

Complaints Handling Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Scope

This policy and procedure applies to Macquarie Anglican School in handling complaints made in respect of services provided by the School or against staff members, which includes employees, contractors and volunteers.

The procedure is intended to ensure that complaints are handled fairly, efficiently and effectively. A complaint may be made by a student, parent/carer, staff or community member.

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. Whistleblowing complaints are dealt with under the School's [Whistleblowing 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 Safe Policy](#).

Complaints regarding a grievance between staff members about work matters are addressed in accordance with the school's [Staff Grievance Policy](#). This includes work relationships and decisions made by other staff members which impact on their work.

Complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying between staff are generally addressed in accordance with the School's [Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy](#).

1.4 Confidentiality

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

1.5 Audience

The intended audience for this policy is Macquarie Anglican School staff, parents, carers, students and community members.

1.6 Scope

This policy and associated procedures apply to all of the Macquarie Anglican School community.

1.7 Alignment to the Strategic Plan

- **Vision:** Growing a school of excellence and care, honouring God through teaching, learning and service to others.
- **Mission** To develop resilient young people who make a difference in the world within a high quality affordable, Christ-centred education.
- **Values:** We value our shared Christian faith, a culture of lifelong learning, an inclusive and respectful community and our connectedness to the Central West and beyond. Complaints must be addressed in line with the values of Macquarie Anglican School. Our School is committed to providing a safe and

supportive environment where diversity is valued and everyone



is treated with respect, fairness and dignity. Discrimination, sexual and other forms of harassment, bullying, violence and threatening behaviour are unacceptable. All employees, students, parents and visitors in schools are expected to act accordingly.

The School Executive and Council, will act to ensure that the safety, security, health and wellbeing of all employees, students, parents/carers, visitors and community members are protected.

Macquarie Anglican School expects that all parties will, when addressing concerns and complaints:

- maintain the confidentiality of all parties, in line with the School's policies and legislative requirements
- acknowledge that their common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties • act in good faith and in a calm and courteous manner
- show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value difference, rather than judge and blame
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced • ensure that parents are aware of their right to advocacy when communicating the issues involved in their complaint and in negotiating an outcome.

In addition to the expectations of all parties above, the School will address complaints: • courteously

- efficiently
- fairly
- promptly, within timelines agreed with the person with the concern or complaint (where possible concerns or complaints should be addressed within 20 school days)
- in accordance with due process and where appropriate, the principles of natural justice

2. 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 Section 3 of this Policy. 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 Safe Policy](#). Please refer to the [Child Safe 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 may be reported under this policy.

3. Raising a Complaint

A complaint may be raised with the staff member responsible for the area of concern outlined in the table below. The complaint is to be raised in writing, including the use of email.

Complaint or Concern	Staff Member Responsible
Junior School Students – Academic, Behaviour	Class Teacher and/or Academic Leader for each stage

Junior School Students – Wellbeing	Head of Junior School / Head of Student Wellbeing
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Senior School Students – Academic	Academic Leader for the subject concerned Director of Studies
Senior School Students – Behaviour and Wellbeing	Year Coordinator / Head of Wellbeing
Sport	Head of Sport (K-12)
Creative and Performing Arts including peripatetic lessons	Academic Leader - CAPA
Financial and Property Matters	Infrastructure Manager
Administration and Enrolment Matters	Infrastructure Manager
Child Protection	Headmaster (NB: Allegations of reportable conduct must be reported immediately to the Headmaster. Please refer to the School's Child Safe Policy)
Work Health and Safety	Infrastructure Manager
Subject Selection	Director of Studies
Illness and Misadventure matters	Director of Studies

Learning Support	Learning Support Coordinator
Complaints may also be sent to the appropriate Executive member.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Junior School • Head of Senior School • Infrastructure Manager • Deputy Headmaster • Headmaster

The staff member responsible for responding to the complaint will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing as soon as possible, usually within 48 hours.

Should the matter not be resolved through the appropriate person, the complainant may raise the matter with the School Executive members. This is to be made in writing to the appropriate School Executive members or via email complaints@mags.nsw.edu.au. Any complaint about the conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the Headmaster.



As a guide, the following matters are deemed to be serious complaints and must be referred to School Executive staff members:

- Child Protection Matters (refer to the [Child Safe Policy](#))
- Potential criminal acts
- Possession, use or distribution of illegal drugs or prohibited weapons
- Significant breach of Staff or [Student Code of Conduct](#)

All serious matters will be dealt with by the responsible member of the School's Executive team, delegated by the Headmaster.

Where a person wishes to make a complaint concerning the Headmaster, the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of the School Council, care of the PA to the Headmaster, at email joanne.rankmore@mags.nsw.edu.au. In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the Headmaster should be read as references to the Chair of School Council.

