

Complaints Handling Policy



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1. CONTEXT

Saint Ignatius' College Riverview (the College) is a Catholic, Jesuit boarding school for boys from Year 5 to Year 12. Situated on the beautiful Lane Cove River in Sydney NSW, it has an enrolment of over 1600 students. The College is conducted by the Society of Jesus and is part of a worldwide network of Jesuit schools and universities.

Established in 1880, the College is committed to an education for each student that proposes Christ as the model for human life by promoting the spiritual, academic, social, physical and experiential growth of its students.

The educational program at the College is dedicated to the holistic formation of the human person and does so through the pursuit of 'human excellence'. We seek to form, in companionship with parents, young men who are highly competent, committed, compassionate and with a developed conscience. We seek to form young men who are for and with others.

The purpose of the College policies and procedures is to provide a framework which ensures that the safety, individual care (*cura personalis*) and dignity of each person is paramount.

2. PRINCIPLES

Saint Ignatius' College Riverview (the College) aims to create a working and educational environment where all students, staff, parents, volunteers, contractors, visitors and the community are treated with dignity, courtesy and respect.

The College is committed to providing an effective procedure for handling complaints based on the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice and supported by the Executive of the College.

All members of the College community are strongly encouraged to maintain respectful and collaborative working relationships and quickly address any misunderstandings should they arise. However, a person may feel aggrieved in the course of their engagement with the College or feel that a situation cannot be addressed quickly and believe that the situation is serious enough to warrant formal intervention to remedy the issue.

Complaints will be dealt with in a fair, transparent and consistent manner.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all students, staff, parents, volunteers, contractors, visitors and the community.

The Principal has overarching responsibility for this policy document.

4. COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

It is our policy that the College:

- develops and implements a Complaints Policy for managing complaints that include:
 - o how to raise a concern
 - o how the College responds to concerns
- develops and implements clear guidelines and expectations for stakeholders regarding:
 - o how to raise complaints or allegations of staff misconduct or employee reportable conduct

- how the College will respond to complaints or allegations of staff misconduct or employee reportable conduct allegations and convictions
- as soon as practicable, investigates any complaint about the administration, management and operation of the College that, in the Principal’s opinion, is not a frivolous or vexatious complaint
- makes its complaints handling policy publicly available.

This Policy, through its associated Complaints Handling Procedure, provides a process for students, staff, parents, volunteers, contractors, visitors and the community, who feel that they have grounds for complaint, to seek resolution of these issues.

The College will seek to resolve issues quickly and use principles of conflict resolution to ensure that grievances between individuals are resolved with the least amount of stress for those involved.

Processes for reporting complaints and for dealing with their resolution may be informal or formal depending on the nature of the complaint. The College recognises the need to treat all parties with fairness. It views formal complaints as a serious issue.

4.1 Child Safeguarding Complaints

This policy does not deal with the investigation and handling of Child Safeguarding related complaints. All complaints of this nature are to be dealt with using the procedures outlined in the Child Safeguarding Policy and Child Safety Complaints Management Guidelines.

Complainants are not required to assess whether their concern meets the threshold of reporting under the Child Safeguarding Policy before making a complaint. Any complaint or concern about a child’s wellbeing may be reported under this policy.

4.2 Staff Complaints

Complaints regarding an issue between staff members about work matters, including work relationships and decisions made by other staff members which impact on their work, are addressed in accordance with the Staff Complaints Section in the Complaints Handling Procedures.

Complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying between staff are generally addressed in accordance with the College’s Staff Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy.

Complaints in relation to allegations of Staff Misconduct and Reportable Conduct are dealt with in the procedures as outlined in the Complaints Handling Procedures: Staff Misconduct and Reportable Conduct and the Child Safeguarding Policy all located on InsideView under College Policies.

4.3 Student Complaints

Complaints from students or parents regarding an unfair or inappropriate response to a behavioural issue, a co-curricular decision or an academic result, are addressed in accordance with the Student Complaints section of the Complaints Handling Procedure.

Complaints regarding unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying are generally addressed in accordance with the College’s Student Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy.

4.4 Contractors, Volunteers and External Stakeholders

Complaints from contractors, volunteers and members of the broader community are addressed in accordance with the Complaints Handling Procedures.

4.5 Whistleblowing Complaints

This policy and procedure does not extend to complaints which are whistleblowing disclosures. The procedure for processing whistleblowing complaints are dealt with in the College 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 College, 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 College, the College's auditor or a person who the College has authorised to collect such disclosures.

