

B8.2 Guidelines and procedures regarding complaints, grievances 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. It is important for staff to understand this process as outlined below.

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.

These should be brought directly to the attention of the Year Coordinator, a member of the Executive, Principal or the College Director so that the matter can be discussed.

Students are made aware during their orientation of the process of raising concerns. These are outlined in their orientation Booklets and for boarders in Boarding House information. The 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 or the Youth Worker. Grievances are then communicated to relevant executive members of staff with due regard to privacy and confidentiality.

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, the Principal or by the College Director where appropriate.

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 Principal or College Director. All such reports will be dealt with in accordance with the published Child Safe 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 Principal or College Director. 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 for STUDENTS in detail

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.

Complaints against other students/staff

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

Informal Complaints Resolution

- e) In the first instance, the College requests there is an attempt to informally resolve the issue through mediation/informal resolution of the complaint.
- f) Students should contact the Year coordinator or their Boarding Supervisor, 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.
- g) Parents should contact the Principal to discuss the problem with in the first instance to attempt mediation/informal resolution of the complaint.

- h) If the matter cannot be resolved through mediation, the matter will be referred to the Principal or College Director and the College's internal formal complaints and appeals handling procedure will be followed.

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

- i) 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.
- j) The student/parent must notify the school in writing of the nature and details of the complaint or appeal.
- k) Written complaints or appeals are to be lodged with the Principal or College Director.
- l) Where the internal complaints and appeals process is being accessed because the student has received notice by the school that the school intends to report him/her for unsatisfactory course attendance, unsatisfactory course progress or suspension or cancellation of enrolment, the student has 20 days from the date of notification in which to lodge a written appeal.
- m) Internal complaints and appeals processes are available to students at no cost.
- n) Each complainant has the opportunity to present his/her case to the Principal or College Director.
- o) Students may be accompanied and assisted by a support person at all relevant meetings.
- p) The formal grievance process will commence within 10 working days of the lodgement of the complaint or appeal with the Principal or College Director.
- q) Once the Principal or 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.

- r) If the grievance procedure finds in favour of the student, the College will immediately implement the decision and any corrective and preventative action required.
- s) The College undertakes to finalise all grievance procedures within 20 working days.
- t) For the duration of the appeals process, the student is required to maintain enrolment and attendance at all classes.

2) 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 Principal or College Director in writing or via phone or in person of the nature and details of the complaint and/or request an interview with the Principal or College Director.
- 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 Principal 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 Principal or College Director 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 Principal or 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 Principal as soon as possible upon completion of the investigation.

External Appeals Process

- j) If the complaints procedure does not find in favour of the student/parent or the student/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. This information is included in the College's website link under Policies.
- k) The external body used for the College's external complaints and appeals processes is Catholic Schools NSW which can be contacted by phoning 02 9287 1555. This is accessible by **local students and parents**.

Overseas students If the problem is still not solved, a student can contact the Ombudsman for Overseas students <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/complaints/international-student-complaints>.

Complaints can be made online, or by phone 1300 362 072 in Australia +61251173600 outside Australia, 131 450 for translating services in Australia, or writing to Commonwealth Ombudsman GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601 or visiting one of their offices at an addresses found online <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/contact-us>.

Definitions

- l) 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*
- m) 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]