

## St Paul's International College

### Guidelines and procedures regarding complaints and appeals from students, parents and community members

St Paul's International College is committed to a safe and supportive environment, characterised by fairness, mutual trust, respect and reconciliation. Any parent, student or community member who has a complaint or grievance has the right to have this addressed.

The College's policy for dealing with complaints and grievances includes processes for raising and responding to matters of concern identified by parents and/or students. These processes incorporate, as appropriate, principles of procedural fairness.

Student complaints should be brought directly to the attention of their class teacher, or to Mr Blaik Junior School Coordinator, Mr Pollard Senior School Coordinator, Ms Scott the Head of Leadership & Administration or to Mr. Laing the Head of Teaching & Learning, so that the matter can be discussed. The student can do so in writing or in person. The appropriate staff member will interview the student and either resolve the issue or escalate it to another staff member.

This process for making a complaint is published on the College website.

Parents or members of the community may raise concerns with the College at any time through email, in writing or by telephone. Initial contact is made through the College Secretary. Grievances are then communicated to relevant executive members of staff with due regard to privacy and confidentiality.

#### **Complaints/grievances regarding child protection issues:**

Parents, carers and community members are encouraged to report any conduct that is in their view inappropriate, reportable or criminal conduct to the College Director or Head of Admin. All such reports will be dealt with in accordance with the published Child Protection Policy (see website) and the School's complaint handling procedures detailed below.

Complaints and grievances include allegations of staff misconduct or reportable conduct such as:

- (i) 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);
- (ii) any assault, ill-treatment or neglect of a child;
- (iii) any behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child whether or not, in any case, with the consent of the child.

Complaints and grievances involving allegations of staff misconduct or reportable conduct should be sent directly to the College Director or the Head of Admin. The College Secretary can supply contact details. Confidentiality on these matters should be maintained at all times. Please see below - [5](#) Formal Complaints Handling Procedure for child protection matters including staff misconduct and reportable conduct

The College undertakes to respond to such matters promptly and with due regard to the seriousness of matters raised. Formal responses or notifications are forwarded by relevant members of the Executive staff or by the College Director where appropriate.

## **Complaints and Appeals Policy in detail**

### **1) Purpose**

- a) The purpose of the College's Complaints and Appeals Policy is to provide a student with the opportunity to access procedures to facilitate the resolution of a dispute or complaint.
- b) The internal complaints and appeals processes are conciliatory and non-legal.

### **2) Complaints against other students/staff**

- a) Grievances brought by a student against another student will be dealt with under the College's Behaviour Policy/Code of Conduct.
- b) Complaints or grievances brought by a student/parent against a staff member will be dealt with by the Executive.

### **3) Informal Complaints Resolution**

- a) In the first instance, the College requests there is an attempt to informally resolve the issue through mediation/informal resolution of the complaint.
- b) Students should contact their class teacher /Year Coordinator/Executive member, or any member of the College staff they feel comfortable to discuss the problem with in the first instance to attempt mediation/informal resolution of the complaint.
- c) Parents should contact the Head of Leadership & Administration to discuss the problem with in the first instance to attempt mediation/informal resolution of the complaint.
- d) If the matter cannot be resolved through mediation, the matter will be referred to the Head of Leadership & Administration or College Director as appropriate and the College's internal formal complaints and appeals handling procedure will be followed.

**4) Formal Complaints Handling Procedure for non-child protection matters**

- a) The process of this grievance procedure is confidential and any complaints or appeals are a matter between the parties concerned and those directly involved in the complaints handling process.
- b) The student/parent must notify the school in writing of the nature and details of the complaint or appeal.
- c) Written complaints or appeals are to be lodged with the College Director.
- d) Students may be accompanied and assisted by a support person (usually a parent or caregiver) at all relevant meetings.
- e) Each complainant can present his/her case to the College Director.
- f) The formal grievance process will commence within 10 working days of the lodgement of the complaint or appeal with the College Director.
- g) Once the College Director has come to a decision regarding the complaint or appeal, the student/parent will be informed in writing of the outcome and the reasons for the outcome.
- h) If the grievance procedure finds in favour of the student/parent, the College will immediately implement the decision and any corrective and preventative action required.

**5) Formal Complaints Handling Procedure for child protection matters including staff misconduct and reportable conduct**

- a) Confidentiality must be maintained by all parties.
- b) The student/parent must notify the College Director or the Head of Admin in writing or via phone of the nature and details of the complaint and/or request an interview with the College Director or Head of Admin.
- c) An interview will be arranged as soon as possible to hear and note details/evidence of the allegations.
- d) If the student attends, they may be accompanied and assisted by a support person (usually a parent or caregiver).
- e) Depending on the seriousness of the allegations, the police may be called and a police interview arranged for the student/parents. Parents also have the option of directly calling the Police for serious matters.

- f) There will be an investigation conducted by the Head of Admin or for more serious allegations, a police case may be started and/or an investigation conducted by an external investigator contracted by the College.
- g) Once the College Director or Head of Admin has come to a decision regarding the complaint or grievance, the student/parent will be informed in writing of the outcome and the reasons for the outcome. They may then appeal the decision by writing to the College Director. The outcome of that appeal will be conveyed to the student/parent in writing within 10 days of the appeal being received.
- h) If the complaints/grievance procedure finds in favour of the student/parent, the College will immediately implement the decision and any corrective and preventative action required.
- i) For cases of serious misconduct or reportable conduct, the College will be guided by the Police, the Office of the Children's Guardian and/or external investigator. The parents will be informed of the outcome in writing by the Head of Admin as soon as possible upon completion of the investigation.

## 6) External Appeals Process for Parents

- a) If the complaints procedure does not find in favour of the parent or the parent is dissatisfied with the result of the complaints procedure, he/she will be informed of the external complaints and appeals process available to them at no cost.
- b) The external body used for the College's external complaints and appeals processes is the Wollongong Catholic Education Office which can be contacted by phoning 0242530800. This is accessible by **local parents**. The external body for international students and their parents is the Ombudsman <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/How-we-can-help/overseas-students> In Australia, call: **1300 362 072** (calls from mobile phones at mobile phone rates). Outside Australia, call **+61 2 6276 0111**.

## 7) Definitions

- a) Working Day – *any day other than a Saturday, Sunday or public holiday during term time*
- b) Student – *a student enrolled at the College or the parent(s)/legal guardian of a student where that student is under 18 years of age*
- c) Support person – *a friend/teacher/relative not involved in the grievance [lawyers and/or education agents are not acceptable support persons at this stage of the complaints handling process]*