4.6 Historical Child Abuse Complaints

The College takes historical complaints involving allegations of child abuse very seriously.

The College will address these complaints by working with the Australian Province of the Society of Jesus.

Any allegations associated with criminal activity should be directed to the NSW Police in the first instance.

All historical complaints can be directed to the College Principal and/or the Province Director of Professional Standards professionalstandards@siasl.org.au.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 All Staff Responsibilities

Complaints may be received by any member of staff, at any time, either over the telephone, via email, or during face-to-face meetings.

So that complaints can be handled properly, it is important for all staff members to:

- be aware of their roles, responsibilities and authorities with respect to complaints;
- be aware of what information to give to complainants;
- document all complaints they receive;
- demonstrate good interpersonal and communication skills; and
- acknowledge all complaints in a timely manner.

All staff are authorised to deal with Informal Complaints. Where a person makes a Formal Complaint, this must be referred to the Complaints Handling Manager or a Complaints Handling Officer.

5.2 Complaints Handling Manager

The College has appointed the Chief Risk Officer as the Complaints Handling Manager who is responsible for:

- ensuring that all staff are educated about our Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures;
- ensuring informal and formal complaints are forwarded to the most appropriate Complaints Handling Officer;
- if required, investigating and, where necessary, escalating complaints to the Principal;
- liaising with Complaints Handling Officers;
- maintaining accurate records in the Complaints Register;
- regularly reporting to the Executive Team about complaints;
- ensuring systemic complaints are identified and rectified; and

- monitoring the effectiveness of, and continually improving, our Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures.

5.3 Complaints Handling Officers' Responsibilities

The College has appointed a number of key senior staff members to act as Complaints Handling Officers. These individuals are authorised to investigate and manage Formal Complaints once they have been logged.

Complaints Handling Officers are responsible for:

- investigating and, where necessary, escalating complaints to the Principal
- liaising with complainants
- maintaining accurate records in the Complaints Register.

The College Complaints Handling Officers are:

- Deputy Principal Students
- Deputy Principal Teaching and Learning
- Chief People Officer
- Director of Boarding
- Chief Operating/Chief Financial Officer
- Chief Information Officer
- Director of Regis
- Director of Co-Curriculum

6. COMPLAINTS

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the College about an educational and/or operational matter relating to services provided by the College or the behaviour or decisions of a staff member, student, parent, contractor or volunteer, including misconduct.

Complaints may be made by any member of the community.

The College will seek to resolve complaints informally where possible but acknowledges that in some cases a person may wish to make a formal complaint.

6.1 Raising an Informal Complaint

Informal complaints may be raised by a complainant directly with the person involved following the process outlined in the Complaint Handling Procedures. Informal complaints may be made verbally, through the online form or in writing.

However, if the complainant does not feel comfortable doing so or the matter is one where it may not be appropriate to do so, an informal complaint can be made to the Director of Regis, Head of House, Head of Division or Head of Faculty depending on the nature of the informal complaint.

Informal complaints can also be made to the Complaints Handling Manager or a Complaints Handling Officer.

Any complaint about the conduct of a staff member should be raised directly with the Chief People Officer in the first instance.

6.2 Raising a Formal Complaint

Should the matter not be resolved through informal processes, the complainant may raise the matter formally with the College following the process outlined in the Complaints Handling Procedures.

A formal complaint can be made through the online form or in writing to the Principal or the Complaints Handling Manager, via [email](#).

Where a person wishes to make a formal complaint concerning the Principal the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of the Board, via [email](#). In this situation, the references in this policy relating to the role of the Principal should be read as references to the Chair of Board.

6.3 Assessing a Complaint

The Principal/Delegate generally will assess the complaint and determine:

- whether the complaint is one to be addressed under this policy or is a reportable conduct matter which are dealt with by the relevant policies;
- the priority of the complaint in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the matter raised; and
- whether the College may be required to report the matter to the Office of the Children’s Guardian, Police, Department of Communities and Justice or other relevant authorities should the complaint relate to possible unlawful conduct or other reportable matters.

6.4 Managing a Formal Complaint

The Principal/Delegate generally will manage a formal complaint by:

- advising the complainant of the likely steps that will be undertaken by the College in relation to the complaint;
- 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 College considers necessary to assess the complaint;
- making a decision about how the complaint will be resolved; and
- advising the complainant in writing, and any other relevant parties as appropriate, of the resolution decision of the Principal/Delegate 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 College 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 College about the complaint. However, the College 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 College to be inappropriate.

