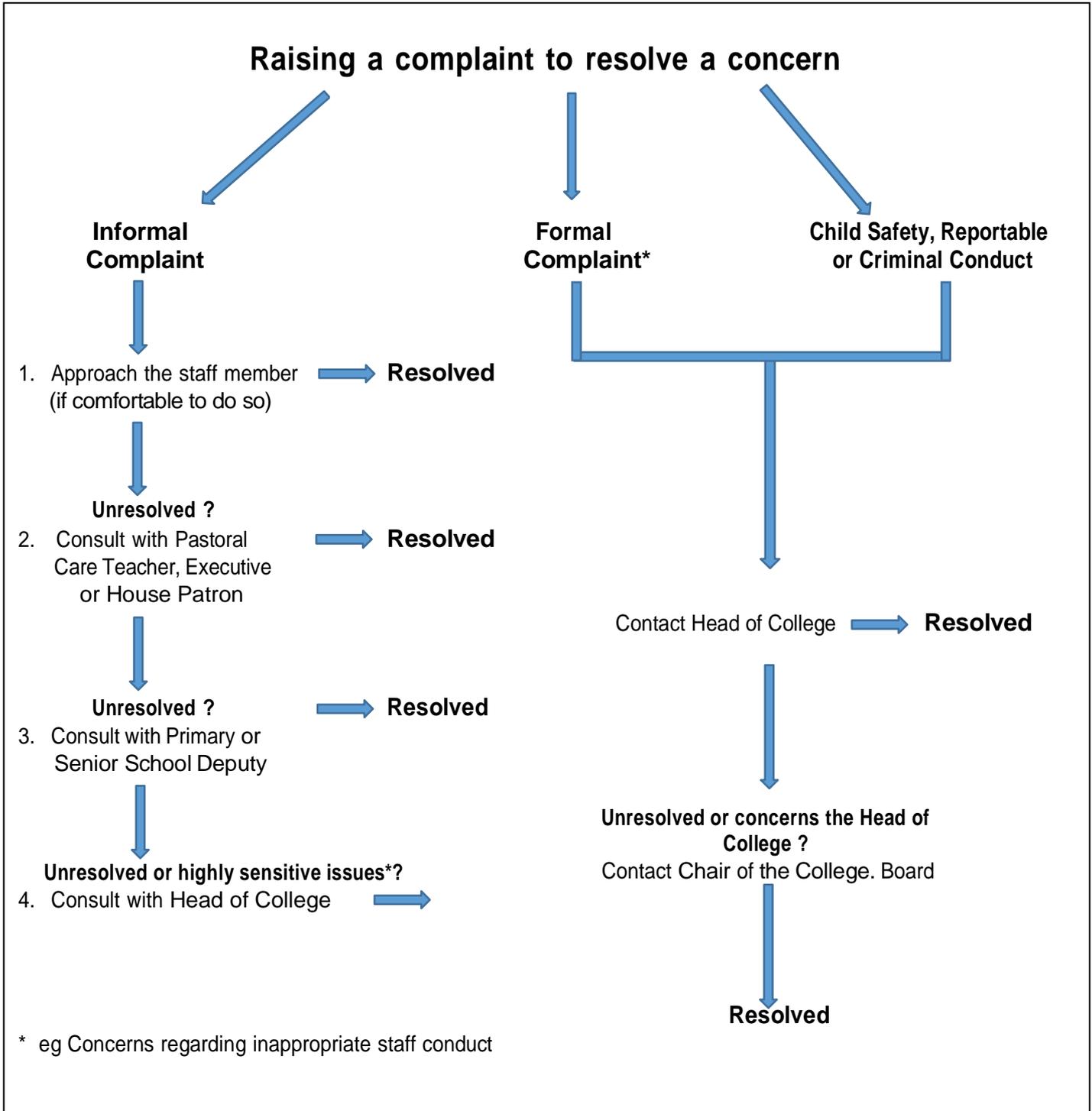
- conduct that is reasonable for the purposes of the discipline, management or care of children, having regard to the age, maturity, health or other characteristics of the children and to any relevant codes of conduct or professional standards; or

- the use of physical force that, in all the circumstances, is trivial or negligible, but only if the matter is to be investigated and the result of the investigation recorded under workplace employment procedures; or
- conduct of a class or kind exempted from being reportable conduct by the Ombudsman under section 25CA.

Examples of conduct that would not constitute reportable conduct include (without limitation) touching a child in order to attract a child's attention, to guide a child or to comfort a distressed child; a school teacher raising his or her voice in order to attract attention or to restore order in the classroom; and conduct that is established to be accidental. Sometimes an allegation may fall within more than one category.

3. Raising a complaint

3.1 The complainant



3.1.1 Informal complaints

Informal complaints may be raised by a complainant directly with the person involved. The flow chart above is an example of a correct procedure to raise an informal complaint.

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 *Head of Primary/ Secondary or the Head of College*.

Any complaint about the inappropriate conduct of a staff member should be made to the *Head of College*.

3.1.2 Formal complaints

Should the matter not be resolved through informal processes, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the School. A formal complaint can be made in writing to the *Head of College*, via email f.david@stmarynsw.edu.au.

Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the Head of College the complaint should be made in writing to the *Chair of the Board*, via ross.nassif@sydneycopts.org In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the *Head of College* should be read as references to the *Chair of the College Board*.

3.1.3 Complaints regarding child safety, reportable or criminal conduct

A concern regarding child safety, or the reportable or criminal conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the *Head of College* in the first instance. A complaint regarding a concern of this matter may be made verbally (face to face), by email, letter, by phone call or in a meeting.

3.2 The School

The *Head of College* will generally acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint in writing as soon as practicable.

4. Handling complaints

4.1 Assessing a complaint

The *Head of College or their delegate* 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 which are dealt with by the relevant policies, see section 1.2; 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 Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), Police or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.

4.2 Managing a formal complaint

The *Head of College* generally will 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) advising the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision of the *Head of College* 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.

5. Contact

If you have any queries about this procedure, you should contact Mrs. Lana Micallef, Front office Manager for advice.

VERSION HISTORY				
VERSION	APPROVED BY	REVISION DATE	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE	AUTHOR
1	Head of College	2018	Implementation	Head of College
2	Head of College	2020	Revised	Head of College
3	Head of College	2021	Revised	Head of College
4	Head of College	2022	Revised	Head of College
5	Head of College	2023	Revised	Head of College