



## Grievance Policy and Procedure

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VERSION HISTORY				
VERSION	APPROVED BY	REVISION DATE	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE	AUTHOR
1	Head of College	2013	Policy and procedure implementation	Head of College
2	Head of College	2017	Policy and procedure review	Head of College
3	Head of College	2020	Policy and procedure review	Deputy Head of College

\*Next review of policy to take place in December 2022 by Deputy Head of College

# Grievance Policy and Procedure

## About this policy

This policy sets out how St Mary & St Mina's Coptic Orthodox College **assesses, resolves** and **follows up** complaints identified by students and/or parents. The policy sets out **clear guidelines** and **expectations** for stakeholders, ensuring that complaints or grievances are always handled **transparently, confidentially** and in a **timely manner**, while upholding the principles of **procedural fairness**.

## 1. Introduction

St Mary & St Mina's Coptic Orthodox College (the college) is committed to providing a safe, fair and honest environment where complaints and grievances are dealt with confidentially and in a timely manner.

The college is committed to maintaining a strong sense of community, which fosters Christian values as outlined within the Bible. The Grievance Policy and Procedure was written in the spirit of the gospel of Matthew 5:9 - *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."*

The policy outlines a framework for stakeholders within the college when raising a complaint or grievance.

Parents/caregivers and students are encouraged to come forward with their concerns and grievances in the knowledge that the college will hear their complaints, and that action will always be taken while upholding the principles of procedural fairness for all parties.

## 2. What is a complaint or grievance?

A complaint or grievance is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the college, where a response or resolution is reasonably requested or legally required.

A complaint or grievance can be about any aspect of the services provided by the college, including behaviour or decisions by staff, practices, policies and procedures or the way in which the college has handled a complaint.

This policy applies to all complaints other than complaints made by staff of the college. Complaints made by staff are dealt with under the Staff Complaint Procedure as outlined within the college's Staff Handbook.

Some complaints or grievances may fall outside the standard definition of a complaint. If a complaint or allegation is about a person's behaviour and concerns the protection of children and young people, which could amount to an internal investigation (and possibly a crime), then the Head of College is to notified immediately.

### 2.1 Complaint or grievance handling principles

There are a number of principles that the college is committed to when handling complaints or grievances. These principles include:

- ensuring the respectful treatment of complaints;
- providing information about making complaints and ensuring that it is accessible to complainants;
- good communication with complainants about the status of the complaints;
- taking ownership of complaints and ensuring that people who are responding to complaints are supported;
- timeliness of complaint handling and dealing with issues as soon as possible;
- preventing complainants or students from suffering detriment because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf; and
- transparency through recording and analysing complaints data to inform systems improvement.

### 3. Receiving a complaint

Complaints can be made in many different ways, for example in person, by telephone and in writing by print or online. Any member of staff from the college may receive a complaint.