4. Handling complaints

4.1 Assessing a complaint

The staff member responsible for handling the complaint 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 which are dealt with by the relevant policies (refer to Section 1 of this Policy), 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 Ombudsman, Police, Family and Community Services or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters

The staff member responsible for handling the complaint generally will:

- advise the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the School in relation to the complaint
- advise their immediate supervisor of the matter. If the complaint is about the particular supervisor, advise the appropriate Executive Staff member
- record in writing the steps taken, information collected and final decision. For simple matters this could be documented in the staff members' diary or on Edumate
- if appropriate, advise the relevant parties of the complaint at the relevant time and provide them with an opportunity to respond
- collect any additional information the School considers necessary to assess the complaint
- make a decision about how the complaint will be resolved ("resolution decision") and
- advise the complainant, as well as any other relevant parties as appropriate, in writing and/or verbally of the resolution decision and if appropriate, any proposed action to be taken

4.2 Managing a complaint

Serious complaints will be dealt with by the appropriate Executive staff member. The Executive staff member responsible will generally manage complaints by:

- advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the School in relation to the complaint. This includes notifying the complainant that it is the School's intention to resolve the complaint in a timely fashion with a suggested timeline of within 20 days of receiving the formal complaint (However, from time to time the time frame may be longer. The School will communicate to the complainant any reasons for a delay in addressing their complaint.)
- advising their immediate supervisor of the matter (unless the complaint is about the particular supervisor and if so, will advise the Headmaster)



- recording in writing the steps taken, information collected and final decision in CompliSpace
- if appropriate, advising the relevant parties of the complaint at the relevant time and providing them with an opportunity to respond
- collecting any additional information the School considers necessary to assess the complaint
- making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved ("resolution decision") and
- referring to the Corporation's [Risk Rating Criteria](#) Brochure in conjunction with the Headmaster to determine whether the complaint needs to be referred to the Corporation Board or School Council
- advising the complainant and any other relevant parties as appropriate, in writing of the resolution decision 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.

4.3 Complaints Summary

<p>Who is responsible for addressing the complaint</p>	<p>Appropriate staff member as per table above</p>
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Where records of complaints are kept and how they are accessed.	Complaints are held in the Complaints Register and are accessed through the School's CompliSpace data base.
How long will the complaint be stored	7 years
Who will see the complaint	School Council members Executive Staff members
When will this occur	The Complaints register is tabled at the School Council meeting on a yearly basis
What will happen	The staff member dealing with the complaint will communicate to the complainant about the steps being taken and write to the complainant outlining the final decision. Please note it is the goal of the School to resolve complaints in a timely fashion with the aim to resolve the matter within 20 days.



Escalating to the School Council or Anglican Schools Corporation office If the school is unable to resolve a complaint, the issue may be raised with the School Council or the Anglican Schools Corporation for support as appropriate. Complex complaints are those that:

- defy resolution over a long period of time
- involve complex issues (including issues involving more than one school) •
may include complaints about the Headmaster

If a parent with a concern or complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the School, they can contact the School Council by placing their concern or complaint in writing and addressing this to the Chair of Council through the Executive Assistant of Macquarie Anglican School. The Chair of Council will respond to complaints received and, where appropriate, acknowledge, in writing the receipt of a written complaint. The Chair of Council will, as far as possible, attempt to resolve the issue raised by the complainant and provide a final response within a reasonable time frame.

4.3 Complaint resolved

A complaint is considered to be resolved when the complainant and the School agree on an appropriate response or remedy. Possible responses and remedies include:

- an explanation
 - an acknowledgement of each other's perspective and agreement on ways to manage differences
 - an apology or expression of regret
 - an admission of fault
 - a change of decision
 - a change of policy, procedure or practice
 - agreement on what constitutes acceptable behaviour
 - an undertaking that unacceptable behaviour will change
 - the provision of counselling or other support
- Remedies should be implemented as soon as possible.

4.4 Complaint Dismissed

A complaint can only be dismissed:

- after it has been investigated
- if an investigation has determined that the complaint cannot be substantiated

4.5 Complaint Unresolved

A complaint is considered to be unresolved if the complainant does not agree on a course of action and/or a remedy, or if the remedy cannot be implemented. It may not always be possible to fully resolve all complaints to the complainant's satisfaction. This could happen if the complainant has unrealistic expectations about the outcome of their complaint, or if the School's policies or regulations are contrary to their views. If the complaint remains unresolved at the completion of all investigative procedures, or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the manner in which the complaint was handled by the school, the Headmaster may inform the complainant of options for review by an external agency such as Ombudsman NSW.

4.6 Anonymous Complaints

Macquarie Anglican School takes seriously all complaints that are received. However, it recognises that its staff may not be able to fully investigate a complaint if they cannot effectively liaise with the complainant. Furthermore, anonymous complaints raise natural justice issues for respondents who have a right to know the particulars of the allegations made against them. The Headmaster should determine the extent to which an anonymous complaint received by the school shall be investigated.

4.7 Unreasonable Complainant Conduct

Unreasonable complainant conduct is behaviour that:

- is clearly and significantly outside the expectations of confidentiality, cooperation, courtesy and respect
- calls for staff resources and time unjustified by the nature or significance of the complaint
- is vexatious; an action or complaint that is brought without merit, often to cause annoyance to another person
- is oriented towards conflict.



The Headmaster, in conjunction with other Executive Staff members, can determine if a complainant's conduct is unreasonable. If so determined, they will develop a plan to address the complaint and the complainant's interaction with the school.

When a complainant uses threatening or violent behaviour staff are to follow the protocols outlined in the Communication Guidelines. Staff who feel their safety is in jeopardy are to immediately contact the Headmaster, a member of the Executive and if appropriate the Police.

4.8 Communicating

The School should brief all members of staff (including volunteers) about its Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures. It will also provide staff with access to training appropriate to their responsibilities under these procedures.

5. Contact

If you have any queries about the Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure, you should contact the Headmaster for advice.

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