6.5 Closing a Complaint

The complaint will be closed on the Complaints Register once:

- the complaint has been resolved with the complainant (either internally or externally) or all reasonable internal and external options of rectification or remedy have been exhausted;
- all relevant information about the complaint has been captured;
- consideration has been given to the underlying risk associated with the complaint and, where appropriate, the risk has been included on the College’s Risk Register; and
- any recommendations with respect to rectification work have been recorded in a corrective action task.

7. TIMEFRAMES

7.1 Immediate Acknowledgement of Formal Complaint

The College will aim to immediately acknowledge the receipt of formal complaints and address them promptly in accordance with their degree of urgency.

Where the College cannot acknowledge a complaint immediately, acknowledgement should be made as soon as practicable and, in any event, within three working days, allowing for public holidays and College holiday shutdown periods.

7.2 Target Resolution Within 14 Days

The College aims to resolve all complaints within 14 working days, with the initial investigation completed within 7 days, if practicable and depending on the complexity of the complaint.

7.3 Extension Beyond 14 Days

If the College is unable to respond to a complaint within 14 days, a Complaints Handling Officer or the Complaints Handling Manager will, prior to the end of the 14-day period:

- contact the complainant by telephone, if possible, or otherwise in writing;
- advise them of the reasons for the delay in resolution of their complaint;
- advise them of a new target resolution date.

A Complaints Handling Officer or the Complaints Handling Manager will keep the complainant regularly updated on the status of their complaint.

8. APPEALS

The College does not offer unlimited opportunities for appeal if a complainant is unhappy with the resolution of a complaint.

Any appeal against the resolution of a complaint should be made in writing to the Principal, or if the appeal involves the Principal, the Chair of the Board. An appeal is only likely to be considered if there is evidence that there was a procedural problem with the investigation.

The Principal, at his/her discretion, will consider the application for an appeal and will either direct that the complaint be re-examined or direct that the matter be closed.

Child Safeguarding appeals against the finding of the investigation conducted by the College are to be addressed to the Office of Children's Guardian.

Complainants are afforded a number of avenues throughout the complaints handling process should they feel that the complaint is not being handled as they see fit, including:

- seeking alternative dispute resolution other than through the College's Complaints Handling Policy, for example through mediation which involves the assistance of an independent third party who helps parties to negotiate a settlement of the complaint or dispute;
- seeking legal advice, should a complaint escalate to a dispute, to ensure that they know their rights relating to the issue at hand.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY

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

Personally identifiable information about complainants, and if relevant the person against whom a complaint is made, is only made available for the purpose of addressing the complaint within the College and, unless the complainant consents, actively protected from disclosure.

10. RECORDING KEEPING

The College will maintain an online Complaints Register of all complaints received.

The Complaints Register is reviewed in Executive Team meetings and key information is provided to the Executive Team on a regular basis.

11. DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Complaint	<p>A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to the College about an educational and/or operational matter relating to services provided by the College or the behaviour or decisions of a staff member, contractor or volunteer, including misconduct.</p> <p>The term “complaint” is used to refer collectively to any enquiry, comment, complaint or dispute raised by a person expressing dissatisfaction as to a particular circumstance, or situation, related to the College services or operations.</p>
Informal Complaint	<p>An informal complaint is a complaint that can be resolved at the time the complaint is made or received, or very shortly after it is received. The nature of the complaint can be addressed by the first point of contact staff.</p>
Formal Complaint	<p>A formal complaint is one that requires further investigation and/or written acknowledgement and response.</p>

12. RELATED POLICIES & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Related Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Education Act 1990 (NSW) – Disability Discrimination Act 1992 – Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 – Privacy Act 1988 – Children’s Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)
Related Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Child Safeguarding Policy – Privacy Policy – Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy (Staff and Students)
Related Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Complaints Handling Procedure
Related Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – NSW Registered and Accredited Individual Non-government Schools Manual – AS/NZS 10002:2014 Complaints Handling Standard

13. DOCUMENT CONTROL

POLICY	Complaints Handling Policy
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Principal
CONTACT OFFICER	Chief Risk Officer
APPROVED BY	Chair of the Board
VERSION NUMBER	3.0
SUPERSEDED VERSION NUMBER	2.0
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