#### 3.1 Deciding who is the best person to manage the complaint

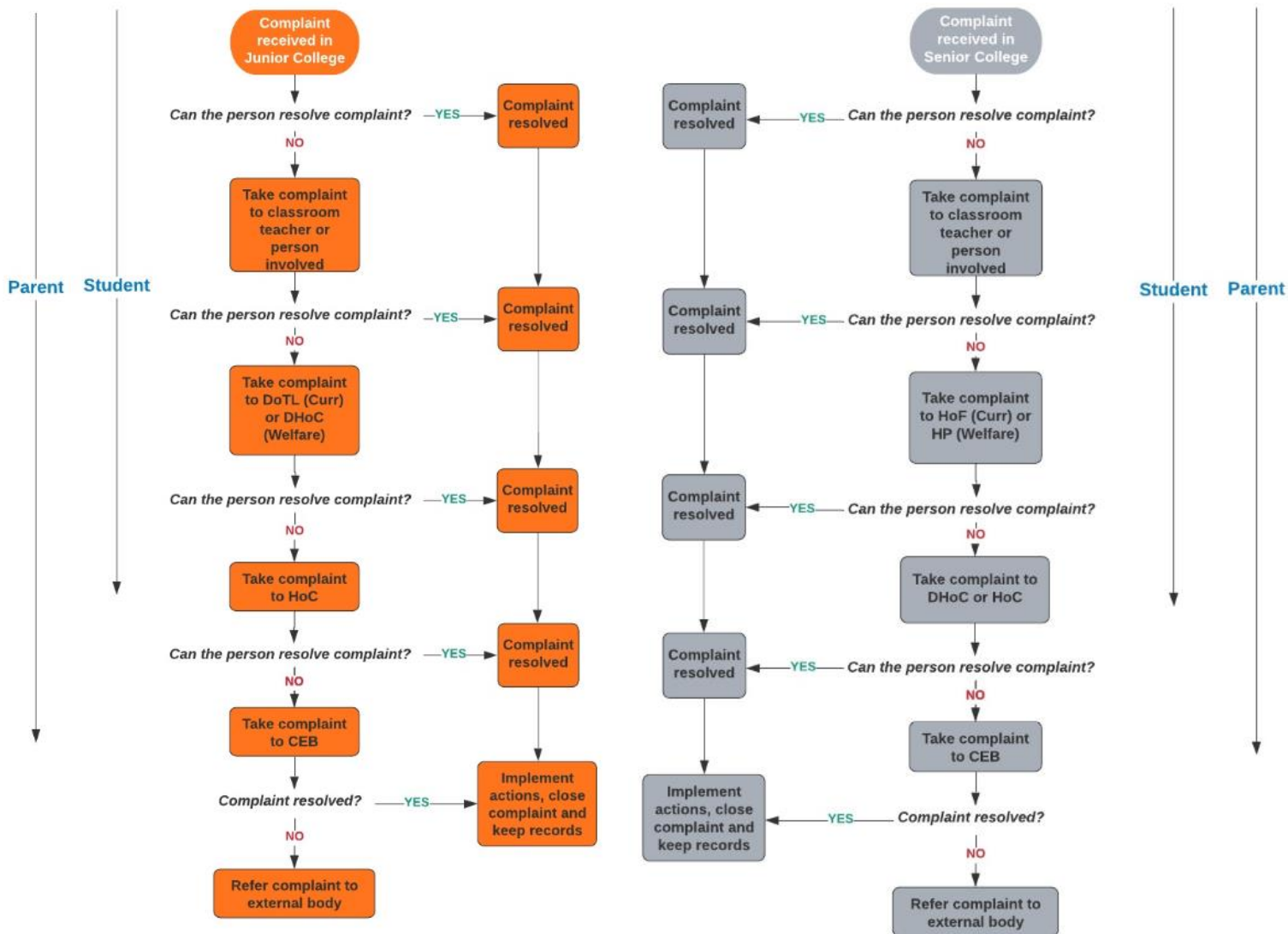
If the complaint is not considered an identified risk (see 3.3 Identified Risks and Risk Management Actions) and cannot be resolved directly by the staff member that received the complaint, then another member of the college staff that has sufficient knowledge and authority about the complaint issue, may manage the complaint.

**Most** complaints are best resolved promptly by the classroom teacher. At the college, the classroom or subject teacher is often the best person to handle routine concerns about matters within their classroom and/or area of responsibility.

**Some** complaints will need the involvement of the Director of Teaching and Learning (for curriculum matters in the Junior College), Head of Faculty (for curriculum matters in the Senior College) or the House Patron (for welfare matters in the Senior College). As issues are clarified, a complaint or grievance may be managed by a person that is more senior than the classroom teacher.

**Few** complaints should require management at the college executive (Deputy Head of College or Head of College) or Coptic Education Board (CEB) level. As issues are clarified, a complaint or grievance may be managed at the college executive or CEB level if required.

## 3.2 Complaint handling flowchart



If the matter still remains unresolved you have the right to seek arbitration through the courts, ombudsman, legal representation and other government commissions such as the human rights commission etc. These might entail some financial cost to you.

Mediation is an option at any stage if the complaint and the person to whom the complaint is directed towards so agree.

## 3.3 Identified risks and risk management actions

The person who receives a complaint should assess it to identify any immediate health, safety or security risks. Any identified risks should immediately be actioned and/or escalated to the Head of College. Any identified risks and risk management actions should then be documented by the Head of College.

Where there are allegations of criminal conduct, there must be a report to Police. For other risks of a child protection nature or if unsure, complete the [Mandatory Reporter Guide](#), record the outcome and take any action required.

## 4. Managing the complaint or grievance

There are five key stages of managing a complaint or grievance. These are:

1. Acknowledging the complaint or grievance;
2. Assess, gather information and resolve;
3. Provide reasons for decision;
4. Implement outcome or actions; and
5. Maintaining records.

### 4.1 Acknowledging the complaint

When responding to a complaint it is important to deal with all complainants with respect, being helpful and positive at all times.

The person managing the complaint should:

- acknowledge the complaint as soon as possible, if possible within 1 working day. This can be done in person, by telephone, email or formally in writing. If acknowledgement was made verbally, it should still be documented by the person managing the complaint;
- let the complainant know that they will be kept up to date with progress;
- keep the matter as confidential as possible by only sharing information with those who need to know about the complaint; and
- understand the issues which need to be addressed and resolve the complaint where possible directly at the 'local level' (classroom teacher or person involved).

#### 4.1.1 Anonymous complaints

The college will endeavour to respond immediately to all forms of complaints, however the extent to which the college can handle anonymous complaints may be limited. It is not appropriate to try to establish who made the complaint or approach anyone to ask them if it came from them. Sometimes anonymous complaints raise the most serious issues.

### 4.2 Assess, gather information and resolve

#### 4.2.1 Assess

It is important to determine what the complaint is about. This may require going back to the complainant to clarify their concerns. For verbal complaints, it is useful to document the complaint issues, provide these to the complainant and ask them to confirm that the complaint has been characterised accurately.

If the process of clarifying/defining the complaint starts to indicate that the complaint issue is different from what was first raised, that should be documented and confirmed with the complainant. That way, there is agreement about the nature of the complaint.

Clarify the complainant's expected outcome. Provide information about likely outcomes for the type of complaint and be candid with the complainant if the desired outcome is not achievable.

Keep matters confidential as it is easier to handle and manage complaints when the information about the complaint is only shared on a need to know basis. While the person managing the complaint cannot enforce this with the complainant, it may be useful to remind them that it will assist the resolution process if only those who need to know are told about the complaint. Similarly, the person managing the complaint should try to maintain confidentiality to the extent that is possible.

#### **4.2.2 Gather information**

Gather enough information to allow a proper assessment of the concerns as quickly as possible. Information to be gathered could include:

- policies and procedures;
- copies of other college documents such as forms, reports, student records etc;
- copies of previous correspondence;
- information and/or accounts from students, staff or other areas of the college; and/or
- further information from complainants.

#### **4.2.3 Resolve**

Complaints should be finalised as soon as possible and no later than 5 working days after they were first raised.

The person managing the complaint must keep the complainant updated on the progress of their complaint. If a delay is anticipated, inform the complainant and other parties and provide reasons for the delay.

Consider any reasonable outcomes suggested by the complainant and any staff member that may be the subject of the complaint.

Ultimately the person managing the complaint determines how a complaint is to be resolved. Outcomes will depend on the circumstances of each complaint and take into account any legal requirements. Wherever possible, flexible approaches to resolving complaints should be considered.

### **4.3 Provide reasons for decision**

The person handling the complaint should provide information about the outcome to the complainant. This may be in a meeting, by telephone or email.

When giving the outcome information, explain:

- the outcome of the complaint and any action that is going to be taken, by whom and when;
- the reason/s for the decision; and
- any internal or external options for review.

The outcome of a complaint should always be confirmed in writing (email is acceptable). Complex complaints may require additional record keeping (for example, file notes of contentious meetings).

While it's good practice to provide as much information as you can about outcomes, it is important keep confidential specific personal details about the management of staff.

If a person is the subject of a complaint, they should also be provided with information about the outcome.

## 4.4 Implement outcome or actions

Take all reasonable steps to implement and monitor the outcomes of the complaint. Where the outcomes relate to the whole of college or other processes, the Head of College or Deputy Head of College should oversee progress and / or delegate responsibility to a specific member of staff with relevant responsibilities.

## 4.5 Maintaining records

Upon the completion of a complaint or grievance, the following records must be maintained:

- the contact details of the complainant;
- how the complaint was managed;
- the outcome of the complaint, including how and whether any concerns were substantiated and the actions taken in response; and
- the steps taken to follow up any outcome actions.

Complaints that are dealt with immediately by the person that has received the complaint initially should use their professional judgement to decide what, if any, records are required to be maintained.

## 5. Reviews

Complainants may request a review of the complaint outcome if they have information that:

- the complaint outcome was incorrect; and/or
- the complaint handling process was unfair.

Requests for a review should be in writing and give the reasons for the request and which particular part of their complaint is the subject of their review request. This request should be made to the person who managed or addressed the initial complaint.

A request for a review should be made within 5 working days from when the initial complaint decision was made.

The review must be conducted by a more senior staff member to the person who handled the complaint. The person reviewing the complaint must not be the subject of the complaint in any way or have been involved in managing the complaint.

Reviews should be completed within 5 working days of the receipt of the request and the complainant subsequently informed of the outcome of the review in writing.

After a review has been conducted internally by the college, the complainant still has the right to request an external review of the complaint or grievance, if they are still dissatisfied with the outcome.

External reviews may be conducted by organisations such as the NSW Ombudsman.